**The Ephemeral Artefact**
**Visions of cultural experience**

**by**

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**Keynote Presentation**

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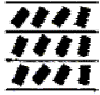
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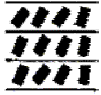**University of Toronto**

## Abstract

*Why do we create the things we do? Simply put, we are compulsive story-tellers, and our cultural creations are the language with which we create our narratives; indeed they are the embodiment of our stories. At various stages in human development, our civilization has created artefacts that "bind time" or "bind space," technologies and artefacts that would be able to sustain through the ages, or those that could be easily transported to span far distances. Under today's conditions of instantaneous, multi-way communication, our experience and perception of time and space differences change. The cultural artefacts that emerge from our culture are ephemeral in nature – they exist precisely in the present, and can only be experienced, creating a narrative by which we are telling our stories to ourselves. Whereas a mass medium was once thought of as one in which people experienced the same thing at the same time from different locales. But now, mass media is that which allows massive participation in the creation of cultural expressions at different physical times, from different physical locations, with the perception of simultaneity and immediate proximity. Such proximity, the realization of McLuhan's "global village," implies the emergence of a global culture, and the creation of cultural artefacts that "bind the present" and transcend ephemerality. Such creations are both reflexive and recursive: transcending ephemerality is effected through experiential meme that is adopted, assimilated and changed into the next new form. I suggest that the total environment – the set of complex, interacting, dynamic processes in which we participate – is the true artefact of experience in the ever-present presence.*

Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Mark Federman and I will be your purser for your flight this afternoon. In a few moments, we will be departing for the future. For your comfort and safety, please ensure that your seatbelts are securely fastened, and that your seatback and tray tables are in the upright and locked position. At this time, please take a moment to look around you, and ensure that all your carry-on baggage – your prior assumptions and preconceived notions – are placed in the overhead bin or safely stowed under the seat in front of you. You will not be needing them for the remainder of this flight. Would the cabin crew please take your seats for immediate departure.

Where are we going? Are we there yet? When will we land? Will there be someone to meet us when we arrive? What language do they speak? Are we there yet? Are we… *there…* yet? And, if so, how can we tell? And more significantly, if we are *there*, are we still "we?"

Talking about a vision of the future is perhaps one of the easiest things to do.

You are never wrong, because the future never actually arrives. It is always tomorrow – next week... next month... next year... next generation – it's always... well, in the future; therefore, those who profess to speak of the future need never worry about accuracy, let alone responsibility or accountability. Our politicians today have especially mastered this fine, sophistic art! Marshall McLuhan himself used to say, "Never predict anything that hasn't already happened," because – and this is most important – "The future of the future is the present." Aye, there's the rub – the problem is not one of seeing the future, but of perceiving the present. The present is a very tricky thing, because it has a habit of getting away from us and very quickly becoming the past.

When I ask people to speak of the present, most often they will speak of anything BUT the present: They will speak about the future – what they're about to do. They will speak about what they have just done – the past. It is actually very difficult to speak about the present since most of our language is geared towards these other two temporal orientations. This is not surprising, since, for the last 3,000 to 4,000 years, we have designed and developed our culture almost exclusively for the purposes of recalling the past, or attempting to impose our will on the future.

Let us consider the various creations of humankind throughout the ages – the myriad writings and drawings and sculptures and tapestries – the plethora of artefacts and leavings with which we have littered the annals of human history. I survey this in my mind's eye and ask, why? Why is it that we create the things we do? What inner drive comprises our motivation, the inspiration
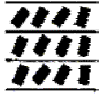
that results in art, literature, poetry, fashion, music, dance, architecture or even the games we play? I would propose to you that we as a species are compulsive story-tellers, and our cultural creations are the complex language with which we create our narratives; indeed they are the embodiment of our stories.

But, precisely for whom are we constructing these narratives? Who is, or has been, the audience for all this creativity and invention over the millennia? I ask this question because understanding the nature of the intended recipient may help us understand the intention of the story-teller. Understanding the story-teller may assist us in understanding how he or she perceived their own time. And, understanding the mechanism of expressed perception may help us to better understand our own time – the present – and thereby allow us to foretell "the future of the future."

### Time and Space

Harold Adam Innis was a political economist, and an influential colleague of Marshall McLuhan. He described that certain technological innovations had an inherent bias towards either "binding" or spanning time, or spanning space. He maintained that the particular bias of the inventions and artefacts created by a given society influenced everything from the role of religion and the society's cultural orientation, to its political structure, the development of its institutions, and the expression of all these in a reified form.

For example, think of the Ancient Egyptians. They constructed the great pyramids, the Sphinx, hieroglyphics inscribed and painted on the walls. They

created massive, ornate sarcophagi and elaborate ornamental decorations. Such technologies and artefacts were not particularly designed for efficient transport, except perhaps to be conveyed to the underworld. Such artefacts have the ability to transcend time as, indeed, they have conveyed much about the society of Ancient Egypt to our modern time. Innis observed that societies that created its cultural artefacts that bind or transcend time were often those with a primarily oral culture, rooted in tradition, with a hierarchical social order that controlled access to knowledge. In addition, the geographic influence of that society tended to be relatively limited.

Oral cultures – those that have not yet felt the effects or, or are not dominated by, the phonetic alphabet – tend to be focused primarily on the past. Their cultural artefacts seem to be designed as memory aids – think of the metre and structure of Homeric verse, for example – providing the society with a context for their current existence and an explanation of the world in which they find themselves. Their great cultural works are epic and mythic in nature, telling the stories of battles and heroes, and creation and origin myths from long ago. These societies developed specific structural forms – technologies from which emerged both the tangible and intangible artefacts that would allow them to pass the stories from generation to generation, ensuring their survival for all time.

Compare this with a society that developed technologies that were relatively easy to transport, and additionally, the technologies of transportation itself – from roads and wheeled chariots, to radio waves and receivers. Think of the Roman Empire that developed "advanced" communication and transportation technologies and

infrastructure, enabling long-distance political administration and expansionist aspirations. Such "space-binding" societies tend to favour secular institutions with political, as opposed to religious, authority. It's not difficult to understand why this occurs. Local influence can be achieved by those in authority invoking the word, and standing in the place of, a deity who is immortal. Influence at a distance, on the other hand, necessitates the separation of the word from the person that uttered the word. Thus, these space-transcendent societies tend to be literate cultures, meaning that they not only possess a phonetic alphabet, they tend to be dominantly influenced by the effects of societal literacy.

The phonetic alphabet is an incredibly powerful and magical piece of technology. One of its major effects is that it enables a society to crystallize its past – in other words, to create a relatively immutable history that can stand by itself. In fact, in such societies, there is a great value placed on historical records and the preservation of artefacts, as we say, "for future generations." With the written alphabet, these space-transcending, literate-dominant societies tend to focus on the future – and telling their stories to the future – since they need not worry about preserving the past.

But its magic goes even further. The phonetic alphabet allows us to take any word from any language, and break it down into is component sounds. Then, we can draw from a collection of typically between twenty and thirty – in some cases up to forty – semantically meaningless symbols to encode those sounds. Such a transformation allows a society to transport something that was an integral part of a person – their recounting of their experience, the expression of their will –
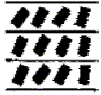
across vast distances without the person! This has the effect of decontextualizing the experience, enabling the reader to substitute his own context and thereby, his own meaning.

### The Obsolescence of Visual Dominance

It was the invention of the vowel that first freed text from its clerical context. But, because most people were illiterate during the time of the "manuscript culture," the clergy remained a major force for centuries. Generally speaking, those who had command of the phonetic alphabet had tremendous power and influence in society since they commanded the magic of the written language, while still retaining the influential power of the masses – mostly at masses. But the 15th and 16th centuries saw the explosion of mass literacy with the invention of the moveable type press by Johannes Gutenberg. The separation of sound from sight via the phonetic alphabet enabled words and ideas to exist silently, within the minds of their readers, and out of the reach of authorities. For the phonetic alphabet, accelerated by typography, created the private mind and with it, private identity. Society fragmented into collections of individuals, and their cultural creations and artefacts reflected both personal expression, and the collective expression of like-minded societies.

Space-transcendent societies, possessing the phonetic alphabet and mass literacy, are visually dominant. It doesn't take much in the way of observation to realize this: The architecture of this beautiful city (Salzburg) is such a cultural artefact, as are the thousands of pieces of Renaissance and later works of art. The European literary legacy is entirely visual – unlike the literary traditions of disappearing societies that have been primarily oral to this day and whose legacy is being hurriedly captured using a phonetic alphabet precious moments before the last story-tellers perish. Traditional western music is a literate form; folk music and improvised jazz, on the other hand, are oral forms that originally draw from more tribal sources – and I use that word, tribal, very specifically as it relates to the dynamics of a primarily oral culture.

In the 20th century, we were almost overrun with visual domination: Advertisements, photographs, cinema, television, magazines, and books. In that primarily visual world, think of who controls, and culturally dominates our visually-oriented society. In order to have intellectual credibility, you must be a published author, or an accredited scholar – you must, in other words, have command of the book. To have mass appeal, you can be a famous movie director or actor – in other words, a master of the silver screen, and later, the glowing television screen. Political leaders, for the most part, must be physically attractive and telegenic, and it also helps if one comes from the world of visual celebrity. In California, the population did not vote for Arnold Schwarzenegger to be their governor, they voted for "The Terminator." Before the television era, it was the news photograph and cinematic newsreel that conveyed power and presence. If anyone doubts what I am saying, well… "seeing is believing."

The visual bias with which we have all been so well conditioned, and to which we have all been so well socialized is evident even in the most subtle of instances. This session, for example, is nominally titled, "*Visions* of cultural experience." But when we want to predict
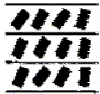
the future by foretelling the present, we must accurately probe all of these assumptions of our cultural conditioning – the assumptions of the hidden ground that underlie all of our reactions and behaviours. For example, does the visual bias remain dominant in its effects on the creation and evolution of culture today? Is seeing still believing, or has the predominating visual orientation of the past, say, 600 years been pushed beyond the limit of its potential, and is now revealing its reversal characteristics?

Have we yet learned to "see through" much of the visual trickery perpetrated by Photoshop magicians and the likes of the wizards of Weta Workshop, who created the recent cinematic incarnation of *The Lord of the Rings*, and brought us armies of orcs and trolls, and the fortification of Isengard and Helm's Deep? And, on the other hand, have we conditioned ourselves to only see that which we already believe, ignoring what might otherwise have been mind-altering evidence? Perhaps the truism reverses, from "seeing is believing" into "if I didn't believe it, I wouldn't have seen it."

It is clear that something has changed in the way we perceive, and interact with, our world. In the visually dominated world, linearity, sequential causality and order ruled the day. In most endeavours, including cultural creations, there was almost always a starting point, a middle and an end. The creations and conceptions of humankind were bounded – an "Unfinished Symphony" was an exception first, and a completion challenge to the musicologist, second. I can remember when I first experienced the mind shift from linear, visually dominant space to an electrically-accelerated something else – at the time I couldn't even describe it. In 1993, someone first

showed me the World Wide Web on what was then the Mosaic browser. Naively, I asked, "where does it start?" "On the home page," was the response. "And where is the home page?" I asked. "Wherever you start," came the almost mystical reply.

Over time, I gradually became comfortable with the metaphorically acoustic nature of the Internet. Like sound that comes to us from all around, our experience in the connected spherical space of the Internet is that the centre is everywhere, and the boundaries are nowhere. Under conditions of multi-way, instantaneous communications, our conventional notions of space and time are called into question. Any artefact that we create in this space is but one click away from any other object or person – anything and everything in this omni-centric sphere of connections is immediately proximate to anything and everything else. We do not bind space as in Innis's conception, since there is no space to bind. Similarly, our experience of artefacts and creations under conditions of pervasive and instantaneous communication always occurs now – immediately in the present. The first time we encounter anything or anyone it has just flashed into existence, at least as far as we can tell. And it is true, that something that is made to look old – even with a bygone date stamped onto it – could well have just been created. So just as we do not bind space, neither do we bind time.

This presents a bit of a paradox for Innis. Societies either created large and heavy artefacts that would bind time, and the societies themselves were oral in nature, retelling stories that connected them to the past. Or, they created transportable artefacts that would bind space, and the societies were characteristically literate and visually dominant. The past was fixed by literacy,
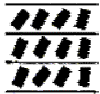
so that the narratives of those societies would tell their stories to those who would live in the future. It seems that we, in the 21ˢᵗ century, have created this spherical field of existence that binds neither time, nor space but, rather, transcends both. In our world of instantaneous, multi-way communication, everywhere is here and every-when is now. What is the nature of the artefacts that are characteristic of our pervasively connected culture? What is the focus of our cultural narrative? To whom are *WE* telling *OUR* stories?

I had been puzzling over this paradox for quite some time. It seems to be The Cultural Riddle of our era, almost worthy of an electronic cyber-Sphinx: What binds neither time nor space, but transcends both? What is neither large nor small, neither fixed in place nor transportable, but exists everywhere at the same time? Does anyone have any ideas? It occurs to me that the quintessential characteristic of such an artefact is ephemerality. An ephemeral artefact exists precisely in the present, and can only be experienced at the moment of its creation. It defies conventional descriptions of magnitude and is pervasively located. I submit to you that the cultural artefacts of *our* time are experiential in nature and create a unique form of narrative by which we are telling our stories to ourselves.
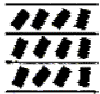
### Interactive, Not Interpassive

Now I have to remind you that in-flight meals are sometimes difficult to digest, so while you're chewing on what I've just served up, let me begin the entertainment portion of the flight. And for that, we go to Yamaguchi, Japan, and their culture and arts centre that opened last November (2003.) For the opening, artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer created an interactive installation called "Amodal Suspension." A network of 20 robotically-controlled searchlights sent sequences of flashes into the night sky. The flashes were actually coded SMS messages from mobile phones or web sites that had been sent from one person to another, but were intercepted by the installation and held, "suspended" in the sky. The intended recipient instead received an email message stating that "a message is waiting for them in the sky of Yamaguchi."

Amodal Suspension is a cultural artefact that could only be experienced through direct participation in its creation. Unlike traditional cultural artefacts that can stand alone, and possess an intrinsic value, apart from their creator, an ephemeral artefact like Amodal Suspension not only requires people for its inception, but for its continued existence. It is continual acts of participatory creation that imbue ephemeral artefacts with their value. As critic Timothy Druckrey points out, "ephemerality is not inconsequential, [and] interactivity is not merely a worn catchphrase for old media."

Today, we are no longer merely consumers of culture or cultural artefacts. We are instead – all of us – producers of our indicative cultural creations that exist for as long as we are experiencing them — and no longer. This goes beyond what we typically think of as "interactive media." Where we once thought that we "interacted" with our various media by effecting some pre-programmed action – clicking on a computer screen, or causing tableaux to shift in a museum exhibit when we push a button – we now give way to a new perception. These all-too-common modes of consuming culture are essentially no different than the television remote control, turning us into mesmerized "culture potatoes," and clearly

demonstrate the obsolescence of consumption-oriented cultural artefacts – what I call "inter*passivity.*" True inter*active* media are those in whose creation we actively participate. From the emergence of these new cultural forms we experience involvement in depth.

A mass medium was once thought of as one in which a mass of people experienced the same thing at the same time from different locales. It was typified by broadcast – radio, television and the early incarnation of the Internet, whose first use as a new medium was the emulation of the old media. But now, we can further refine our understanding of mass media culture as it is emerging today – that which allows massive participation in the creation of cultural artefacts at different physical times, from different physical locales, with the individual perception of simultaneity and immediate proximity.

In fact, one of the most important effects of massively multi-way, instantaneous communications is pervasive proximity. We experience everyone to whom we are connected – and conceivably everyone to whom we are potentially connected – as if they are exactly next to us. The effect is that of hundreds, or thousands, or millions of people coming together in zero space, so that there is no perceptible distance between them. This is the ultimate expression of McLuhan's "global village." The dominant sense in this world of pervasive proximity is no longer vision, despite the fact that many, but not all, of the portals to this world are screen-based. The dominant sense in this world is touch.

### To Touch and Be Touched

When the invention of the phonetic alphabet "gave us an eye for an ear," it separated what was integral – spoken language, into sound and meaning. The sound was coded into alphabetic symbols, and these groups of symbols inherited the meaning. The invention of instantaneous communications works on touch as experience of reality in a similar manner. It separates what was integral into two distinct components – tactility and tangibility. Experience of reality – literally what we feel – inheres in the tactility resulting from pervasive proximity. We touch and are touched in ways that transcend the apparent visual barrier between the cyber and the physical. It is a only a conception, an artefact of visual dominance, that the screen represents an interface that demarcates reality from non-reality that we often refer to as "virtual." When measured against the test of the effects of our experience, it is clear that such an interface does not actually exist. Experience effected through the processes of pervasive proximity means that what we feel online – those whom we touch and those who touch us – is quite real, despite its lack of physicality and materiality. What this means is that under conditions of pervasive proximity, experience transcends our traditional conception of media boundaries. And it is through transmedial experiences that we can begin to observe the emergence of a culture for the global village.

McLuhan observed that, "the artist is always engaged in writing a detailed history of the future because he is the only person aware of the nature of the present." Therefore we should look to the artists for expressions of transmediality, and clues as to its effects. Some of my favourite examples of experiences in physical space
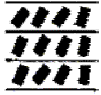
that transcend physicality are games. Blast Theory's "Can You See Me Now?" pitted a team of wirelessly-connected runners in the streets of a city against online players controlling avatars on a map of the city. When a runner in physical space caught up with a player in cyberspace, the runner would "shoot" the cyber player – that is, he would take a photograph with a camera of the physical place in which the cyber player would be located – and the player would be out of the game. A similar concept led to the creation of "PacManhattan" in the streets of New York, and many other similar, transmedial games.

Another fascinating example is Texterritory, what was called a "playground performance," in which dancer and actor Sheron Wray improvised her movements and the nonlinear revelation of the story itself in response to aggregated text messages from a pervasively proximate audience who may or may not happen to be physically located in the actual performance space. Audience as collaborative creators were also able to influence the music and lighting in the environment.

Ars Electronica facilitated and demonstrated another aspect of a new form of cultural creation that occurs under conditions of pervasive proximity. The story begins with forty-five-year-old recordings – discovered over the past few years – that captured the Ngoma Buntibe music of the displaced Tonga people now living along the border between Zimbabwe and Zambia. Last year, the music was reintroduced via streaming media from South Africa to Linz, Austria, then to the UK and back to Zimbabwe via short wave. At Ars Electronica this year, they went even further. Ngoma Buntibe music groups performed the traditional music live from

Zimbabwe and Zambia, collaborating remotely with digital musicians in Linz. They created a new musical form, over what was called an "Acoustic Bridge." In this performance, Central Europe and South Africa were effectively transported and made immediately proximate, so that modern, digital sound creation was juxtaposed with traditional forms. What was heard is indicative of the type of cultural creations that are beginning to emerge from artists all over the global village, from this relatively higher culture example to the pop culture Hindi remix of Michael Jackson, called "Don't Stop Till You Get to Bollywood."

### We Are All Wallawalla

We hear it in music, we see it in art and design, we taste it in our restaurants, we wear it in our fashions, we tell it in our new mythologies. And, we create it when we touch, and are touched, by each other's indigenous heritages, that we combine and recombine, mix and remix. The history of human culture has slowly evolved through processes of integration, acquisition, adoption, rejection, extinction, yielding a modern *métissage* that emerges from a complex socio-cultural matrix. Pervasive proximity accelerates what has, until recently, been a project on the time scale of centuries, but now occurs in days, or – given the right meme – in hours or even minutes. Canadian anthropologist and essayist Serge Bouchard puts it this way:

"…humanity has been intercultural and polyglot since the dawn of time. … In today's world every culture is the result of encounters, for good or ill, that humans have made since they first walked and talked. We're all the same, but we're also all Wallawalla,
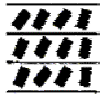
Nambikwara, Breton, Basque, Tutsi, Chechen, Samoyed, Ainu, Berber. Humanity is nourished on diversity."

I am fortunate to live in Toronto, Canada, a city that has, over my lifetime, undergone a process of *métissage*, so that, through the course of an average day, we can experience an awareness of what many people can only achieve through travel among many countries. Pico Iyer, the author of *The Global Soul*, describes the psychological phenomenon of awareness that travel manifests. In an interview given to *Mother Earth News* shortly after the publication of *The Global Soul* in 2001, Iyer muses that:

"I think travelling physically is just a shortcut to thinking about the kind of values and issues that we have to face in our day-to-day lives that sometimes we're blind to because of habit or routine. … When I write about the global soul I'm partly writing about the wonderful possibilities of this new borderless world, and I'm partly writing about the challenges that we have to face…
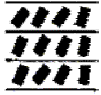
The biggest [challenge] is the lack of responsibility. I think of a certain kind of global soul as living in midair – in an airplane six miles above. The danger of that is that it's a realm of all rights and no responsibilities. In some ways I think being a global soul means having to find out what your affiliations are, that what used to be a given is [now] a chosen."

In 1964, McLuhan wrote that, "in the electric age, we wear all of mankind as our skin," observing the dominance of tactility under conditions of pervasive proximity, and alluding to the type of affinitive responsibility expressed more recently by Pico Iyer. When you think about Iyer's expression, it is easily understood as a very humanistic and ecological sensibility. But McLuhan's aphoristic formation of what is essentially the same notion introduces a more complex element – an element that brings with it aspects of magic and mysticism. And as we attempt to wrap our minds around the ideas of ephemeral artefacts, and all of humanity fitting into an infinitesimally small space, we are indeed drawn to a mystical and almost primitive ground. What emerges is the image of the shaman of our tribe, the one who acts as a medium between the visible and invisible worlds, practicing forms of magic that exert control over what otherwise appear as natural events.

### Shaman… and Shamwoman

But what does the shaman traditionally do? Borrowing from McLuhan's language, the shaman "puts on" the tribe and wears them as tribal masque, reflecting the totality of the tribal culture all at once, his utterings becoming the tribe's "outerings." In doing so, however, the shaman is the sham-man – the no-body – the man who is devoid of his own identity because he assumes the identity of the entire tribe all at once. But McLuhan observed that in the electric age, when we are "on the air," we are all no-bodies. We are discarnate – our presence is felt, but our bodies are not. In this age of instantaneous communication and pervasive proximity we are all "sham-men" and "sham-women," increasingly empty of individuality, putting on bits and pieces of

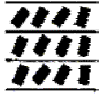the global village's socio-cultural matrix to wear as our skin.

Our physical bodies, increasingly obsolesced as the container of identity – and especially cultural identity – acquire an aesthetic form in themselves and become *objets d'art*. Tattoos, piercings, other body modifications, self-made pornography and fetishes represent the obsolescence of the individual as the body itself is turned into aesthetic object. Although as individuals we become culturally empty, we are nonetheless transcendent – moving inexorably towards new forms of mass culture that border on the mystical in which we go beyond wearing all of mankind as our skin, as Marshall McLuhan famously said. Rather, we assimilate the entirety of the world and all of world culture within each of us, that we as sham-men and sham-women reflect back to the tribe, as did the shaman of yore, inducing ever-changing cultural expressions throughout the global tribe.

Thus, we are driven to create ephemeral artefacts that "bind the present," and seamlessly connects physical and cyber spaces in ways that correspond to our perceptions and experiences of transcendent reality. We are the embodiment of those artefacts – simultaneously the actors and the audience, the performers and the performance, the spectators and the spectacle; We are the musicians, the instruments and the music itself. It is not the global village that we inhabit, but the global theatre on whose stage we play. Without our presence and intimate involvement at the moment, there is no culture in our time – only cultures of other times. Any latent or lagged expression of culture, as when an ephemeral artefact is captured or fixed in another form, becomes a shadow of the experience, projected onto a different time with a different sensual dominance – typically visual or acoustic. Digitization of an ephemeral artefact is not the artefact – nor even an accurate representation of the artefact – because in capturing it for a different time, the artefact is, of necessity, mediated and hence, changed. A future experience of the artefact, even if it can somehow be technologically reconstituted with complete fidelity, must of necessity be a different experience, and thus will subsequently yield a different ephemeral artefact, because the cultural ground that we embody as a tribe of no-bodies will have changed.

But the evolution of culture necessitates the type of continuity that occurs in the proximity and interaction among cultural artefacts themselves. How then can we conceive of any sort of continuity in the creative process of culture when we are dealing exclusively with artefacts that bind only the present? In other words, how can we transcend ephemerality?

Experiential cultural creations are both reflexive and recursive, as I illustrated a moment ago –we being at once the performers and the performance. Certain of these experiences will generate a cultural meme. Transcending ephemerality is accomplished through such experiential memes that are incorporated, and morphed into the next cultural experience that replaces the previous one. The meme is the continuity vector of ephemeral artefacts. Transcending ephemerality, in other words, is the state of being adopted, assimilated and changed into the next new form. Institutions, curators, scholars, librarians, and archivists who all consider themselves as custodians and conduits of cultural artefacts from one generation to the next, must now reconsider their

location in society relative to the memes that are vectors of the present. Such a reconsideration now recasts the creative phenomenon that we have come to call the "remix culture" or "sampling culture" against significant sociological and philosophical grounds.

If artefacts comprise the vocabulary of cultural expression, from where do we draw to create the lexicon of ephemeral artefacts? In an interview given in 1965, Marshall McLuhan observed,

> "If we have used the arts at their very best as a means of heightening our awareness of the otherwise unconscious environment, then turning a whole skill to the making of the environment itself into a work of art, namely, of transcendent awareness, would seem to be the logic of this form. … The possibility of using the total environment as a work of art, as an artefact, is a quite startling and perhaps exhilarating image but it seems to be forced upon us. The need to become completely autonomous and aware of the

consequences of everything we're doing before the consequences occur is where we're heading."

Our cultural lexicon then, as McLuhan suggests, is the total environment – the all-encompassing set of complex, interacting, dynamic processes in which we participate. Our total environment is the ultimate artefact of experience in ever-present presence.

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the future. If you would like to set your watches, the local time is the present. For your comfort and safety, please remain seated with your seatbelts fastened until we come to a complete stop at the terminal building. Please exercise caution when you open the overhead bins, since some of your carry-on baggage – your prior assumptions and preconceived notions – may have shifted during our flight. Thank you for flying with us today, and we wish you a pleasant experience here at eCulture Horizons.

*An unconventional, yet strategic thinker,* **Mark Federman** *has more than twenty-five years' experience in the high-technology industry as executive, manager and consultant, spanning disciplines including research and development, marketing, sales, operations and strategic leadership. Mark is currently a lecturer and the Chief Strategist at the McLuhan Program in Culture and Technology at the University of Toronto, a visiting professor at the Fachhochschule in Kiel Germany, and a guest lecturer at Högskölan för Lärande och Kommunikation in Jönköping Sweden. His most recent corporate role was that of President of PersonaMedia, a small company whose focus is on the use of Voice as an object of rich business information, enabled by Internet technologies. He is the co-author, with Derrick de Kerckhove, of* McLuhan for Managers — New Tools for New Thinking. *Some of his recent explorations have examined "Integral Awareness in the Connected Society," "The Cultural Paradox of the Internet," and "Creating a Culture of Innovation." Mark's current research examines the roles that individuals play in their workplace as emergent media forms, from which people can gain new awareness of their location and effects within corporate cultures, and how corporations can respond to emergent role, rather than job, dominance.*

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