

**Global Citizen Artists,
Virtual Collaborations Balanced (for Change) at the
Meeting Point of Place and Community**

by Nadja Masura

Introduction:

“What is a Citizen Artist?” is much too large a question for one person to answer; it must be answered collectively, in chorus, through the work we choose to create, the collaborations we form, and the cumulative ideals that we put forth. It is a question which has a touch of prognostication and the folly of the present, but it also requires the visionary within ourselves to step forward. Though it cannot be encompassed by one mind, the title’s parameters, Citizen and Artist contain and correspond to two reoccurring components of Place and Community which, when combined, emit an aura of change. As Artists, we have depicted the world as the Place around us, and as Citizens we speak to the formation of Community. Therefore as global citizens, the art we make together should reflect this expanded sense of place and community.

Through common place and interest, community is formed (*Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*¹).² Throughout the history of theatre performance, Place has been performed for Community and often transformed in the process. It is this axis of transformation where Community and combined-Place meet, that the collaborative projects of Art On The Grid are formed. In addition to tracing lines of Place (illusion and its translation) and Community in Theatre/Performance, I intend to locate my project, *Outside/In* as a continuation of these core impulses, and offer it and other Art Grid works as an example of a growing tradition of virtual collaboration (telematic, multisite, and other works created in the past decades of digital technological advancement) whose coordinates point to the very real meeting of distant Places in real-time, but also of the creation of Community and pockets of hope and resistance.

Place

Place³ has been a fascination and basis for theatre and entertainment since its inception. Theatre is often described as a place for communal meeting.⁴ The theatre itself is a location, a physical point with its own social attributes, but within its parameters (be they wooden walls, stone, or virtual- computer interfaces) the illusion of distant and sometimes familiar places has long fascinated us. In since ancient Greece (and perhaps before) we humans have striven to

¹ Community is often referred to in terms of commonality of place (physical geographical location) or *Gemeinschaft*. Whereas a community referred to in terms of commonality of interests and concerns is *Gesellschaft*. www2.pfdiffer.edu/~lridener/courses/GMEIN.html.

² “A further definition places common needs, interests, activities, or desires at the center of community...”² “...in 1976 Willis Sutton and T. Munson asserted that over 70 percent of the definitions relied on ‘community as a structural entity—a specific population, place, or location,’ and less than 12 percent used social interaction as a determining characteristic.” Haedicke, Susan, and Tobin Nellhaus, editors. *Performing Democracy: International Perspectives on Urban Community-Based Performance*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2001, 10.

³ This term will be explicated by deCerteau later, but is meant to be a general term expressing a range of physical locations.

⁴ “A theatre, in the widest sense of the word, is the general term for all places of amusement through the ear or eye, in which men assemble in order to be amused by some entertainment presented to all at the same time and in common.” Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “Progress of the Drama.” In Dukore, Bernard F. *Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greeks to Grotowski*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc, 1974, 587.

depict and therefore understand or catch glimpses of meaning in Places and their wonders. Be it city and town, or natural environments,⁵ places fascinate us. The effort to create illusion of places on stage was executed in Greece partially through the painted scenes on tri-sided periaktoi.⁶ The real delight of Place (and shifting local) can be seen in Heron of Alexandria's mechanical scene change machines, which robotically animated scenes from one of Euripides' plays.⁷ Beyond the delight at the novel individual miniaturization of ships and dolphins in the tiny mechanized sea, one can suggest that this was pleasing to those gathered because it depicted a scene, a unique view of a Place in the world, (the sea) that many knew well, and others may have long to see.

This same instinct for recreating the world around us so that we can view its wonders or examine it at our leisure led to the enthusiasm around the inventions of perspective illusion based Italianate scenery, panorama and other publicly shared delightful optical reproductions of Place. The spectacles of Italianate scenery captured audiences for centuries. Both natural and social worlds were depicted. "The setting of the Prologue: The scene presents the spectator a vast mountain whose uneven peaks rise one above another, the summit soaring into the clouds. The base of this mountain is cleft open at one point by a deep cave through which the ocean can be seen distantly. The sides of the stage are thick-set with trees..."⁸ "The stage represented a very beautiful city, with streets, palaces, churches, and towers. The streets looked as if they were real, and everything was done in relief, and made even more striking through the art of painting and well-conceived perspective."⁹

The delight in the spectacle of place is best characterized in the ten-second scene shift, designed by Bibiena in 1774^{10 11} in which transformations of Place, was a source of entertainment in itself. This tradition of depicting place carried on both into the Realist sets and spectacular settings of melodramas. Spectacular stagings that come to mind are Willam Brady's 1901 production of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*¹² with moss covered trees and horses, and Reihardt's and Tree's depictions of *Midsummer Night's Dream*, each with real trees, flowers, grass, and one with bunnies.^{13 14} The same fascination for depicting place can be seen in the panoramic

⁵ (In 1611, Serlio, in his book, *Architettura*, defined what types of staging should accompany what types of theatrical production: Comic scenes: should have a bawdy house, a great Inn, and a church. Tragedies: always happen in the houses of great Lords, Dukes, Princes, and Kings. Satirical scenes: represent Satires, and thus should be "rude and rusticall." Trees, roots, herbs, flowers.) Nagler, A.M. *A Source Book in Theatrical History*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc, 1952, 74-78.

⁶ Brockett, Oscar G, and Franklin Hildy. *History of the Theatre, 9th ed.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1991, 30-31.

⁷ From lecture notes from Theatre 490 with Dr. Hildy at the University of Maryland.

⁸ Nagler, A.M. *A Source Book in Theatrical History*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc, 1952, 167.

⁹ Nagler, A.M. *A Source Book in Theatrical History*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc, 1952, 71.

¹⁰ Brockett, Oscar G, and Franklin Hildy. *History of the Theatre, 6th ed.*, 287.

¹¹ "The setting of Act One: By a marvelous device, the craggy outlines of the massive mountain range vanish in a twinkling, and in their place appears the capital city of Cepheus' realm, or rather, the public square of this city." Nagler, A.M. *A Source Book in Theatrical History*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc, 1952, 169.

¹² (*Uncle Tom's Cabin* production in 1901 also used horses and dogs.) Brockett, Oscar G, and Franklin Hildy. *History of the Theatre, 6th ed.* 344.

¹³ In Reinhardt's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1905, there were "Veritable trees, not painted, but plastic ones, were placed on the stage, and the space below was covered, not with a painted ground-

viewings of, and shifting atmospheric elements of the Diorama¹⁵ and other public devices.¹⁶ “The public were enchanted by the changes of lighting, the passage of a cloud across the canvas, the sun going down slowly, and so on.”¹⁷ ¹⁸ Though they were not theatre per se, these viewings were public spectacles performing Place and revealing locations in both familiar and extraordinary/exotic forms.

In the modern age, this same optical interest in representing Place, the world around us, could be seen in the filmic work of Piscator and Svoboda. In his production of *The Good Soldier Schwejk* in 1928, Piscator used a treadmill on which Schwejk marched in front of an unfolding map,¹⁹ and in *Storm Over Gotland*, he showed film footage of a raging sea, etc.²⁰ Place was experimented with, especially in the multiple places depicted simultaneously by Svoboda in his work with *Polyekran* and *Diapolyekran-Creation of the World*. *Their Day* was a Polyekran production that used the screens as windows into “part of your environment.”²¹ Today, Broadway is still full of lavish reproductions of Place following in the illusionistic and even realistic modes, from the lake under the Paris Opera house in *Phantom of the Opera*, to Austin’s kitchen in *True West*.

Current digital theatre practitioners pick up from Piscator & Svoboda’s use of film to create Place (which often commented on character/plot situations) and have added digital animation as well as video to the (tool belt) of building Place. Artists such as Mark Reiney at the

cloth, but with what seemed to be palpable grass, in which the feet sunk among the flowers; while here and there were seen bushes and little beeches growing between the trees; and in the midst of all a little lake mirrored between two hills.” W. R. Fuerst and S. J. Hume, *Twentieth-Century Stage Decoration* (New York, 1929 and 1967) Vol. I, pp. 16-17, quoted in Braun, Edward. *The Director and the Stage*. London: Methuen Drama, 1982, 99.

¹⁴ Herbert Beerbohm Tree used live rabbits in his production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Brockett, Oscar G, and Franklin Hildy. *History of the Theatre*, 6th ed., 399.

¹⁵ The Diorama was created in 1822 by Louis Jacques Mande Daguerre and Charles Marie Bouton. It had a pivoting auditorium from where the audience would view a series of three scenes. Mannoni, Laurent. *The Great Art of Light and Shadow: Archaeology of the Cinema*. Exeter, Devon, UK: University of Exeter Press, 2000, 185-187.

¹⁶ The Eidophusikon, created by Philip de Louthembourg had scenes where “...the clouds positively floated upon the atmosphere, and moved faster or slower, ascended or descended. Waves carved in soft wood and highly varnished undulated and threw up their foam, but as the storm began to rage, grew more and more violent, till at last their commotion appeared truly awful” A contemporary account quoted in Helmut and Alison Gernsheim, *L.J.M. Daguerre* (New York: Dover, 1968), 43, quoted in Neale, Steve. *Cinema and Technology: Image, Sound, Colour*. London: BFI, 1985, 25.

¹⁷ Mannoni, Laurent. *The Great Art of Light and Shadow: Archaeology of the Cinema*. Exeter, Devon, UK: University of Exeter Press, 2000, 188.

¹⁸ Abbe Moigno, the ‘Apostle of Projection’ created *Le Cosmos* in 1852 which utilized a series of projections an lectures to entertain and educate the audience. Mannoni, Laurent. *The Great Art of Light and Shadow: Archaeology of the Cinema*. Exeter, Devon, UK: University of Exeter Press, 2000, 268-271.

¹⁹ Piscator, Erwin. *The Political Theatre*. Translated by Hugh Rorrison New York: Avon Books, 1978, 250.

²⁰ Piscator, Erwin. *The Political Theatre*. Translated by Hugh Rorrison New York: Avon Books, 1978, 136.

²¹ Burian, Jarka. *The Scenography of Josef Svoboda*. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1971, 93. Svoboda also experimented with live television feed and projecting street scenes into the theatre in *Vivisection*.

University of Kansas & Dr. David Saltz at the University of Georgia (and their colleagues) paint the stage with the virtual settings of Places only achievable through animation. From Matrix-like fields of data, intricacies of a ever-revolving Escher-like castle, music-filled forests filled with light-shifting trees, or modulating soundscapes of color as in Reiney's spectacular production of the *Magic Flute* to the sifting sands on Prospero's enchanted isle of Georgia's *Tempest 2000*, the Place creating urge remains strong today. Illusionary setting extends into cyberspace in the form of shared virtual (3D animated navigable) worlds which have been compared to the human urge to create place similar to the story of *Harold and the Purple Crayon*.

Place in Transformation

What these last animated depictions or rather creations of Place show along with the ancient and Renaissance examples, is a human fascination, not just for depicting exotic places...but the pleasure of watching them shift, dissolve and transform. This ability to transform, or even more so, to dwell on the edge of real and imagined is what makes Telematic and other technological stagings of Place so interesting. Telematics and networked art fuses many locations into one patchwork of Place.

There has long been in existence an inter-play between real Place and Imagined world in theatre. If one travels to Epidaurus, or to the Theatre of Dionysus in Athens, you can observe that the actual city and/or landscape was present in the view of the ancient Greek spectators (who were at once watching the festivals and aware of their surroundings).²² Likewise in Roman, French, and other instances of created or manufactured water fetes and battles, they flooded preexisting structures or utilized bodies of water,²³ while the storyline and its trappings were fictional, the body of water which dominated the Place was real. Place was thus caught between real and imagined (virtual and real). "Perhaps the most spectacular of all the entertainments were the *naumachiae*, or sea battles. The first was given in 46 B.C.E. by Julius Caesar on a lake dug for the occasion; it featured a battle involving 2,000 and 6,000 oarsmen. Later the amphitheatres were sometimes flooded for such events. By far the most ambitious of all the *naumachiae* was given in 52 C.E. on the Fucine Lake east of Rome to celebrate the completion of a water conduit. On that occasion, 19,000 participants fought and many perished."^{24 25}

²² Personal observation from my trip to those ancient theatres in Greece.

²³ Vitruvius's description of theatrical settings: "Tragic scenes are delineated with columns, pediments, statues, and other objects suited to kings; comic scenes exhibit private dwellings with balconies and views representing rows of windows after the manner of ordinary dwellings; satiric scenes are decorated with trees, caverns, mountains, and other rustic objects delineated in landscape style." It also embodied another Renaissance interest derived from Vitruvius: the "ideal city." Vitruvius's overall purpose was to provide a guide for laying out towns. Renaissance artists, fascinated by the concept of the ideal city sought in their stage settings to embody various aspects of it by depicting in the tragic scene the royal and ceremonial sections, and in the comic scene those occupied by ordinary citizens. Brockett and Hildy, *History of the Theatre*, 166.

²⁴ Brockett, Oscar G, and Franklin Hildy. *History of the Theatre, 9th ed.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1991, 53.

²⁵ "The popularity of sea scenes motivated the invention of several devices for simulating waves. In one, a large sheet of painted cloth was moved up and down rhythmically by means of cords attached to its underside; in another, a series of two-dimensional pieces shaped like waves as seen from the front were moved in such a way that as one line of waves rose, another lowered to simulate the movement of the sea; in a third, a series of long, spiral cylinders was rotated one behind the other to create the sense of waves swelling and falling. Sometimes a sufficient number of unites were utilized so that changes from calm to storm, from darkness to light, and various other conditions at sea could be simulated. Ships, whales and dolphins moved through the waves. To create the proper

These and other court events (especially featuring royalty at court) mixed the real and the imagined Places in a sort of liminal dance. Similar mixings occurred later, notably in Evreinov's production of *The Taking of the Winter Palace* in 1919, held on the second anniversary of the Russian Revolution, which utilized the site of the original event, and had a cast of more than eight thousand soldiers, sailors, workers, and actors,²⁶ as the people, often, as themselves.

The quest for theatrical illusion and novelty often carried with it elements²⁷ suggesting real Place. In the instance of ultra-realism demonstrated by Belasco²⁸ taking the dinner out of the dinner and putting it on the stage (not just pots and pans), or stripping the actual cheap hotel room of its furnishings down to the wallpaper – it becomes more than the depiction of Place; a recreation, and transportation of the elements of the Place and perhaps Place itself. Belasco described his method, saying, “When I produced *The Easiest Way* I found myself in a dilemma. I planned one of its scenes to be an exact counterpart of a little hall bedroom in a cheap theatrical boardinghouse in New York. We tried to build the scene in my shops, but, somehow, we could not make it look shabby enough. So I went to the meanest theatrical lodging-house I could find in the Tenderloin district and bought the entire interior of one of its most dilapidated rooms...”²⁹

In the designs for Gropius's Total Theatre, it is the configuration of the actual Place of the theater building which shifts and transforms around the audience, forming three different seating arrangements and various opportunities for projecting multiple Places and shaping space. “...using a system of spotlights and film projectors, transforming walls and ceiling into moving picture scenes, the whole house would be animated by three-dimensional means... Thus the playhouse itself, made to dissolve into the shifting, illusionary space of the imagination, would become the scene of action itself...if it is true that the mind can transform the body, it is equally true that structure can transform the mind.”³⁰ (This was a clear precursor to telematics.)

In more recent performances, like those by Johannes Birringer's group Alienation, real Places are used for the site of performance and reinterpreted through the artist's physical and emotional/ideological (in response to performance scenarios, reclaiming abandoned urban social spaces³¹).³² Johannes Birringer notes on working on site-specific collaborations connected to

illusion, miniatures were usually mounted on poles and operated from beneath the stage.” Brockett, Oscar G, and Franklin Hildy. *History of the Theatre*, 9th ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1991, 175.

²⁶ Brockett, Oscar G., and Robert Findlay. *Century of Innovation: A History of European and American Theatre and Drama Since 1870*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973, 315.

²⁷ including the aforementioned bunnies and grass

²⁸ “‘Everything must be real’ was his (Belasco's) aesthetic dictum. Belasco's productions pushed nineteenth-century stage realism to new extremes with solid, three-dimensional scenic units, actual objects, elaborate, historically accurate costuming, and ‘natural’ lighting effects. Like Daly, Belasco controlled every aspect of production...” Londré, Felicia Hardison, and Daniel J. Watermeier. *The History of North American Theater: The United States, Canada, and Mexico: From Pre-Columbian Times to the Present*. New York: Continuum, 2000, 183.

²⁹ David Belasco, “Creating Atmosphere,” in Cole, Toby, and Helen Kirch Chinoy, eds. *Directors on Directing*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1976, 133.

³⁰ Gropius, Walter, and Arthur S. Wensinger, eds. *The Theater of the Bauhaus*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1961, 12-14.

³¹ The group began working on what they envisioned would be “an urban ‘archaeology’ of closed spaces, focusing on not only the particular memories/histories connected with specific sites but also their present function in the urban topography of frustrated expectations.” Johannes Birringer, *Media & Performance: Along the Border*. (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 327.

Place, “it is a dance of ‘being there’ even if it occurs in transitional states, countries, territories, and always appears on the border of the technological media that serve as our extensions.”³³ “...reconstruction of community, as site-specific intervention into social and technological”³⁴ community.

In George Coates’s *Blind Messengers*, giant three-dimensional animated projections transformed an actual building into a mixed-fictionalized Place both itself (the building in the present) and the digitally altered Place it is imagined to be in the year 2025.³⁵ Onstage, in the work of the Troika Ranch and others, midi-devices triggered by bodies in space or sensor-wired sets have altered Place into a sensorial space-alive with sound/lights/and video creating capriciously shifting environments torn between one Place and another. In the University of Georgia’s *Tempest 2000* (and in *Kaspar*),³⁶ performers recreated Place through gesture. “As the actor gestured, the audience would see that gesture interpreted as thunder, wind, and lightning. In production, the animation was keyed to the arm movements of Ariel’s motion-capture suit: as she raised her right arm, the waves rose toward the right and so forth. The characters on the ship lurched back and forth on the main stage as if the stage deck were rocking when the animation did.”³⁷ Most significant is the ability of technology to re-structure or alter our concept of Place itself, through the bridging of distant places and the interaction of people in multiple performance sites throughout the globe.³⁸

Community

Before moving on to the fertile bed of discussion that is the Telmatic garden and multi-site collaborative communities, let’s lay the foundations and acknowledge the existence of both community-based theatre and evidence of goals/existence of community in and through theatre

³² “Transcultural collaboration always involves choreographic methods, and thus we collect movements, notations, videos, sounds, sketches, drawings, costumes, recipes, and reflections.” Birringer, Johannes. *Performance on the Edge: Transformations of Culture*. London: Continuum, 2000, xvi.

³³ Birringer, 347.

³⁴ Birringer, Johannes. *Performance on the Edge: Transformations of Culture*. London: Continuum, 2000, xvii.

³⁵ Another loosely scripted production by George Coates Performance work was *Blind Messengers*. This production was created for and performed at the Sesquicentennial celebrations for the state of California at the capital in Sacramento, and held in front the sculpture at the (then) new Golden State Museum. It featured live singers and an 80-member choir (“from the future”), as well as newly composed music by international technomusician Forest Fang. Through digital projection the art on the mural came to life, showing first early murals of cave people to later murals of Diego Rivera, and finally the mural aged into the future where it needs to have its words repaired.

³⁶ “We selected specific sensors that could detect when each set piece was handled in precisely the way Handke’s stage directions specify. For example, we used an accelerometer to sense the movements of the rocking chair, and pressure-sensitive resistors to detect when Kaspar pressed on the cushions of the sofa. These sensors fed directly into a computer that played the appropriate audio sequences when, and only when, Kaspar was interacting “appropriately”. For example, the instant Kaspar rocked the rocking chair, we heard the corresponding text through the speakers; the instant he stopped, the words stopped. In this way, the interactive technology transformed the set into a large Skinner box that conditioned Kaspar by automatically reinforcing all and only correct behavior.” Kaspar. Available from the World Wide Web in the Digital Performance Archive: http://dpa.ntu.ac.uk/dpa_site. Kaspar.

³⁷ Teague, Frances. “The Digital Tempest 2000: Staging Magic.” *Shakespeare Bulletin*. 19.2 (2001).

³⁸ This will be discussed in further detail.

as the general area of examination. Beginning with the Greeks³⁹ we can see theatre as a forum for civic pride and the bonding of community in the form of the collected members of the polis. In the Medieval Cycle Plays there is also a sense of community formed through the trades gathering to create their part of the pageant.⁴⁰ Likewise, in the French Parterre, there was a sense of intense ownership of the stage/theatre by the public. The audiences' sense of entitlement of the theatre can be seen in the conflict between those on stage (be they actors or elite nobles), and the pit.⁴¹ The audience communicated in various ways with the performers on stage. "...these practices were disquieting to authors and performers forced to collaborate with interventionist spectators."⁴² And throughout the development of theatre we can see theory pointing to the importance of theatre in forming community often in the form of imparting morals or building a sense of nationalism. One of the most booming examples of the voice of theater for creating community, is Wagner's statement for the Volk. "...*The Folk*, will no longer be a severed and peculiar class; for in this Art-work we shall all be *one*..."^{43 44}

One of the most booming examples of the voice of theater for creating community, is Wagner's statement for the Volk. "...*The Folk*, will no longer be a severed and peculiar class; for in this Art-work we shall all be *one*..."^{45 46} through a universal "message...shared with the community...a common purpose."⁴⁷ In addition, Schiller and others have looked to theatre to shape community. "If one feature characterized all dramas; if the poets were allied in aim—that is, if they selected well and from national topics—there would be a national stage, and we should become a nation. It was this that knit the Greeks so strongly together, and this gave to them the all-absorbing interest in the republic and the advancement of humanity."⁴⁸ (Reinhardt said, "...and the audience itself, transformed into *the people*, drawn into, become a part of, the action

³⁹ The theatre played a part in the civic and religious festivals in ancient Greece at the City of Dionysia celebration. Brockett, Oscar G, and Franklin Hildy. *History of the Theatre, 9th ed.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1991, 19.

⁴⁰ Peter A. Bucknell, *Entertainment and Ritual: 600 to 1600*, London, Stainer and Bell, 1979, 91-95.

⁴¹ "The creation of this fecal deposit signified the audience's unwillingness to follow the normal rules of exchange governing the spectator-spectacle relationship. This transgressive act might be interpreted as a protest against any of a number of contemporary power dynamics being replicated in the parterre. Significantly, the author of the Memoires secrets continued his recounting of the incident by noting, "The Duchess of Bourbon stayed, but did not want to be the judge between the Public and the actors, as the latter group desired, or rather she told the players that they would have to submit to the desires of the Public." Ravel, Jeffrey S. *The Contested Parterre: Public Theater and French Political Culture, 1680-1791*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999, 44-45.

⁴² Ravel, Jeffrey S. *The Contested Parterre: Public Theater and French Political Culture, 1680-1791*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999, 56.

⁴³ Richard Wagner, "The Art-Work of the Future," in Dukore, 780.

⁴⁴ "...the sum total of all those who feel a common need..." Richard Wager, *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*, 10 vols. (Leipzig, 1871-1872), 48, in Carlson, 254-255.

⁴⁵ Richard Wagner, "The Art-Work of the Future," in Dukore, 780.

⁴⁶ "...the sum total of all those who feel a common need..." Richard Wager, *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*, 10 vols. (Leipzig, 1871-1872), 48, in Carlson, 254-255.

⁴⁷ Richard Wagner, "The Art-Work of the Future," In Dukore, Bernard F. *Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greeks to Grotowski*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc, 1974, 794.

⁴⁸ Friedrich Schiller, "On the Use of the Chorus in Tragedy." In Dukore, Bernard F. *Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greeks to Grotowski*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc, 1974, 445.

of the play.”⁴⁹) Modern theorists Brecht,⁵⁰ Grotowski,⁵¹ Boal,⁵² Piscator, and Schechner⁵³ had equally revolutionary tones in their times. Each spoke for communities which needed to be educated, awakened to themselves, and empowered. Piscator, like many others felt that “theatre addresses the community rather than the individual, and it appears to do so more directly because there is no printed page or painted canvas to interpose between the artist and his audience.”⁵⁴ Through didactic techniques or through direct connection, new forms of community were sought.

Today, theatre (and performance) is on the edge of a whole new type of community one meeting not in one Place, but several. “They also have had profound effects on societal processes. One of the most widely discussed effects, and a consistent theme of this volume, is that the information age is bringing about the end of geographical distance as a significant barrier of human interaction.”⁵⁵ The internet offers a host of virtual meeting Places and interactive vehicles for the formation of community. In addition to publishing or broadcasting to expand the onsite audience, the internet has been used to expand community through a sense of hands-on collaboration. The Plaintext Players,⁵⁶ among others, have created scripts by members of the virtual community, while George Coates’ *Crazy Wisdom Show*⁵⁷ took text straight from the extended internet audience to the actors’ lips (via teleprompter). In the case of *M@ggy’s Love Bites*, the sense of community grew out of the ability to send sound and video files to be incorporated in the performance. M@ggie’s “communication between the Internet participant and the dancers appeared to be two-way. Participants communicated by submitting a multimedia file and then saw the dancers respond immediately via the screen. This allowed the participants

⁴⁹ Max Reinhardt, in Braun, Edward. *The Director and the Stage*. London: Methuen Drama, 1982, 103.

⁵⁰ “A theatre which makes no contact with the public is a nonsense.” Willett, John, ed. *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1957, 7.

⁵¹ Grotowski saw the “total act” connection between the actor and the spectator as almost therapeutic: “Why do we sacrifice so much energy on art? Not in order to teach others but to learn with them what our existence, our organism, our personal and unrepeatable experience have to give us; to learn to break down the barriers which surround us and to free ourselves from the breaks which hold us back, from the lies about ourselves which we manufacture daily for ourselves and for others...” Grotowski, Jerzy. *Towards a Poor Theatre*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968, 256.

⁵² “In order to understand this poetics of the oppressed one must keep in mind its main objective: to change the people—‘spectators,’ passive beings in the theatrical phenomenon—into subjects, into actors, transformers of the dramatic action.” Boal, Augusto. *Theatre of the Oppressed*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1985, 122. *People’s theatre*: Boal, 154.

⁵³ “The environmental use of space is fundamentally collaborative; the action flows in many directions sustained only by the cooperation of performers and spectators. Environmental theater design is a reflection of the communal nature of this kind of theater. The design encourages participation; it is also a reflection of the wish for participation.” Schechner, Richard. *Environmental Theater*. New York: Applause, 1972, 39.

⁵⁴ Innes, (on Piscator), 11.

⁵⁵ Donald G. Janelle, and David C. Hodge, National Center for Geographic Information & Analysis. *Information, Place, and Cyberspace: Issues in Accessibility (Advances in Spatial Science)*, (New York: Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg, 2000), 1.

⁵⁶ Plaintext Players. Available from the World Wide Web in the Digital Performance Archive: http://dpa.ntu.ac.uk/dpa_site.

⁵⁷ Coates, George. Available from the World Wide Web in the Digital Performance Archive: http://dpa.ntu.ac.uk/dpa_site. *The George Coates Performance Works*.

to send other files in reply to the dancers. It was this direct, synchronous, two-way communication in MLB that provided such a strong sense of participation.”⁵⁸

Telematics and Networked Performance

It is this in-between space made up of several Places which most interests me, and holds what I believe to be a unique opportunity for change and the coming into their own of emerging Citizen Artists. At this meeting point, Place is formed by Community. Roy Ascott has defined telematics as “computer-mediated communications networking between geographically dispersed individuals and institutions . . . and between human mind and artificial systems of intelligence and perception... (which) challenges the traditional relationship between active viewing subjects and passive art objects by creating interactive, behavioral contexts for remote aesthetic encounters.”⁵⁹ Bruce Breland notes that “The concept of interactive systems has erased the old boundaries of regionalism or nationalistic art. Telematics has created the possibility of a new setting for interactive participation between individuals and groups. Telematics provides a means for instantaneous and immediate dissemination of information granting the individual a choice between simple retrieval or intricate collaborative art events.”⁶⁰

Multi-site performance is art created through similar technologies with similar aims, but is often (in my opinion) based on some form of pre-arranged performance of script/dance/or other performed aspects and it exists in the hyper, liminal, or interstitial space between all performers involved. Lisa Naugle defines Networked performance as “a synchronous approach to communication; that is, a shared activity between two or more people who are collaborating at the same time. Collaborations may be located at the same place or in different places... This can be two way or multipoint method of communication... that includes the collective intelligence of people working collaboratively, alongside the peculiar idiosyncrasies of telecommunications tools for the purpose of a networked performance event.”⁶¹ This type of performance generates an electric current of *Gesellschaft* which links diverse people disparate Places in one collaborative Community or collectively created artistic experience.

A brief and partial overview of this creative movement of both Telematic art and multi-site or distance performances must include: the Satellite work, *The World in 24 Hours*,⁶²

⁵⁸ Leonardo 35,1 –Sita Popat and Jacqueline Smith-Autard, 34.

⁵⁹ (page 2 3 2 below). Shanken, Edward A. “From Cybernetics to Telematics.” In Roy Ascott. *Telematic Embrace: Visionary Theories of Art, Technology, and Consciousness*. Berkeley: University California Press, 2003, 1. “

⁶⁰ Bruce Breland, Director of the group, wrote that: Eduardo Kac, "Aspects of the Aesthetics of Telecommunications." In *Siggraph Visual Proceedings*. Edited by John Grimes and Gray Lorig. (New York: ACM, 1992), 34.

⁶¹ .” PAJ 71 24.2 Distributed Chorography – Lisa Marie Naugle, 56

⁶² One of their first activities was participation in "The World in 24 hours" (1982), a global network organized by Robert Adrian for Ars Eletronica, in Austria, which linked sixteen cities on three continents for a day and a night. Three years later, they stretched the notion of worldwide interaction with "The Ultimate Contact", a slow-scan TV piece created over FM radio in collaboration with the space shuttle Challenger, in orbit around the Earth. The Dax group also participated in larger networks realized in acknowledged art institutions, such as the "Ubiqua" (1986) telecommunications lab at the 42nd Biennale de Venezia. In it, they participated with text (IP Sharp), slow-scan TV, and fax. More recently, they were the first to collaborate with African artists in a telecommunications event. On July 1990, they created "Dax Dakar d'Accord", a slow-scan TV exchange with artists in Pittsburgh and Dakar, Senegal, as part of a Senegalese five-year commemoration of the African Diaspora, the

Electronic Café International,⁶³ Allan Kaprow's *Hello*,⁶⁴ *Hole in Space*, Kac's *Teleporting an Unknown State* which allowed people across the globe to collectively tend to a plant,⁶⁵ *Telematic Dreaming* by Paul Sermon which placed distant bodies together on a shared telematic bed,⁶⁶ the Gertrude Stein Repertory Theatre's *UBU Project*, *World Wide Simultaneous Dance*, and ADaPT. *Hole-In-Space* by Kit Galloway was a video portal between Los Angeles and New York street locations. It "collapsed geographical distance, bringing into being a window between two physical places, through which passers-by at each site could encounter each other visually in real time."⁶⁷ Other pieces which expanded the video-teleconferencing experience in performance were the Gertrude Stein Repertory Theatre's production of *UBU Project*⁶⁸ and Lisa Naugle's *World Wide Simultaneous Dance*, a project which connected sixty dancers from twelve nations. "The project consisted of two components: live dance performances happening at the same time in 12 countries around the world and a live internet video conference that linked participants and allowed audiences to interact vital the event...but who also saw in *World Wide Simultaneous Dance* an opportunity to construct--for a brief period of time--a collective 'based upon the

"Goree-Almadies Memorial". Eduardo Kac, "Aspects of the Aesthetics of Telecommunications." In *Siggraph Visual Proceedings*. Edited by John Grimes and Gray Lorig. (New York: ACM, 1992), 35.

⁶³ "By 1995, Electronic Café International, based in Los Angeles, had approximately thirty network affiliates in Brazil, Denmark, Israel, New York, Toronto, and other locations around the world." Malloy, Judy, ed. *Women, Art, and Technology*. London: The MIT Press, 1995, 61.

⁶⁴ "One of the earliest experiments with telepresence was conducted in Allan Kaprow's *Hello* (1969), a 'multi-site happening' which 'used the facilities of WGBH-TV in Boston to link four locations in the Boston area...'" Giannachi, Gabriella. *Virtual Theatres: An Introduction*. London: Routledge, 2004, 103.

⁶⁵ Kac "plants a seed in a dark-room and the only light source (projector) overhead displaying the light collected from volunteer participants around the world who digitally capture local light and convey it, via the Internet, to the exhibition space. Thus, it is the combined effort of the participants around the world and the global communication technologies that allows the seed to germinate and ultimately thrive." *Leonardo* 34:2, Review of Edward Kac's *Teleporting an Unknown State*.

⁶⁶ "Telematic Dreaming surely has the most powerful impact because of the dissimulating effect of the bed, a sign shared by everyone. . . . [D]espite the fact that the body is the only means of communication therein, the body of the other party is ghostlike, without substance. This contradictory situation not only confounds the audience, but also, after first releasing them from the logic and restrictions of daily life and dismantling the various elements of signatory identity and the biological environment of the body, it enables experimentation with and enjoyment of the role the body plays in communication. The virtuality of the space enables it to maintain both theatricality and the context of daily life at the same time....Telematic Dreaming allows not necessarily an escape from the body but the opportunity to observe oneself from a new perspective. It also allows the viewer to explore the relationship of touching and looking." Stephen Wilson, *Information Arts: Intersections of Art, Science, and Technology*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995), 520.

⁶⁷ Leeson 1996, 49. Malloy, Judy, ed. *Women, Art, and Technology*. London: The MIT Press, 1995, 58.

⁶⁸ The *UBU Project* (an adaptation of Alfred Jerry's play *King UBU*) was a collaboration between the NY based group, and performers in Russia and Japan. <http://www.villagevoice.com/issues/9849/chalmers.php>. It was only partially staged as conceived, however the production was compelling in that connected actors of nationalities and in different physical locations (Places). As in the other productions it was "an illustration of the fundamental components underlying an evolving art form taking place between two live performers on opposite ends of the globe." DPA, <http://www.gertstein.org/screen/stage-pro.htm>. In addition, the project further brought together different places (transmission locations) in to one physical place—on the actor's body. By projecting real-time video transmissions of distant performers onto the costume and cloth props of co-present actors, Faver was thickly, visually layering the space, and creating a composite character and a multiplicity of spaces in one Place.

mutual acknowledgement of difference.”⁶⁹ Naugle, Birringer, and other faculty members at the Universities of Ohio, Utah, and other institutions formed the collaborative group ADaPT, focusing on continued choreographed collaboratives over the Internet.

My Work:

Which leads us to the Art on the Grid Group, a loose band of art-technologists from several universities and research institutions (including Alaska, Ottawa, Utah, Maryland, Perdue, Montana and others, and coordinated by Jimmy Miklavcic at the University of Utah) who come together weekly via the Access Grid to meet, show art-technology-communications related thoughts/works in process, and to create various forms of performative collaborations. Myself, I have been with the group (or attending meetings and involved in projects) for two years. And as a participant/member/and observer I can say that I sense it to be a real community. (When I produced my first work *Outside/In*, it was through the virtual community that I received continuous support both technically, with staging, and emotionally. I’ve often felt a community bond—a genuine gladness each time we meet, joke, and work together, which outmatches any of the ties of my physical Place-based collegiate community. And it is with great joy that I received my first solid items of exchange: discs and a holiday card.) This interpersonal contact is a demonstration of the real sense of connectedness and (strengthening) positive relationships which virtual communities can foster. Just as Ascott describes a ‘connection and...close community, almost intimacy...quite unlike...face-to-face meetings’ that people have reported experiencing online.”⁷⁰

My first Grid involvement in this (mobile) place ushered me into the community feet first. In *Networked Touch* we experimented with the perception of community/place intersecting through hands and feet which met in mixed video. In *Interplay: Hallucinations*, (and *Mind In A Box* coming this April) we played with conceptual ideas of loosely interwoven material (drums and haunting three-dimensional imagery from Alaska, my midi-controlled video loops mixing consumerist messages and political imagery, positioning of a 3-4ft Barbie doll, and live dance based on the moebius strip by Brian Buck, all of which was mixed and by Utah who coordinated the creative experience with Flash animation and a loosely structured narrative about perspective, surfaces and stereotypes aided visually by the presences and multiple perspectives of multiple cameras). In these works, Place is shifting and slippery.

In my own piece (coordinated at Maryland) I focused on a Place and the individual’s ability to reach outside her physical surroundings. The video-conferencing served as a parallel technology to the imaginings of a fictionalized Emily Dickenson. Her poetry opened windows into other Places, outdoors into nature. We were projecting images of disparate Places in the Outside world and bringing them into the black-box theatre. To do this we tested using the Personal Interface to the Grid, each site came up with its own solutions to the problem of broadcasting outdoors. The simple three-way performance between Utah, Ottawa, and Maryland outdoors and indoors, was in the form of a simple script structured around Dickenson’s poetry, and the characters were invoked as aspects of her personality or extended community and sense of freedom/knowledge found in nature. Visually the characters were unified in their various

⁶⁹ [3].” Laura Knott, "World Wide Simultaneous Dance: Dancing the Connection between 'Cyberplace' and the Global Landscape," *Leonardo*, 34.1 (2001): 11.

⁷⁰ Ascott, Roy. *Telematic Embrace: Visionary Theories of Art, Technology, and Consciousness*. Berkeley: University California Press, 2003, 6.

environments by wearing white dresses. The outdoor Places themselves were as disparate as their climates. In Maryland, we had green grass but no leaves on the trees; in Utah they had bushes full of foliage and flowers; in Ottawa there was no growth—just bleak winter branches. My intention was to highlight the Place-expanding nature of the Grid by actually showing people in natural/variable environments rather than in front of another white office wall (which could be down the hall), and to do it in a way that the technology supported an artistic idea (the soul or creativity as a portal to nature/freedom). Despite some minor technical glitches (like dropping sound occasionally), I think it achieved its goals. I look forward to creating further projects with the Grid Community.

Theory:

Again, why are concepts of Place and Community essential to the Citizen Artist today? Because our society is experiencing rapid change and theorists as well as artists are using these tools to solve current doubts and questions. “In recent decades, a vigorous inquiry into the role of spatial experience in constructing cultural meaning has been under way in many fields, resulting in renewed interest in topography, geography, and mapping, as well as new attention to the specificity of place... real world in a time-collapsed global structure.”⁷¹ The conceptual tools of Community and Place used in concert with the physical/data tools of technology are both needed to re-instill a sense of agency and belonging in the world, as artists utilize the tools of telecommunications technology for world-wide connection and combat inhuman forces of empty globalization. “Communication networks form an invisible geography that intersects the geography of physical place but is defined by political, economic, and cultural systems. The interconnections between communication networks and places enable a kind of conceptual weaving—the opportunity to map the world according to different sensibilities and to form reciprocal communications across geographic, political, perceptual, and temporal borders.”⁷²

“Community as a concept has a definite center without a well-defined periphery. The core of the concept of community is around people interacting in specific space and time; but these dimensions vary”⁷³ and this concept can be extended to fit into expanding senses of Place via virtual connections of Place. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau said, “A place is thus an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability. . . . A space exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Thus space is composed of intersections of mobile elements... In short, *space is a practiced place*.”^{74 75 76} But a cyberspace meeting Place can be composed of multiple visual Places may

⁷¹ Fuchs, Elinor, and Una Chaudhuri. *Land/Scape/Theater*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002, 6.

⁷² Malloy, Judy, ed. *Women, Art, and Technology*. London: The MIT Press, 1995, 64.

⁷³ Linda Stoneall, *County Life, City Life*. Quoted in Haedicke, Susan, and Tobin Nellhaus, editors. *Performing Democracy: International Perspectives on Urban Community-Based Performance*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2001, 9.

⁷⁴ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Translated by Steven F. Rendall, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 117.

⁷⁵ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Translated by Steven F. Rendall, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 117.

⁷⁶ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Translated by Steven F. Rendall, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 117.

have the essential sense of Place. In the book, *Land/Scape/Theater*, Alice Rayner says about the Internet, “One speaks of *worlds, rooms domains, fields, environments, architectures*: words that help to conceive computational reality in the familiar terms for definable spaces.”⁷⁷ Though data is transitory, the effect of a meeting of people in a cumulative Place is real.

Art on the Grid collaboration and other Telematic and multi-site works offer a sense of expanded Place and Community so very much needed today. Distant Places can be affected through Telematics giving participants a renewed sense of agency in the ever expanding world. Places and people are connected through performances, even experiencing a sense of existing in one place. “As Internet enthusiasts unceasingly observe, the on-line environment cress a new option for “being there” in the accomplishment of many tasks. If we view the on-line environment as a place...”⁷⁸ Networked performance and art creates a sense of Place and a potential for change; “cyberplace possesses two strengths “real” places do not possess: (1) its nature is to connect people...”⁷⁹ The performers in *World Wide Simultaneous Dance* expressed this feeling of hope and connection, as they had “an opportunity to construct--for a brief period of time--a collective “based upon the mutual acknowledgement of difference” [3].”⁸⁰ As was encouraged by theorist Bhabha, “It is in the emergence of the interstices—the overlap and displacement of domains of difference—that the intersubjective and collective experiences of *nationness*, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated.”⁸¹ As Ascott says, “When people interact, when minds interpenetrate, a proliferation of ideas are generated. When sensibilities from diverse cultures from all parts of the globe interweave, collaborate, conjoin, and become restructured, new cultural forms emerge, new potentials for meaning and experience are brought forth. This is the scope and ambition of networking.”⁸²

Conclusion:

In my own firsthand experiences with networked art and collaborative online performance, Place and Community are apparent and offer great potential for global and local good. “Interactive telecommunications...speaks a language of cooperation, creativity, and transformation. It is the technology not of monologue but of conversation. It feeds fecund open-endedness rather than an aesthetics of closure and completion...”⁸³

There are as many ways of defining citizen artists as there are artists. Each of us conceives of this term in their own way as we bring our creative expression (be it performative or experienced in plastic forms) into being and to the public. Each time an act of creation occurs,

⁷⁷ Alice Rayner, “E-Scapes: Performance in the Time of Cyberspace,” In Fuchs, Elinor, and Una Chaudhuri. *Land/Scape/Theater*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002, 351.

⁷⁸ Laura Knott, "World Wide Simultaneous Dance: Dancing the Connection between 'Cyberplace' and the Global Landscape," *Leonardo*, 34.1 (2001): 15.

⁷⁹ Laura Knott, "World Wide Simultaneous Dance: Dancing the Connection between 'Cyberplace' and the Global Landscape," *Leonardo*, 34.1 (2001): 15.

⁸⁰ Laura Knott, "World Wide Simultaneous Dance: Dancing the Connection between 'Cyberplace' and the Global Landscape," *Leonardo*, 34.1 (2001): 11.

⁸¹ Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994, 2.

⁸² Ascott, 223.

⁸³ Stephen Wilson, *Information Arts: Intersections of Art, Science, and Technology*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995), 482.

it is created by a citizen for other citizens, and the creation of community is often the desired outcome. This scope of this potential community grows as our sense of the world expands. The relationship between performer and audience has become more complex through the permeating boundaries and ebbing national distinctions dissolved by the flows of virtual connection, but the goals of depicting our Place in the world and joining with others in community remain. Globalism and virtual community use related mechanisms, but they travel with different agendas; to expanded sense of community and to process resources for corporate capitalism. In this era of global citizenry it is up to each one of us as artists, to consider how to use our creative voices and the type of world (“*theatrum mundi*,” or world stage⁸⁴) we intend to shape. To quote Oscar Wilde, “A map of the world without Utopia is not worth glancing at.”⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Fuchs, Elinor, and Una Chaudhuri. *Land/Scape/Theater*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002, 15.

⁸⁵ Oscar Wilde in Lippard, Lucy. *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society*. New York: The New Press, 1997, 290.

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