The Livingverse Project
An Experiential Representation of
Global Networked Power

A thesis paper submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Masters of Fine Arts
in
Digital Arts and New Media

by
Karl Baumann
5/20/10
Digital Arts and New Media Program (DANM)

ORAL DEFENSE AND GRADUATION STATUS FORM

By the last day of instruction of the third quarter of the second year, the completed thesis project and paper must have been presented and submitted to the Thesis Committee in an oral defense.

By the last day of the third quarter of the second year, documentation of the thesis project and paper must be delivered to Program Manager.

By the last day of the third quarter of the second year, the Thesis Committee must send this form signed by members of the Committee to the program manager that states whether the student may graduate.

The committee members' and chair's signatures on this form indicate the formal status of the student's graduation. The signed form must be filed with the Program Manager at fsrice@ucsc.edu, 459-1554 and added to the student's file.

Instructions: Please complete this form and submit it to the DANM program manager by the last day of spring quarter.

Student Name: __________________________________

☐ Completed oral defense
☐ May graduate
☐ May not graduate. If not, please attach terms of completion of degree, including deadlines, to this form.

Committee

Committee Chair: _______________________________ Department: ________________

Committee Member: ______________________________ Department: ________________

Committee Member: ______________________________ Department: ________________

Department approval

_______________________________________________________________
DANM Program Chair Signature Date
ABSTRACT

The Livingverse project is an immersive audio-video walking tour—or embodied documentary—that investigates the entangled relations between memory, media, and power through an interactive semi-fictional exploration of contemporary public history. The semi-fictional tour is an extension of a documentary, Lebenverse: Living Video Memory, which analyzes the Gulf Wars, Rodney King incident, and the Iranian “twitter revolution,” focusing on the powerful possibilities and complications of personal media for communicating individual experiences and constructing socio-political realities. The project utilizes mobile media and binaural audio recordings to create a research-practice that reinscribes embodied pedagogical experiences into analyses of our contemporary global networked society. The Livingverse embodied documentary then is an exercise in artistic, filmic, and academic production that seeks to create an immersive semi-fictional world to re-engage the body of the viewer and create an experiential bridge for reflexively integrating and re-imagining the complex relationships of global information networks, personal media, and state power. Drawing from Cultural Studies, Sociology, and Philosophy, this paper sets up a theoretical framework and analysis of (1) how state power functions within a global networked society, (2) the role of media in the construction of a socio-political reality, and (3) the experience of place within rapidly shifting perceptions of space and time. As I will establish in this paper, the codification of a symbolic universe tied to dominant forms of representation still limit the collective potential for meaningful alternative practices. The network structure is in itself both democratizing as well as dehumanizing, and it is the accumulated intentions of individual agents that defines the flows of information and the forms of representation within these constructed public spaces. So the site of artistic and academic intervention, politically and pedagogically, becomes the individual subject and their affective understanding of global power dynamics in relation to themselves as well as other individuals and populations abroad.
DEDICATION

Dedicated to my supportive family, friends, and faculty sponsors that have helped advise, steer, critique, tease, and enjoy my developing work, both at the Ohio State University and at the University of California Santa Cruz. To my parent’s, whose own academic rigor, as well as selfless saving, has set the standards for my siblings and I in our life pursuits. To my brother, and his artistic philosophies, aesthetic disagreements, and life-long friendship. To my sister, and her driving intensity, political insights, and life-long friendship. And to all those who’ve I’ve met in Argentina and across the US during my projects, who were willing to sit down and talk with me, even with a camera present. And especially to my Grandmother Patricia “Patsy” Baumann who continues to live a long and fulfilling life, full of wit and insight, and is always willing to indulge the historic and the artistic, in her selfless giving to all of us kids.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to thank: Sharon Daniel, Irene Gustafson, Noah Wardrip-Fruin, Nik Hanselmann, Nick Lally, Jen Menjivar, Lyes Belhocine, Elizabeth Travelslight, Christoph Girard, Kayt Anhberg, Soraya Murray, Lyle Troxell, Antoine Abou-Jaoude, Sameer Padania, Sam Gregory, Allen Feldman, Hamid Naficy, Marita Sturken, and Alex Vernon. These projects were made possible with funding and organizational support from the UC Berkeley Human Rights Center Fellowship, WITNESS, the Florence French Awards, and the UCSC’s Porter College Graduate Arts Research Committee.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Certification of Approval.........................................................................................3
Abstract..................................................................................................................4
Dedication..............................................................................................................5
Acknowledgement...............................................................................................6
Table of Contents.................................................................................................7
List of Figures.......................................................................................................8

Introduction..........................................................................................................9

The Livingverse Project and Cinematic Mobility..................................................12

Global Networked Society...................................................................................15

Immaterial Places and Personal Perceptions of Time..........................................18

Representational Power and Counter Power.......................................................23

Raw Moments and Witnessing Others’ Pain.........................................................27

The Embodied Documentary and Affective Intervention....................................33

Conclusion............................................................................................................45

Endnotes.................................................................................................................48

Figures..................................................................................................................52
LIST OF FIGURES

FIG. 1: *Livingverse*: Layering of Spaces, Los Angeles, CA.................................52

FIG. 2: The UCSC Digital Arts Research Center, 2009........................................53

FIG. 3: *Livingverse*: DARC walkway-subway, Oakland, CA...............................54

FIG. 4: *Livingverse*: Perceptual Jolt of Participants...........................................55

FIG. 5: *The Telephone Conversation*, 2001, Audio-Video Walking Tour..............56

FIG. 6: *Shadows From Another Place: San Francisco<->Baghdad*, 2004, Web-Based...57

FIG. 7: *Cherry Blossoms*, 2006, Locative Media Project....................................58

FIG. 8: *Livingverse*: Archival scene of Iraq War..............................................59
Introduction

As you enter the exhibition you walk to a large desk covered with architectural drafts and artist renditions of a future building, the building you’re standing in now. A docent at the desk asks if you’d like to take an audio-video walking tour with an iPad or iPod. “An iPad. I've never seen one of these in real life”, you say to yourself as you admire the full HD quality video display. The docent takes your driver’s license and you begin your tour. You follow the sounds of footsteps in the headphones as the screen shows a first person perspective of where you’re walking, through a hidden black hallway. As you walk into the hallway the screen suddenly changes to walking down a street in Los Angeles. (Figure 1) A male voice breaks through, “A warm blanket of urban noise builds around you. Letting you know you’re not alone.”

Figure 1: Initial Layering of Virtual/Historical Space, Los Angeles, CA
The *Livingverse* project is an immersive audio-video walking tour—or embodied documentary—that investigates the entangled relations between memory, media, and power through an interactive semi-fictional exploration of contemporary public history. The semi-fictive tour is an extension of a documentary, *Lebenverse: Living Video Memory*, which analyzes the Gulf Wars, Rodney King incident, and the Iranian “twitter revolution,” focusing on the powerful possibilities and complications of personal media for communicating individual experiences and constructing socio-political realities. By re-imagining the documentary into a tour, *Livingverse* provides an active and embodied narrative space for exploring the material conditions and political genealogies that underlie our contemporary digital world.

The project utilizes mobile media and binaural audio recordings to create a research-practice that reinscribes embodied pedagogical experiences into analyses of our contemporary global networked society. Rather than presenting global networks through abstracted graphical representations of nodal relationships, the *Livingverse* project creates an immersive narrative world that more directly engages with the perceptual and affective elements of the individual in relationship to these larger historical events and social transformations.

As this paper investigates in some detail, the process of globalization and the formation of networked societies have profoundly reconstituted the individual subject, both socio-culturally as well as in terms of experiences of space and time. The increasing fragmentation of the nation-state has dispersed the relation of the individual to state power, while the expansion of global participatory media
networks has opened new public spaces for communicating and constructing new subjectivities and communities. Unfortunately this emerging social reality is still fraught with historical inequalities and divisions, as well as experiential limitations between the symbolic universe of mediated images and the material conditions of the social world.

Nevertheless, the potential for emerging subjectivities based on a changing understanding of the embodied sense of place and community, at once immediate and global, provides the nascent structuring of alternative networks that move beyond the historically defined social divisions. One of the continuous boundaries of these alternative networks however, is the perpetuation of codified or dominant values embedded within the performance and construction of current public media-information networks. In order to illustrate both the limitations and possibilities of current uses of public networks, and dominant nodes, my project is grounded in the fringes of everyday social reality, in acts of violence committed by state agencies.

The *Livingverse* embodied documentary then is an exercise in artistic, filmic, and academic production that seeks to create an immersive semi-fictional world to re-engage the body of the viewer and create an experiential bridge for reflexively integrating and re-imagining the complex relationships of global information networks, personal media, and state power. The representation and critical analysis of contemporary acts of state violence is both an artistic and political project, that is influenced by my experience doing Human Rights research as much as my position within a MFA program in the United States.
Drawing from Cultural Studies, Sociology, and Philosophy, this paper sets up a theoretical framework and analysis of (1) how state power functions within a global networked society, (2) the role of media in the construction of a socio-political reality, and (3) the experience of place within rapidly shifting perceptions of space and time. In addition, the global organizational work of the WITNESS Human Rights group will be discussed in the creation of mass alternative media networks. As an individual practitioner, my work then functions as a single pedagogical experience for engaging participant’s symbolic and affective understandings of power and social agency. The Livingverse piece will be further contextualized within theories of Documentary film as well as Critical Art Theory and practice, in order to illustrate the interdisciplinary genealogies and applications of this project. Yet, this project is not merely intended to be a research tool but also an experiential intervention into understandings of these complex global events.

The Livingverse Project and Cinematic Mobility

It is only through immersion both spatially and culturally that places become aesthetic memories. Our shared corporeity with architecture makes it no longer an object but an equal participant in a process of perceptual unfolding, which intertwines perceiver and perceived.

-Aanjio Punnen Mathew
Beyond Technology...¹

Passing through the black hallway, the screen changes from a contemporary image of a Los Angeles street corner to archival footage of angered men crowding around cars at that intersection. The perspective is still first person, it’s still on the ground. As you hear the sounds of protests and police sirens, a female voice says, “It’s nearing sunset now and tension’s building from the trial’s verdict”.

The Livingverse tour begins at the corner of Normandie and Florence during the 1992 Los Angeles Riots. Archival footage mixed with contemporary video of the
street corner is used to layer this historical scene onto the architecture of the UCSC Digital Arts Research Center (Figure 2). Virtual and physical space is collapsed into one mobile viewing experience with the constant mixing of a first person perspective of walking through the specifics spaces of the building and the images of being at that place in Los Angeles, during the riots. The combination of binaural and stereo archival sounds builds a spatialized and visceral experience of the mediated event that asks participants to simultaneously imagine themselves within the event itself and to be viewing it from afar.

![Fig. 2: Digital Arts Research Center, UC Santa Cruz.](image)

As the participant continues through the tour, they are continually given the option of what chapter to choose next at multiple forking paths along the trip. Each participant will end up experiencing multiple events but none will experience each chapter without beginning a new, giving an unknown and open sense to other possible decisions and stories. This incompleteness of the single experience in comparison to the whole at once speaks to the spatio-temporal limitations of the body in the process of knowledge production and understanding, both in terms of history as well as a single artwork itself. The multi-narrative walking tour then functions quite literally in Eco’s terms of *The Poetics of the Open Work* that, “every reception of a work of art is both an *interpretation* and a *performance* of it”. ² Here the meaning of the piece is inherently tied to the participants’ decision to immerse
themselves in the physical process of performing the tour, of assuming the position of the first person perspective that moves through the multiple spaces.

The consistent reference back to the perceptual experience of moving through the space, both in terms of the image as well as the binaural sounds of footsteps, constructs a bridge between the liminal space that separates the body and the screen. As Margaret Morse claims, “the interface between this world and the other world of imagination is a culturally produced and historically shifting construct that has taken many shapes and forms.”

Here, the culturally produced world of the image is directly tied to the perceptually produced world of the body. The screen symbolically and experientially constructs a link between the individual participant/agent and the politically entangled images of history.

Many of the images of the Los Angeles Riots were produced by television crews but the other events along the tour, such as the 2009 Iranian post-election protests, the Iraq War, and the Oscar Grant shooting, consist of images produced by personal video cameras and cell phones. Thus the images of history are those constructed within the context of global personal media networks. The matched perspectives of the screen not only become a cinematic code but also a material potential of the participants themselves. The participant again is inculpated as both a viewer and a subject in the experience of history and state violence. Power becomes assigned to the act of producing witnesses and knowledge as much as it assigned to the physical assaults by agents of the state. The possibility of a collective counter public, a multitude⁴, becomes lucid in the affective performance of the tour, re-framing questions of agency and power within a global networked society.
Global Networked Society

Network has become a common form that tends to define our way of understanding the world and acting in it. Most important from our perspective, networks are the form of organization of the cooperative and communicative relationship dictated by the immaterial paradigm of production.

-Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri
*Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*

The contemporary socio-political world has become defined by the layering and interlinking of networks across the globe, pushed by military and capital enterprises but performed and constituted through individual subjects and social actors. As Manuel Castells points out “while networks are old forms of social organization, they are now empowered by new information/communication technologies” which have enabled a pervasive global infrastructure of decentralization. This decentralization has not only profoundly altered the relationship between individual social actors, but has also changed the very economic and political formations of nation-states and governmental power. Now the modern nation-state has become replaced with the network state, “a state made out of a complex web of power-sharing, and negotiated decision-making between international, multinational, national, regional, local, and non-governmental, political institutions.”

Even though the language (and militarized borders) of the nation still function as an organizing principle of identity, place, and power, their role as centralized and sovereign actors of the world has begun to dissolve.

This is not to say that the power of the state, or more importantly the power of economic capital, has disappeared as a driving force in people’s lives, but rather it has come to function in increasingly dispersed and less visibly coercive forms. Thus
the power of economic and political forces becomes increasingly indiscernible as they liquefy into all aspects of human life. Deleuze terms this transformation to invisible and dispersed forms of power as indicative of a shift from institutionalized and disciplined societies, in the Foucauldian sense, towards societies of control. No longer is power disciplinized through rigid relational boundaries of place: work vs. home, or activities: labor vs. play, but it becomes “free-floating” as these boundaries dissolve into continuous actions and forms of living.

The very fabric of life then becomes contaminated and reordered around flexible structures of political and economic control. Hardt and Negri define this new form of socio-economic structuring as being “transformed under the hegemony of immaterial labor, that is, labor that produces immaterial products, such as information, knowledges, ideas, images, relationship, and affects.” They go on to explain that the “hegemony” of immaterial labor is not defined quantitatively, as such forms of labor are still a small minority globally in comparison to industrial and agricultural workers, but rather the characteristics and logics of immaterial labor are transforming the other forms of labor as well as society as a whole.

Thus the very liberating fluidity of personal and affective relationships within a networked society are becoming the very tools for mobilizing or exploiting the process of life itself for the sake of capital and economic enterprise. The role of images and affects within the process of immaterial labor will become especially significant throughout this project, as personal media networks and exchanges become a central site for analysis and critique. Media production itself, from professional firms to quotidian prosumerism, has become indicative of the larger
shift of immaterial labor. As John Caldwell discussed in a recent presentation on the changing nature of Hollywood, the role of the temporary employment-based firms has increasingly fractured the centralized role of both the corporate studio and the artisan unions. One of the major elements of these firms is the quick but high intensity forms of production that are structured around collaborative spaces that promote and blur the separations of work and play. The affective and interpersonal elements of these ludic and collaborative work-play spaces become exploited in the form of temporary and immaterial labor in order to construct the affective and symbolic systems for larger corporate entities.

Moreover, the quotidian consumer productions of media have now become tied to capitalist enterprises as well, as dominant public networks, or supenodes such as YouTube, become extensions of larger corporate entities like Google. The development of personal video sharing and the affective interchanges of glimpses into each other’s everyday lives have now become forms of affective and immaterial labor as these social sites are restructured and embedded with commercial images and hyperlinks. Thus, capital has adapted to incorporate these emerging forms of interpersonal and quotidian production into a speculative project of profit. The issues of representation within these social spaces will be addressed shortly, but first it is necessary to define the correlated sites of immaterial consumption.
Immaterial Places and Personal Perceptions of Time

The space of flows is not a placeless space; it does have a territorial configuration related to the node of the communication networks...places do exist, including homes and workplaces, but they exist as points of convergence in communication networks created and recreated by people’s purposes.

- Castells, Fernández-Ardévol, Qiu, and Sey
Mobile Communication and Society

While the institutionally structured places of work have become fragmented and multiplied into the spaces of the everyday, so too have the institutions of consumption, particularly those of media and spectacle. Mobile technologies have become personal theaters in addition to instantaneous enablers of interpersonal communication. Again, the everyday experience of life has become physically immersed and ordered around flows of capital, not merely in the form of architectural advertisements and institutional spaces of consumption, but also the very intimate and ontological site of the body itself.

The mobile cinema then becomes an immersive and atomizing vehicle that changes the body’s relationship to space as well as constitutes a new emerging sense of place. Here, I’m working with the terms from the seminal text Space and Place by Yi-Fu Tuan, where he claims, “Place is a special kind of object. It is a concretion of value, though not a valued thing that can be handled or carried about easily; it is an object in which one can dwell.” Throughout the book, Tuan consistently emphasizes the valued intimacy and accumulation of memory and meaning that accompanies an individual’s sense of place in comparison to the sense of unknown exploration in the experience of space. Here is where mobile technologies then
redefine the individual and embodied perception of space, enabling an intimate
dwelling and affective place that anchors unknown expanses and new horizons.

Thus the use of mobile video devices in my own project is not only for
utilizing affordances of new cinematic sites but is also consciously tied to the
consumerist impulse of its affective meaning, especially something as novel and new
as the iPad. Upon entering the exhibition space, multiple participants exclaimed,
“Wow an iPad! I’ve never seen one of those in real life before”. Such a loaded cultural
artifact is literally pulled from the mythical and symbolic world of advertisements
and hype into the hands of the participants. Yet, this first experience of such a loaded
object is structured around analyses of state violence and global power, thus
intervening into the expectations and symbolic understandings of such technologies.
So as a new media practice, the very materials of the work are framed critically as a
reflection on how these technologies have redefined immaterial consumption,
projecting futures of mediated experience, and altering the individual sense of place.

So the overwhelming changes in geographical space, both as a conceptual
model of sovereign territory and as economic sites of mobility (for both global elite
and migratory labor) caused by globalization, has been coupled with an experiential
shift in the structuring of embodied space. Furthermore, mobile devices, and
networked technologies generally, alter the experience of time as being primarily
defined by access and information flow rather than movement and process. Again
this embodied sense of time is coupled with a larger systemic shift associated with
the rise of temporary and flexible labor. The ordering of life through short term and
shifting projects denies a conceptualization of long-term acting, which “leads to a
splicing of both political history and individual lives.”  

As Zygmunt Bauman explains, this splicing is ordered around the need for a “swift and thorough forgetting of outdated information and fast ageing habits [which] can be more important for the next success than the memorization of past moves and the building of strategies on a foundation laid by previous learning.”  

The construction of new subjectivities within the global networked society then is one characterized by a paradoxical state of a collapsed embodied time-space of presentness with a fragmented and disjointed sense of life-long time.

One element of the Livingverse project then is an attempt to reinstitute the process of reflective living-in-relation-to-history, as a mode of ordering the self in the social world and for the production of knowledge, tying historical events to individual participants and their memories. The tour continuously resurrects historical events in order to trigger the participants’ memories and to think through the ways history is experienced in the present, as creating underlining assumptions or repressed emotional uncertainties. These events are then doubled and bound to parallel moments in recent history, such as Rodney King to Oscar Grant, or the Iraq War to the First Persian Gulf War, in order to re-examine the historical debris that filters perceptions of contemporary experiences and events.

This reflexive element of living-through-history extends from the production of a linear documentary Lebenverse that preceded the embodied documentary. I drove across the country conducting interviews across the US with Human Rights activists, Media scholars, LA Riot witnesses, and Gulf War Veterans. So it was through the process of conversations and dialogues that the individual subject,
myself the researcher and subsequently the viewing audience, is given access to understanding these complex events. Moreover, during the documentary production, I explored my own subjective position growing up in a military community during the First Gulf War when I used to constantly sketch mythified and codified images of the US military in Iraq.

As William Holdeim claims in the *The Essay as Knowledge in Progress*, “life is not sheer dispersion; it is an ongoing through ever-unfinished unification of the discrete...and it is this process of unification that is the substance of the essay.”

This grounds the process of knowledge production in the progress of the individual life and in making sense of the complicated entanglement of the sensory world of perception, desires, and memories with the symbolic world of culture, language, and society. I structured my documentary around the individual process of the essay, both in terms of traveling to key geographical sites to talk to key interlocutors and also in terms of visiting personal sites of memory and childhood imagination. The subsequent embodied documentary is a product of an essay worked outside of and within the institution, as the first person perspective of the video tour retains the elements of both, juxtaposing the Los Angeles street onto the institutional hallway.

In order to expand this essayistic process to incorporate the participants, a structure was built into the walking-tour experience for the users to record their own memories and subjective relations to these events and their underlining socio-political issues.

“If you’d like to continue through the story world then go to Chapter 3. If you would like to hear more from Dan Byrne and other Gulf War Veterans, check the console. You can also record your own memories of these events, the first Gulf War and the Rodney King incident, into the archive through the console.”
The institutionalized forms of knowledge production and those outside of it are performed in these reflective self-testimonial stations set up on each floor. The stations allow the users to watch other self-testimonials as well as documentary clips dealing with each event experienced on their respective floors. The documentary testimonies help further humanize these events into individual subjects and provide a discursive model for speaking about these historical and political issues. Ideally, the participants’ testimonials become the final act in creating a sense of unification out of these disparate but systemic events, reflecting upon their own individual life’s relationship to these issues and concretizing them into meaningful utterances.

Those that did participate in the self-testimonials helped to form a polyvocal archive of critical political memory about the socio-ontological experience of globalized power. They were no longer merely witnessing but also speaking, moving from the illusionary sense of agency in the tour and regaining an actualized sense of agency in the real social world to which these events are a part of. Their responses could become possible sites for networks of alternative memories and critical dialogue once recontextualized in numerous possible places and circumstances, like the collage of voices and perspective within the tour itself. These events themselves help to build a historical genealogy and framework that act as concretized objects and vehicles for the project. As I stated earlier, these experiences are structured around enactments of state violence, as such events puncture normative affective understandings of the social world and complicate epistemological assumptions of indexical representation.
Representational Power and Counter Power

It was modernism that was marked by such “negations”, espoused in the anarchic hope of an “emancipatory effect” or in the utopian dream of a time of pure presence, a space beyond representation. This is not the case here: all these critics take for granted that we are never outside representation—or rather, never outside of its politics.

-Hal Foster, Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture

Building upon the previously defined ontology of experience in the networked society, the role of a ‘symbolic universe’ of images and power relations will here be elucidated in order to build a cultural and historical framework that orders individual and collective understandings of the social world and its possible affordances. The term symbolic universe, originally defined by Berger and Luckmann in The Social Construction of Reality, refers to the process in which ideology and institutions are upheld through common-sense narratives, proverbs, and codified signs. Moreover, they claim, “the symbolic universe also orders history. It locates all collective events in a cohesive unity that includes, past, present, and future.” Thus the term becomes a helpful way of thinking through the entangled relationships of media, history, and power while maintaining a conscious reference to the constructed mediation of sign systems that becomes lost in Baudrilliardian notions of the “simulacrum”. This is not to say these linguistic and non-linguistic sign systems do not create frames, lens, and obstructions to the real, but rather that there is still an ontological being itself that anchors our sense of existence.

The experience of state violence exemplifies this complicated relationship between the ontological make-up of an individual in the world and the symbolic universe to which meaning is ascribed to that world. As the often-cited Frede
Jameson adage goes, “History is what hurts, it is what refuses desire and sets inexorable limits to individual as well as collective praxis.”\textsuperscript{20} So while history is made through pain and the body, the representation of that pain and moreover its interpretation is extremely problematic; both from a semiotic standpoint and also from a phenomenological position, as often the audiences witnessing these acts have little direct reference to such experiences themselves.

Moreover the affective nature of images of state violence is extremely complicated as they are inherently tied to forms of legitimation. As Hardt and Negri put it, “within the nation, the state not only has an overwhelming material advantage over all other social forces in its capacity for violence, it also is the only social actor whose exercise of violence is legal and legitimate.”\textsuperscript{21} So while the initial images of violence may pre-linguistically provoke an aversive moral response, the ways in which these images are framed or re-narrated are often couched in accepted assumptions of maintaining order. The tension between this affective immediacy and interpretative narration will become a central site of contention as well as possibility in the circulation of media through dominant and alternative networks.

As previously discussed, the emergence of networked subjectivities is tied upon the reordering of space and time combined with new forms of production and consumption. These new subjectivities likewise are opened to contend and manage with the shifting role of the nation-state, as the later must present a unified and necessitated force for the former to identify with and participate in. The role of media in the construction of a symbolic universe that affirms the maintenance of the state can not be overstressed as Castells claims, “the fundamental battle being fought
in society is the battle over the minds of the people...few institutional systems can last long if they are predominantly based on sheer repression.”

Castells states this battle as a historical constant as the process of “power making by mind framing” is played out increasingly in the realm of public communication and media, and now is pervasively perpetuated through increasingly networked and mobile forms of dissemination and distribution.

The social battle of mind framing becomes especially important in the contentious terrain of declarations of war or “nation building”, as is the case with the pre-emptive strike on Iraq. What marks the difference in the representation of this war in comparison to earlier US military operations, such as the first Gulf War which will be discussed shortly, is in fact the presence of public networks of media production and distribution that can produce counter publics and alternative images to the centralized forces of global mass media networks such as FOX or CNN. The success of these centralized forms of image production cannot be taken lightly either. The use of embedded journalism acts to create an affective realness marked by a perceptual framing and identification with the US Coalition troops while the use of popular codes of editing and montage, such as FOX’s coverage of the invasion of Baghdad, represented a powerful excess of information and stimuli that was both legible and visually pleasurable.

Yet, the counter-power embodied within the development of a media prosumer generation connected to social networks was painfully reflected in the military structure itself as soldier produced media circulated throughout the web. Within a year of the invasion, incriminating images of enacted state violence and
human rights abuses undermined the “just war” of the US coalition forces as photos from Abu Graihib went public. These images marked a profound puncture in the state’s ability to control the flow of image production and mind framing during the course of the war, de-familiarizing the codified images of an honorable state military apparatus. In general though soldier produced media online is marked by a perpetuation of codified tropes of popular cinema editing, titling, musical choices, and even choreography. This re-inscription of codified techniques is illustrative of both the need for media literacy as well as the role of “free-floating” control within the symbolic universe of common semiotic systems. Nevertheless the soldier produced media presents an embodied and “amateur” perspective and polyvocal potential for the writing and experiencing of history, that circumvents both state and corporate mass media power.

The power of such images, as building blocks for counter-public imagination, is not completely free from state intervention as represented by recent policy changes in 2007. On May 7, 2007, the US Defense Department unveiled a new YouTube channel entitled MNFIRAQ (Multi-National Force-Iraq) which presented viewers a slew of clips of a “boots on the ground” perspective of the war which are only edited “for time, security reasons, and/or overly disturbing or offensive images.” Thus the state’s role of the symbolic construction of the war moves towards a specious grassroots attempt, which itself is meant to inform while removing the raw markings of painful or “disturbing” images. This action was coupled with a policy change exactly a week later that entailed the outlawing of soldiers’ use of video sharing sites while in Iraq and Afghanistan.
These attempts at restricting the frames of war however illustrate the overall loss of centralized power, especially when contextualized with the history of the first Persian Gulf War which was considered the first “live” television war. Though it was often reported from the front line, the actual images themselves were extremely limited as the US Government restricted reporters in order to reduce the possible repeat of the traumatic imagery generated during the Vietnam War, as George HW Bush referred to the need to overcome the “general malaise” of the “Vietnam Syndrome.” So the live reporting often became voice-over narrations set to images of Iraq generally or Baghdad specifically.

The image of the map functioned to further perpetuate the very object of contestation, the Kuwaiti-Iraqi border as a necessity for the global maintenance of the “New World Order”. The sense of othering the image of Iraq was further presented within the indexical images provided by the military, usually not live but rather retrospectively presented and narrated by military experts. These images were often the perceptual witnessing of the apparatus experiencing itself, video guided and laser guided missiles that “surgically” removed Arabic architectures and military structures, while erasing any possible marking of the body of the other.

**Raw Moments and Witnessing Other’s Pain**

All profound changes in consciousness, by their very nature, bring with them characteristic amnesias. Out of such oblivions, in specific historical circumstances, spring narratives.

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*

“You stop and look up at the walkway. (Figure 3) It reminds you of the aboveground trains back home. The Oakland Fruitvale station comes to mind as you remember taking the trains downtown. That station is haunted now. You’ve seen the image of
Oscar Grant, shot on New Years 2009, but there was little national television attention.” Another female voice comes in on your right, "Why did King get so much attention when Grant's murder was so much more severe?"

Figure 3: DARC walkway triggers “memory” of Oakland Fruitvale Station, CA

Three days after the first Gulf War, 4 LAPD officers beat an intoxicated motorist with two taser shocks, seven kicks, and fifty-six baton blows. The Rodney King incident and the subsequent 1992 Los Angeles Riots would painfully call attention to the persisting racial issue of US society at a time of economic recession and in the wake of international military victory. As Allen Feldman describes, the affective result of the video was that “the images of King’s beating showed the state making pain...[where] the collective retina was suddenly rendered tactile.” Moreover, the subjective positioning of a quotidian technology, of a pedestrian witnessing, collapsed epistemological barriers, as the image itself became a signifier of the “everyday body”. Yet, the Simi Valley verdict would exhibit the persistence of ideology in the initial acts of perception, as well as the interpretative discursive practices that still limit video from ever fully forming a raw experiential or evidentiary position within the lived world.

The subsequent not-guilty verdict of the officers exemplified the powerful textual re-reading and its relationship to the preexisting racially schematized
perception of the jury. As Judith Butler claims, “the visual field is not neutral to the question of race; it is itself a racial formation, and episteme, hegemonic and forceful”\(^35\), that the act of perception is the primary and primordial act of expression. But here the primordial expression is already marked by sedimented social relations that schematize the visual field and become a lived “common sense” for understanding raced bodies and individuals.\(^36\) Butler puts it succinctly, “the physical danger in which King is recorded is transferred to them; they identify with that vulnerability, but construe it as their own, the vulnerability of whiteness, thus refiguring him as the threat.”\(^37\) The haptic and painful shock of the video became reorganized by preexisting racial schema, legitimized and reframed under the operation of sustaining social order.

What still seems to resonate about the event is not merely its exemplary nature of how an image of historical pain can become subsumed into a codified symbolic universe, but also the way in which the event punctured the public imagination, nationally and internationally. This overwhelming collective response to this personal video, especially in comparison to the murder of Oscar Grant by an Oakland BART in 2009\(^38\), speaks to the power of technology in historical relativism; but also the dominant framing power of more centrally rooted mass media outlets in relation to the dispersed movements of mass self-communication networks. Not only do these networks fragment viewing habits and collective experiences of “events” but even the more centrally located supernodes such as YouTube begin to take on certain standards of protocol, which do not effectively contextualize or engage historically traumatic experiences such as state abuse and violence.
The affective networking of such social sites rest upon the glimpses of the everyday, which are casual and experienced through a collaging navigation of multiple videos. This is not to say that such standards are purely architectural and totally rigid, because protocol does change constantly through individual agency and uses. But rather the net effect of such uses become “nonhuman” as Galloway and Thacker term the process in *The Exploit*. They elucidate that within a network lies the tension "between the intentionality and agency of individuals and groups on the one hand, and the uncanny, unhuman intentionality of the network as an “abstract whole”."39 The democratizing power of such mass public spaces then becomes potentially undermined by the structure of networks themselves.

These dominant modes of online interactions and uses of video sharing was seen as well in the *Livingverse* project itself, in response to the self-testimonial consoles set up throughout the building. Unfortunately, many passer-bys who merely saw the general text prompt to record their memories about the event, often responded in comical and nonsensical manners.40 The screen merely acted as a mirror, as a webcam, and was not fully structured around the experience of the events nor was it prompted with a sense of personal accountability from an interviewee. This is a point to keep in mind from a design perspective, but also speaks to the codified expectations of personal video as a system of amusement and entertainment over critical discourse and political exchange. Of course, there should be a place for both, but the issue remains of how to even begin structuring a site for the later, critical forms of exchange while the former practices are so well established and dominant.
Castells gives a prescriptive solution to what he identifies as a similar structure of networks characterized by an ultimate efficiency through, “an unprecedented combination of flexibility and task implementation, of co-ordinated decision making, and decentralized execution.”\textsuperscript{41} The emphasis on efficient execution spread horizontally entails a structure of performance based on the development of some nodes upon the exclusion of others. Once constructed around a supernode then these nodes form a “dominant network” which becomes embedded and structured around the dominant values and tasks. Castells solution is simply to construct “an alternative network around alternative values.”\textsuperscript{42} Here again lies the illusive power and weakness of the networked social morphology: to be flexible enough to reconstitute into another form through individual agents but also to continually fragment and disperse in these ever changing constitutions.

The “Hub” created by the human rights organization WITNESS\textsuperscript{43} is a clear example of such an attempt to build an alternative network of alternative values that compensates for the non-human rights intentionalities of current video sharing social sites. The Hub’s purpose is to create a new community or supernode around multiple pre-existing networks, both digital as well as local grassroots groups, in order to provide a more effective space for not merely making sense of human rights abuses but also mobilizing responses for those various issues and events. For example, the Hub has its own user-generated content but it also incorporates content from larger social sites such as YouTube and Twitter, reorganizing the material and providing further backstories and contextual information for understanding the often graphic images of others’ lives. The user-generated content itself is also
embedded with meta-data to ensure it travels with contextualizing information. Then the individual issues are linked to contact or support information for both international human rights groups as well as specific regional groups whose lives are being affected by the individual issue. The dialogical linking to specific regional and international groups is a key element for bridging the initial aversive affective response of large viewing audiences towards mobilizing or contributing to material efforts around those issues.

The Hub is still largely effective through pre-existing networks of human rights oriented individuals and groups, but exemplifies potential political projects of utilizing multiple layered networks as information technologies become increasingly available within everyday life. The discrepancies of representation caused by the digital divide cannot be ignored either though in the construction of these communities and the understanding of these new forms of history making. The absence of Iraqi perspectives of the war in the participatory public networked spaces exemplifies this asymmetrical development, in which the colonizing perspective is still the foregrounded materials of historical representation. Nevertheless, the role of creating communities around pre-existing human groups that are working on the ground in the effected regions creates a reciprocal structure that empowers the self-representation of those affected while mobilizing contributions from those abroad.
The Embodied Documentary and Affective Intervention

[The] complex interactions of perception, space, time, facticity, consumption, and material culture pose an eminently modernist dilemma: that the perception of history is irrevocably tied to the history of sensory perception.

Allen Feldman, On Cultural Anesthesia

“Now what has happened to the image, the embodied truth of the hands’ digital eye? Has it become so loaded and impregnated that the image becomes as complicated and relative as the rest of our waking lives? Truth again becomes a varied fabric of perspectives, languages, places of birth, moments in time, to the point that everything...Word produces the object through reference, but the body is what defines the existence of the individual—the flesh of potential actions—marked against the world like lines through a thin plastic sheet.”

Nearing the end of the piece, the participant is left with more questions rather than answers, as there is no concluding event that can signify the end of political violence and the complications of mediated experiences. The Livingverse project functions then as an embodied documentary, which experientially represents and opens questions to the participants’ understandings of the entangled relationships between memory, media, and power. The mobile cinema does not merely act as a medium for critically framing global mobility but also as an experience for rethinking the layered process of affect and meaning in embodied perception more generally.

As I will elaborate in this final section, the project reinstitutes the role of the viewer’s body in order to not only ground the semiotic representation of the screen within the material world and intervene in viewers’ assumptions of political history but also to become aware of the embodied and affective personal backdrop in which these histories are understood. As an artistic research-practice, the project functions as a symbolic, more than directly material, intervention into the socio-political lives of the participants and will thus be elaborated largely within the context of film and
art theory and history. Yet, as discussed in the previous section, the symbolic universe that frames the social world is irrevocably entangled with material political structures that perpetuate violent actions and lead to deadly consequences.

The role of the cinematic apparatus in reordering perceptual elements through an embodied perspective has been most comprehensively adapted into Film Studies in Vivian Sobchack’s *The Address of the Gaze: A Phenomenology of Film Experience*. As Sobchack explains, “...the cinematic qualitatively transforms and converts the photographic through a materiality that not only claims the world and others as objects for vision but also signifies its own bodily agency.”47 Film then is experienced semiotically as subjective and intentional and is “perceived not only as an *object for vision* but also a *subject of vision*” that through a temporal flow and movement, inscribes itself in the world as a “*lived-body*.”48 The cinematic apparatus thus becomes a privileged semiotic system as it is experienced as a form of seeing-seen, in which the apparatus is a form of reflexive perception expressed.

The cinema then presents a non-linguistic sign system that uses the raw elements of embodied visual perception itself as the signifying components of its meaning. Yet, this embodiment of the camera is obviously enhanced through mechanical structures that jettison the camera’s vision to signify an omniscient and transcendental figure within the perceptual fields of the lived story world. Moreover, the embodied position of the cinematic camera is constructed as the privileged site of viewing, excluding other possible positions and thus largely closing any sense of epistemological relativism in relation to the site of viewing. As Holly Willis discusses in *New Digital Cinema*, video art in general developed, “paralleling the concerns of
body art and the shift in conceptions of identity...[to] engage with questions regarding perception, space, the body and, ultimately, their relationship to the construction of subjectivity...one as embodied rather than transcendental.”

Thus video art, especially installations that create an immersive environment for viewers, free the viewers’ bodies to enter a reflexive relationship with the moving images of the screen.

The Livingverse project as an embodied cinema utilizes the mobility of the screen then to incite the viewer to move and to find these sites of viewing as they are framed throughout the architecture of their immediate and embodied space. Thus the viewers have to actively reposition themselves as the privileged subject, performing the embodied position of the viewing apparatus rather than interpreting the images within an assumed and privileged position. The successes and failures of the participants to assume the position of the camera, illustrate their own finite and relative point of perception within the lived world. The camera no longer becomes a transcendental subject, but merely the markers of another perspective in another point in space and time. This awareness is most affectively experienced then through the play between the immersive and de-immersive moments in the piece.

After interviewing participants in the project, one of the largest affective responses was that of the jolt accompanying the de-immersive moments of redoubled perception, both visually and aurally. As one participant said, ‘whenever I walked towards a reflective surface like a glass door or a large window, I expected to see myself on the screen. But then there would be somebody else, a man reflected back on the window...I didn't realize how deeply I identified with the screen until
then.’ So the active performance of the participant, positioning her or himself as the screened perspective, becomes so immersed that the viewer unconsciously assumes or identifies with the screened world (Figure 4). It is then only through these fissions that the participant is perceptually jolted back into their embodied selves and become aware of their own subjective position and its complicated relationship to perception and mediation.

Figure 4: Immersed participant experiences perceptual “jolt” at unexpected reflection
Moreover the auditory slippages and ambiguities accompanying the redoubled sounds of footsteps constantly reminds the participants of the mediated nature of perception, as a bringing together of multiple identifiable and discreet elements found in the world. As the renown Phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty claims, “perception is just that act which creates at a stroke along with the cluster of data, the meaning which unites them—indeed which not only discovers the meaning which they have, but moreover sees to it that they have meaning.”\textsuperscript{51} Perception then is the first form of expression in that consciousness orders the lived world into a perceivable field through a subjective experience, which is determined by “intentionality”.\textsuperscript{52} Through the de-immersive jolts and sensory ambiguities, participants’ own process of perception are laid bare as part of an identifiable and selected field of visions and sounds that are then given meaning.

This problematizing of the epistemological nature of perception is then further complicated through the overlaying of distant historical places and times onto the architectural spaces of the tour. The concerns of slippages in perception become entangled with the mediated events that are perceived as discrete but nonetheless systemic components of a larger social world and symbolic universe. Moreover, the use of mobile technology refers to the ontological transformation of a sense of space and place in a globalized media network. Thus the project is not only formally quite different from locative media works that engage historical traces through embedded RFID tags and GPS devices, but also conceptually different from
audio-video tours, such as Janet Cardiff works, that utilizes urban and architectural spaces for site-specific narrative worlds.

The Livingverse project is however very much indebted to Janet Cardiff’s formal groundwork. Cardiff’s tours have developed through multiple phases from her first audio tour Walking and Thinking and Walking at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark in 1996, to The Missing Voice (Case Study B) within the streets of London in 1999, to The Telephone Call’s use of camcorders for an audio-video tour of the SFMOMA in 2001. These three-selected pieces exemplify her range of strategies on her tours, from the exterior of an institutional space to the long treks across an urban environment, to the incorporation of video in creating jolting visual accompaniments in her haunted binaural environments. One aspect of her work that does stay consistent through the pieces is the overly fictive construction of her work. In Artangle’s published transcript of The Missing Voice (Case Study B), curator and critic Kitty Scott calls Cardiff’s style, “a hybrid genre derived from popular science fiction, murder mysteries, thrillers and film noir...[that] also have a self-reflexive and poetic character.”\(^{53}\) So though her work may at times reference real historical events, such as the shooting of John Lennon in her Long Black Hair audio tour in central park in 2004\(^{54}\), the generic expectations and experiences are of a fictional and literary nature. The layering of musical scores enhances this fictionalized sense of the worlds, as well as intensifies the powerfully affective experience.

So the use of binaural and video for redoubling the experience of the space itself is indebted to Cardiff’s body of work. However, the re-construction of historical events through the indexical and archival images and sounds in the Livingverse
project essentially applies the formal developments of the audio-video tour to social-political analyses in a semi-fictional immersive documentary. The use of video and architectural space within the Livingverse also functions as a more self-reflexive object of analysis. The video within The Telephone Conversation is actually experienced through the small screen of a camcorder (Figure 5); redoubling the sense of perception by creating the experience of producing the images themselves as the participants walk through the SFMOMA.55 This effect creates perceptual jolts whenever a participant sees a person in the recorded video museum and not in the lived material museum, and vice versa.

Fig. 5: Janet Cardiff, The Telephone Conversation, SFMOMA, 2001.

The perceptual jolt of the Livingverse project is further layered through the mapping of the disparate events and locations onto the contours and forms of the architectural spaces of the institution. The disparity of the imagined and embodied places of the tour becomes a site for critical contemplation of the relationships between local sites of power and global sites of power. The multiple voices of the narration further facilitate this tension: one voice directs the participant through the space; one guides them through the historical diegesis; one theoretically reflects on media-power; and one directly questions the participants’ own relationship to these events. So while affective immersion is constructed through multiple sensory
stimuli, the fissions built into the piece equally break apart the illusionary world to create an oscillating tension between the real and the symbolic.

The use of layering historical acts of violence, particularly the Iraq War, onto the local has become a tool used by multiple artists in order to relate these events to the local for the purpose of empathetic imagining. Paula Levine’s *Shadows from Another Place: San Francisco <-> Baghdad* (2004) and Alyssa Wright’s *Cherry Blossoms* (2006) both represent excellent examples of similar conceptual projects with very different techniques. Levine’s project is web based and presents a map of San Francisco with a map of Baghdad overlaid upon it. (Figure 6) Across the map of Baghdad are small icons correlated to coalition bombings. Each of these icons contains information and photos of the bombings, but they also identify the correlating neighborhoods and institutions of San Francisco, humanizing the experience of citizens in Baghdad. While the systemic relationships are illuminating and interesting, the empathetic possibilities are stifled by an over reliance on cartographic abstraction, echoing the forms of representation perpetuated during CNN’s coverage of the first Persian Gulf War.

*Figure 6: Paula Levine, Shadows From Another Place: San Francisco <-> Baghdad, Web-Based, 2004.*
Alyssa Wright’s *Cherry Blossoms* on the other hand provides a very visceral and affective experience to the Iraq War. As a participant walks around Boston with a backpack containing a GPS receiver, information fed live from the Iraq Body Count Database triggers a C02 canon in the pack to fire a burst of confetti into the air, (Figure 7) with each piece listing the name of an Iraqi civilian killed during the war. The use of an informational database combined with the GPS receiver, gives a systemic structure to the piece, which as Rita Raley points out, “cannot fail to invoke the high-precision bombing afforded by weapons systems such as the JDAM, air-to-surface smart munitions that contain GPS units,” that coalition forces developed and first used during the first Gulf War. The unexpected blast of the individual wearer then grounds this systemic representation into a very visceral experience and affective understanding of these issues.

As you walk outside towards the exposed staircase, you hear the sounds of footsteps running up the metal steps. You quicken the pace as the echoing sounds of gunshots become closer. Intense blasts of machinegun fire startle you and you hear a soldier shouting close behind, “Up. Up there to the left”. You pick up the pace, holding the large mobile screen tightly against your body as you run towards the third floor. Another blasts of machinegun fire as you hear the roaring sounds of a jet coming in from your right.

The *Livingverse* tour equally attempts to ground a visceral and affective form of representation through the constant combination of playful and precarious
explorations through the building with layered audio of threatening scenes and sounds. As Ralf Beil discusses in relationship to the work of Janet Cardiff, “one of the origins in the development of hearing lies in the supreme importance as an early warning system against life-threatening predators.” So the heightened sense of danger accompanying the audio, as well as the lack of complete agency, lays the foundation for affective immersion and imagination into these sites of violence. The playful sense of danger though becomes attributed and bound to the voices of those who actually experienced these past events as the participants hear soldiers arguing over where to take cover or Iranian citizens shouting in outrage against the assaulting state troops on motorcycles. The extent to which this builds empathy is debatable as it relies on the participant’s own emotional imagination to really feel those relationships, as their danger is illusionary and the others’ is distorted in the archival mediation of their actual pain.

Nevertheless, this affective possibility and reflective agency in the performance of a spatialized narrative world was the original impetus behind creating an embodied documentary, based upon the linear documentary Lebenverse, which I had produced prior to the walking tour. As Bill Nichols states, one of the fundamental questions about documentary film is, “how to represent the human body as a cinematic signifier in a manner commensurate with its status in the ensemble of social relations.” He goes on to explain that the “mythic quality” of the cinematic figure is constructed through a “two-dimensional space of history and interpersonal identification”, and that it is necessary to reground that figure within the social reality of the viewer. One of the solutions he champions is the role of the
director as embodied viewer as well as agent, citing films where the director intervenes into an event as a social actor. Thus the director not only acts as a representing cinematic apparatus of a subject but also an acting intersubjective body within the world that they are viewing/documenting.

As discussed previously, the role of the camera and embodied subjectivity is thoroughly problematized throughout the Livingverse project. This epistemological problematic is especially important within the documentary medium as it specifically is founded upon re-presenting actual people and events within the lived social world. As Nichols discusses, the role of the director is to act as a bridge between the screened world and the social world for constructing a sense of intervention and agency. Yet, the documentarian’s position is already that of a privileged authority of investigation and intervention. The role of the viewers’ positions as social agents is then what is politically and epistemologically at stake.

The matching of the participant’s perspectives to those of the handheld cameras within these acts of state violence, inculpate the participant as both witness and possible subject. As witnesses, they call upon their own memory of the original context in which they perceived these mediated events. As subjects, the embodied performance calls into question their own possible responses, as wielders of prosumer media, to these events, especially those so close to home, like the Oscar Grant case. The project thus acts an experiential bridge for imagining the material possibility of political intervention into acts of state violence, which they’ve most likely never experienced, but are however perpetuated daily across the globe. The true sense of endangerment of those within these events become painfully felt when
the participants run through a combat zone only to look out onto the peaceful institutional surroundings, as soldiers are seen firing automatic weapons and arguing about their precarious position on that rooftop (Figure 8). The affective immersion into the dangerous world of the cinematic scene is only more profoundly transformed then into a sense of absence in these moments of pause and obvious distance. The entangled yet disparate experience of mediated events and a symbolic universe, again is laid open upon a layered embodied and affective experience.

Figure 8: Personal footage and archival audio constructs a scene of the Iraq War
As privileged participants and consumers of networked technologies, mobile devices, and personal video, it is necessary to critically reflect upon the larger political systems and social relationships of which these technologies are a product. Rita Raley claims in her concluding discussions of tactical media, often the work “does not produce revolutionary change...[rather] what it does offer is a socially engaged, participatory, and pedagogical intervention” that is retained through the “living memory” of the participants.62 Therefore, the project is not an intervention into the material workings of state power or global capital, per se, but rather creates an affective and symbolic intervention into the subjective experiences and understandings of the modes and objects that underlie these systems of power. The participants’ performative experience is retained as a “living memory” to critically reimagine their own place as a social agent within a global networked society.

Conclusions

If networks are not just technical systems but also real-time, dynamic, experienced living networks, then it makes sense to consider resistance as also living, as “life-resistance”.

-Alexander R. Galloway and Eugene Thacker, The Exploit63

As networked “control” becomes invisibly entangled into our lives, living itself becomes a political project, which is enacted everyday through our relations to these systems and networks of power. Our power in these systems become performed constantly then in work and play, production and consumption, and even in social relations. As Hardt and Negri claim in their concluding chapter of Multitude,
sovereign power and economic production are, “increasingly biopolitical, aimed not only at the production of goods, but ultimately the production of information, communication, cooperation---in short, the production of social relationship and social order.”

So our very performances and means of interpersonal exchanges become subsumed by systems of power and capital in a very material, and digital, structure of a networked informational society. It is then the role of the individual agent within that structure to critically and discreetly create alternative protocols and alternative network structures.

The codification of a symbolic universe tied to dominant forms of representation still limits the collective potential for meaningful alternative practices. The network structure is in itself both democratizing as well as dehumanizing, and it is the accumulated intentions of individual agents that defines the flows of information and the forms of representation within these constructed public spaces. So the site of intervention, politically and pedagogically, becomes the individual subject and their affective understanding of global power dynamics in relation to themselves as well as other individuals and populations abroad.

Exertions of power are presented as not just the enactment of political violence but also the images, representations, and narrations of these historical moments that publicly illustrate systems of order, either legitimating or bringing into question uses of force. So the role of communication and media, both corporate and personal, are intertwining structures that create a symbolic universe in which frames understandings of social reality. Moreover the acts of violence committed abroad and represented from a quotidian perspective, speak to the possibility of new forms
of identification, tied to changing definitions of networked communities and emerging subjectivities.

The role of an embodied documentary practice then is to return the site of analysis of global networks from abstracted graphical images of nodal system relations to the site of the body itself. The digital world of information exchanges becomes materialized as an extension of the real, which is at the same time both ordered by and re-ordering the experience of spatial and temporal dimensions as well as socio-political structures. The Livingverse project critically frames this re-ordered position of the individual through a mobile and semi-fictive immersive representation; creating an experiential bridge for reflexively integrating and re-imagining the complex relationships of global information networks, personal media, affective perception, historical memory, and state power; and intervening into individual participants’ understanding of their role in global networked societies and opening new questions (and thus new potentials) for the future of alternative forms of power and communication.
Endnotes


5. Hardt and Negri, Multitude, 142.


7. Ibid., 14.


12. Yi-Fu Tuan, Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 12.


14. Ibid.

15. I conducted interviews with Human Rights activists at the WITNESS organization and i-Witness (not related) in New York City. Interviews with Media Scholars were from George Mason University, New York University, and Northwestern University. Interview with LA Riot witness conducted in Lancaster, CA. Interviews with veterans were conducted at Ft. Stewart, GA, Savannah, Ga, Ft. Campbell, KY, Woodstock, IL, and Little Rock, AK.


23. Ibid.
26. Hardt and Negri identify the concept of “just war” as re-emerging legitimation of the war on terror, and was a term highly critiqued by modern philosophers as it was associated with religious warfare and the crusades. Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 15-17.
28. Ibid., 155.
38. The footage of Grant’s death ([http://hub.witness.org/en/node/11825](http://hub.witness.org/en/node/11825)) was actually used to bring Officer Mershele to trial for murder, the first time in 20 years in California. My argument is centered rather around the larger national response to this historical trauma.


40. Examples of responses: yelling “ohhhh” into the camera; stating “this is my memory of that thing” before beginning to gyrate slowly; staring blankly; blowing raspberries; and impersonating Jack Nicholson.


42. Ibid., 16.

43. WITNESS is an international human rights media advocacy group started by Peter Gabriel in the wake of the Rodney King incident. I conducted research at their headquarters in Brooklyn over the course of the summer as part of my UC Berkeley Human Rights Center Fellowship.


55. SFMOMA: Telephone Call: http://www.sfmoma.org/multimedia/audio/aop_tour_421


57. Alyssa Wright, *Cherry Blossoms*: 
61. Ibid., 11.
Figure 1: Initial Layering of Virtual/Historical Space, Los Angeles, CA
Figure 2: Digital Arts Research Center, UC Santa Cruz. Photo by Lyle Troxell, 2009
Figure 3: DARC walkway triggers “memory” of Oakland Fruitvale Station, CA
Figure 4: Immersed participant experiences perceptual “jolt” at unexpected reflection
Figure 5: Janet Cardiff, *The Telephone Conversation*, Audio-Video Walking Tour, SFMOMA 2001
Figure 6: Paula Levine, *Shadows From Another Place: San Francisco<->Baghdad*, Web-Based, 2004
Figure 7: Alyssa Wright, *Cherry Blossoms*, Locative Media Project, MIT, 2006
Figure 8: Personal footage and archival audio constructs a scene of the Iraq War