

PLUG IN, PROVIDENCE

PIXILERATIONS [V.6]: THE GREAT DISRUPTION



RISD Sol Koffler Gallery, 5 Traverse Gallery and venues throughout Providence
September 24 through October 11

As part of FirstWorks' annual performing arts festival, the Pixilerations new media showcase has evolved into an anticipated Providence gateway to the "wired and weird."

An outlet for new media art across a dizzying list of disciplines (including sound, video, performance and installation), Pixilerations intrigued me when I made my move from Boston to Providence two years ago, and was something of a deal-clincher when I joined the FirstWorks staff in late 2008.

Fast-forward to present, as we wade bravely in to make Pixilerations [v.6] a reality (with the help of our partners at Brown and RISD, and hard-won NEA funding). Apparently, it's my job to make Pixilerations legible for the general public. Truth? Even for a halfway insider like me, this is no small task.

Comprised of new media curators, artists and educators, the Providence-based curatorial team that shifts the pixels in 2009 represents several strata of the Brown and RISD tower to enlightenment. For the first time, this year Pixilerations plugs in with a private gallery partner, 5 Traverse Gallery.

Gallery director Maya Allison serves as



ABOVE TOP TO BOTTOM: Colin Williams, *The Empire*, 2009, HD animation, 4 minutes.
Andrew Ames, *Space Invader Returns Home*, 2009, mixed media, custom electronics.

exhibition director for this ambitious showcase, which this year includes more than 70 local, regional and international artists. As the curatorial dust settled, I plugged in with Allison for an insider's tour — a conversation appropriately animated by the submissions database, a colorful spreadsheet and a pile of pixels.

It's your second year as Pixilerations exhibition director. How is this year's show taking shape?

"Part of it will be affected by the change in venues," Allison said. "This year, both exhibition spaces are white-walled galleries. One is the same [as previous years: RISD's Sol Koffler Gallery]. The second venue, 5 Traverse Gallery, is much smaller than last year's cavernous space [a raw space at 191 Westminster Street].

"Last year, I curated thinking of Sol Koffler as a laboratory — white walls...clean, pristine... and, [of 191 Westminster] as more of a romper room; a rough and tumble space, or a 'magical cave.' New media tends to fall into those two categories. There are super high-tech experiments, which can sometimes feel a little sterile; and then there are the interactive, playful things, which have a rougher edge. There's also this 'magical wonderland' side."

In 2009, Pixilerations takes on the economic crisis. Can you give me some examples of how this theme manifests in the exhibition?

"This year's theme [The Great Disruption] did elicit submissions dealing with the economic breakdown," said Allison. "People are working with more humble materials, or with stuff that directly responds to the economy. One example is this out of work videogame character."

Andrew Ames' sculpture "Space Invader Returns Home," depicts the ubiquitous and obsolete arcade game protagonist, propping his burnt-out pixel wounds against a cardboard

sign that reads: "out of work, need help." While humorous at first glance, the piece directly echoes present-day social issues of unemployment, work-force obsolescence, and the deep emotional and physical struggles faced by returning veterans.

Depicting a shabby, one-story home set in suburban summer desolation, Colin Williams high-definition video animation "The Empire" explores the alienation of our "New Depression" through voyeurism and the subtleties of stillness.

A less ambitious exhibition would chew this pithy theme infinitely, but Pixilerations [v.6] is not a one-trick pony. "The second layer that emerged is [a look back] at the history of new media, [which] is always tied to the underlying anxiety about the speed at which technology is developing," Allison said.

In his painstakingly hand-worked sculptures "Orgone Emitter" and "The Leslie," Newport-based artist Luke Randall explores arcane machines that were invented early in the 20th century.

"They're really 'Frankenstein-style' machines! They do things like change the electrical charge of the air around them, which is not at all what you would think of traditionally as new media."

"More like, 'OLD new media.'"

"Exactly. It's like any other kind of appropriation, but it's appropriation talking to the history of new media."

This nouveau nostalgia is interwoven with guest artist performances paired with Pixilerations in the larger FirstWorks Festival event schedule. Taking place at RISD Auditorium, these include electronic music pioneer Pauline Oliveros' "Deep Listening®" on October 2, and "13 Most Beautiful Songs to Andy Warhol's Screen Tests," Warhol's Factory shot 1964-66 screen test films scored and performed live by indie-pop dream couple Dean & Britta on October 3.

This year's call for works also encouraged art incorporating mobile media technologies. Works utilizing info-mapping, GPS and

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1175 Lexington Road (Samuel Brooks House)
Concord, MA 01742
TEL: 978-369-2578
FAX: 978-371-2496
gallery@concordart.org
www.concordart.org

CLASSES

- **Painting Abstraction in Nature**
with Jon Imber SEPT. 28 – OCT. 1
- **Oils from Beginning to End**
with Paul George SEPT. 29 – NOV. 3
- **Plein Air: Getting the Color Right**
with Charles Shurcliffe OCT. 3

TRIPS AND TOURS

- **Williams College** SEPT. 16
Prendergast in Italy
- **Portland Museum of Art** OCT. 7
Call of the Coast: Art Colonies of New England
- **Guggenheim Museum** NOV. 10
Kandinsky Retrospective

SEPTEMBER 2-30, 2009

Connections

An exhibit featuring the work of affiliated artists throughout our 90-year history, on view at the Concord Free Public Library. For hours and directions: concordlibrary.org.

RECEPTION: September 2, 5-7pm

Be sure to check out our web site for updates on our reopening in late October and information on the Frances N. Roddy Open Competition.



