Journeys

The International Journal of Travel and Travel Writing

Journeys

SPECIAL ISSUE
Trauma Trails and Memory Walks

Special Issue Editor:
Maria Pia Di Bella

MOBILE SEPULCHRE AND INTERACTIVE FORMATS OF MEMORIALIZATION

On Funeral and Mourning Practices in Digital Art

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Abstract

The practical and imaginative possibilities offered by art works and art strategies have always been interesting for anthropological research. Analyzing an artistic endeavor that understands the dead as social software, the article investigates contemporary conceptualizations of death and grieving within modern informational economies. This article ethnographically considers the etoy "Mission Eternity Project" which, among other artforms, has created a mobile sepulchre to investigate and challenge conventional practices of the disposal of the dead and of memorialization. The article seeks to generate terms for discussing how new artistic, digital and forensic technologies can reconfigure the more ordinary ways of dealing with the dead. The analysis is significantly informed by my previous anthropological work on practices of the collection, classification and DNA analysis of dead bodies in postconflict Serbia and Tasmania.

Keywords: memorialization, disposal of dead bodies, classification practices, informational economies, new media art, etoy's Sarcophagus, anthropology of death and dying.

In early 2007 I started working on and collaborating with etoy, an international art collective and dot.com art brand (http://etoy.com). etoy is a community of media theoreticians, architects, disabled-persons carers, coders, designers, squatters, medical doctors, lawyers, economists, fashion advisers,

and engineers, based in Zürich and organized as a form of corporation. Its digital and Internet art projects, carried out alongside the members' "day jobs," have drawn plaudits from media, conceptual and system-based artists, and art historians. The group most notably catapulted itself into media consciousness with TOYWAR, a web project through which it successfully defended the URL name etoy from capitalist speculation, by among other things mobilizing an unprecedentedly sizeable cohort of global hacktivists (see Grether 2000; McKenzie 2001).

However, it is its most recent undertaking Mission Eternity (M∞), which projects an understanding of the dead as a form of social software that has garnered the most prestigious awards, while also attracting a number of noteworthy public responses. Around 2002, the etoy group became interested in working with—or rather researching, interviewing, and doing workshops for—children and elderly individuals, hoping this experience would give it a new angle on the fast-paced world of work and life online. Its encounters with old people in residential homes came to feature very many conversations about the nature of memory, practices of memorialization, fears, and hopes connected to dying and the disposal of dead bodies. As a result, in 2005 the group initiated an ultra-long-term project that has set out to record the lives of its still living volunteer participants not through conventional likenesses or tombstones but rather through the compilation of digital archives or storehouses of the informational traces left by subjects over the course of their lives. Inquiring into the notion of the afterlife artistically, technically, and affectively, the group's interactive and multimedia M∞ memorials seek to address the trauma of the friends and relatives of the dead and dying. The project thus approaches questions of death and dying through themes of memory and informational storage.

The project's premise is that after death people leave behind both their mortal remains and a massive body of information that individuated or specified them. etoy members argue for the continued existence of the dead both as biomass and as traces in global memory; for example, in governmental databases, family archives, and in the brain as the electrical bio-memory of human social networks. Yet for these artists the usual practices of disposing of and commemorating the dead promote immobility, exclusion, and the disconnection of the deceased from those emotionally attached to them. Challenging such practices, while simultaneously fighting clear of conventional religious or profane mortuary beliefs, the etoy group has

started to enact a multimodal postmortem plan of activities, which aims to unite usually distinct living communities through orchestrating the engagement of different social groups with a storage system holding data relating to dead persons. In terms of the project's vision, the dead are linked to the living by a network of M∞ figures dubbed Agents, Pilots, and Angels.

etoy's project is specified in terms of a playful mythology of its own. The Agents, the project's creators, have designed a digital communication system known as the Arcanum Capsule—a unique interactive, digital portrait of the Pilots or artistic subjects who have died or are approaching death. Having chosen to participate in M∞, Pilots offer up selected biodata, thereby consenting that their "informational remnants" cross over into a digital afterlife. Capsule data, including pictures and photos of the Pilots, voice samples, mappings of Pilots' intimate social networks, forms of biodata such as signatures of their heartbeats and eyelash measurements, with any personal messages they wish to send on into the digital afterworld, are assembled with the explicit intention of being showcased after their death. In providing such information, Pilots undergo a process of encapsulation producing digitized audio, visual, and textual fragments of their lives. These carefully standardized, controlled, and curated digital remains are taken to form an ideal portrait cocreated by the members of the M∞ community.[1]

In order for Capsules, understood as infinite data particles, to circulate around the global infosphere, Capsule data are designed to be hosted by M∞ Angels. In the project, an Angel is simply an ordinary computer user willing to share at least 50MB of his or her disk space—on personal computers and mobile phones—to host the Arcanum Capsules. In order to distribute Pilots' eternal memory, etoy has created an open source software Mission∞ Angel Application,[2] scattering capsules' data among Angels' file space. Running on personal computers and servers as a peer-to-peer network, this application provides M∞ with secure, transparent, affordable, and long-term storage, while also constituting the project's social spine.[3] Because it is open source, the software provides both the material and social conditions for Pilots' perpetuation, particularly in the sense that Capsules are entirely dependent on Angels' provision of sufficient memory. Indeed, the philosophy of sharing underpins this project and fundamentally characterizes etoy's methods and social ethic.

The Sarcophagus

The project thus draws together three types of community members or actors: Agents, who work on the implementation of M∞ strategy and facilitate community interaction and integration; Pilots, who provide the data to be assembled and stored; and Angels, who contribute a part of their digital storage capacity in support of the mission. Next, alongside the Arcanum Capsules, etoy agents have created another art object to handle physical mortal remains. The M∞ Terminus, a plug-shaped repository sculpture, is the final resting place of the Pilots' cremated ashes. Between January and June 2006, etoy constructed another essential installation, the Sarcophagus or mobile sepulchre, for users who prefer to be buried at an indeterminate geographical location. Built in Zürich, the tomb's physical location differs from the standard disposal solutions (graves, cremation urns, columbaria, etc.) that operate in defined (if sometimes multiple) geographical locations. The sarcophagus takes the form of a mobile cemetery tank fitted into a twenty-foot standard white cargo container (6.1 m long, 8 feet (2.44 m) wide and 4 tons in weight).

The Sarcophagus is a beautiful object. With 17,000 pixels, individually controllable light emitting diodes (LED), covering the walls, ceiling, and floor, it serves as a bridge between digital and physical data storage, displaying composite portraits on its surface. The rasterized Capsule's images flicker in low resolution between screens, and the sepulchre functions as a public installation wherever the Sarcophagus or the Tank travels.[4] While rendering Pilots' private and psychic lives visible in the form of digitized information on a computer screen, the Sarcophagus is also conceived as a real burial place. The physical mortal remains assembled in the Terminus fit integrally into the Sarcophagus, thus offering the dead certain "post-bodied activities" (Graham 2002: 5). The first Terminus entered the Sarcophagus on 26 May 2007[5] in a publicly performed ceremony. Three Agents mixed thirty-two grams[6] of Test Pilot Leary's mortuary ashes with concrete to form a plug of the size of one M∞ Display-Pixel (ca. 2,36 x 2,36 x 4,33 inches). After entering the Sarcophagus, according to the project conception, one M∞ Terminus Unit assumes the role of a dead pixel, with an equivalent-size screen LED light being blocked out by mortal remains.[7] The infospace in such a ceremony ceases to be only a digital tomb, becoming transformed further into a physical site for disposal and an intimate site of mourning.

The system allows for the simple re-location of the mortal remains of up to 1,000 M∞ Pilots. Pilots' final deposition in the Sarcophagus therefore no longer limits the lifetime of their information to the life of its underlying (physical) storage medium, rather transposing individuals' continuity onto the (social) network surrounding, maintaining, and nurturing it. The digital data and mortal remains stored in this interactive, multimedia memorial are designed potentially to journey forever, with the life of the physical remains being limited only by the existence of the Sarcophagus itself.[8]

M∞ Agents stress that their project should be understood primarily as an art installation intended to provoke people to think about death and disposal-related practices. The etoy postmortem plan was not devised to provide metaphysical solutions and is not a commercial service available in the marketplace. etoy Agents are not artists moonlighting as undertakers. Every M∞ publication and show is accompanied by disclaimers stating, for instance, that "M∞ is art and therefore limited to a special audience that is qualified and entitled to participate in this sensitive project." Or, again, the "etoy corporation does not provide services to everybody but offers source code and documentation to the public." Rather than seeking in any significant way to displace the dominant forms of mortuary commemoration in Euro-American culture, the project sets out to reconfigure the way information society deals with memory, time, and death. Further, thanks to the Angel Application software, etoy has been able to operationalize its vision, with currently 16 active Agents, 2 M∞ Pilots (Timothy Leary, the important 1960s countercultural icon and information society figure, and microfilm pioneer Sepp Keiser), 4 Test Pilots and more than 1,100 Angels signed up. The Angel Application system is now running on hundreds of alpha test computers.

Digital Afterlives

This postmortem plan has won important art prizes (such as the SWITCH Innovation Award 2006 and the VIDA award 2007 in Madrid) and has received extensive media coverage in the United States, Spain, France, Switzerland, Austria, and China. The Sarcophagus has been showcased at numerous art festivals all over the world—the Tank has traveled to San Jose, the Nevada desert, Val de Travers and Heiligkreuz in Switzerland, to

Madrid, Beijing, South Korean Gwangju, and Austrian Linz. The project, characterized by one judge as "on the one hand foregrounding the human longing somehow to survive after death, and on the other cultivating a sense of irony about the dated science-fiction fantasies people entertain in seeking to satisfy that desire,"[9] has also attracted an interesting range of attentive and disavowing responses (among both the gallery-educated segment of the visiting public and art passers-by). The Agents' ironic self-description of M∞ as a technology-driven "cult," coupled with the spectacle of Leary's body, have at times seemed to serve up a set of readily moralized stock narratives to media coverage.[10] However, etoy's work has also succeeded in engaging a wide audience and in conscripting a number of Angels.

Within the Sarcophagus, the "evocative object" (Bollas 2009) par excellence, visitors are encouraged to express their emotions, take pictures, and behave as they see fit. Although it is immensely valuable and expensive, Agents have expressly designated the memorial space as an object within the texture of ordinary reality, placing an embargo on any use intended to evoke fear or unapproachableness. The project equally aims to resist any idea of M∞ Pilots as special or holy people placed in the sanctum or shrine of remembrance. Visitors are allowed to touch the concrete block housing ashes and to wander in and out, with children especially tending to play in and around the Tank for hours. Six elementary school girls that I have interviewed during their visit of the Sarcophagus in Linz, found the artwork a perfect place for rehearsing their parts in the school's play. They used the Tank as a dancing stage. Touring in China, for example, etoy Agents have hosted some older visitors in the tank, who, fascinated by the links they recognized between the Sarcophagus' elders and their own, brought in their own pillows to prop them up, proceeding to meditate for a long period of time in the Tank. A number of people I interviewed stated that what fascinates them most is the Sarcophagus' profanity and mobility:

> I've read about the project before coming to Linz, and to tell the truth I was quite skeptical about it … But now, after spending some time in the Sarcophagus, I really think this is an awesome project. etoy's ideas resonate with me. … Each time I entered the tank I got all sentimental. I kept thinking about my grandmother, who passed away three autumns ago, and got totally soaked up in the memories of her and her burial … I rarely visit her tomb. I simply do not like going, … no actually, I hate

going to that cemetery. The place always makes me feel odd, bizarre... and somehow silences me. Our village's cemetery epitomizes all that is static, heavy and morbid. This Sarcophagus on the other hand, instantly pushed me into another dimension and challenged me somehow. I have never entered into a tomb before. The tank manages to feel alive and cemeterial at the same time. The LED light—and audio-show—is simply fantastic. I mean everything is obsessively clean, aestheticized and sci-fi, but it feels very humane too. It's intense, but humane. I could say even warm. Well, I already said that I got sentimental. I kept fantasizing how it would have been had my grandmother been buried there. I could have then actually talked to and communicated with her ... I felt a distinct urge to leave something, something material in the sarcophagus, to slip something inside its walls, something that could stay there and travel with the tank. But of course, one can do that in a digital way too.[11] ...The best thing is this idea that one does not need to travel to visit a grave, but that a grave can travel with one. That is amazing. (Arno, a thirty-one-year-old visitor)

Some other visitors, meanwhile, have stated that they find the M∞ plan attractive but would not want to contribute to it as Pilots. "I would not want to get lost among all these information, in a digital way. I would rather be buried along with my parents," one visitor commented.[12]

The Values of etoy Community

etoy Agents stress that their project, although a real burial site, should be understood primarily as an art installation intended to provoke people to think about death and disposal-related practices. Disavowing any role as high-art funeral directors,[13] or as promoters of online grieving or virtual funeral and mourning practices,[14] they claim a critical and subversive role in "occupying" the familiarly imagined place of death and in creatively hacking into, transforming, and usurping it. The question for research then becomes, how to think through such a self-description anthropologically?

Whatever the final answer to this question, it is clear that Project M∞ has recourse to many metaphorical substitutions familiar to anthropologists. Anthropologists have seized on a whole range of documentary practices in

which persons may be said to be indexed, expanded, or disseminated similarly to the M∞ plan. A wide range of ethnographic fieldwork engages with the agencies of the dead and dying, as well as with the memorialization and disposal of the deceased practices. We are all familiar with the copious scholarly literature suggesting that persons can continue to exist in a distributed state after their corporeal death. In this sense, the memorial carvings such as Capsules may remind us of Malanggan (Küchler 2002) in New Ireland and other mortuary artifacts acting to concentrate and transmit the dispersed agency or "life-force" of a dead person to future generations (see Gell 1999). The imaginative force of passengers is released into the Capsules, in a way similar to which the life force of the dead is released from its container when a Malanggan is destroyed.

Moreover, the low-resolution pixelated information called up in the Sarcophagus is intended to have the compositing effect of projecting a merged personality. In the processes of documentation and assemblage, etoy artists find themselves treating the biographical or biological source material of Pilots' lives rather as if they were "body parts," or detachable aspects of encapsulated person. This practice bears comparison with many Euro-American forensic and postconflict practices of recovering, retrieving, or repiecing corpses, which likewise tacitly rest on a conception of the dead body's integrity (see Petrović-Šteger 2006).[15]

But to return to etoy. In serving as a "total environment" (Poster 1996: 188–189) for Pilots' digital and physical remains, the Sarcophagus is more than an instrument or display space but rather functions as the body of those crossing to an informational afterlife. At the same time the Sarcophagus is a grave. Designed to accommodate several thousand Terminus plugs, its present form anticipates its transformation into a mass tomb. In the case of M∞ then, digitalized information is understood not as a derivative, but rather strives to embody the whole of a person, drawing in a body and the life and death of an individual. The artwork permits the materiality of the human body to be hyper-mediated, transported, and traversed in its depiction or reanimation on the Sarcophagus' LED walls (Waldby 2000: 4). etoy theorizes that the complexity of these multimedia portraits and artifacts answers to the dangers and burdens of the memorialization process in situations of loss (Petrović-Šteger 2011).

Further, the project's encapsulation practices invite us to ponder the status—as a representation or more original form of life—of the Capsule col-

lections in their depiction or extension of the Pilots. As we know from many other artistic and scientific projects, the power of virtual technologies to "copy" a body does not always or simply work as a benign reflection, or as a symmetrical moment in which the human form finds its confirming virtual analogue (Petrović-Šteger 2011). "Copies" may circulate independently of their originals and be turned to new ends. In this respect, it appears that etoy is unique in its manner of dealing with its encapsulated, encoded, and transmitted information. Unlike scientific practices (like those of DNA decoding and unraveling), the etoy Agents are intentionally moving away from perfect rasters, the flawlessly accurate transmission of images, thus providing room for uncertainties and interpretation. The images that flicker on LED screens are not immediately transparent. Raster images (data structure), bitmaps, and image files of the deceased all throb in low resolution on the screen. Low-resolution, in etoy's understanding, works as a visual reminder that their project does not intend to copy or transfer people or to offer perfect representations. The low resolutions introduce a distortion, a pseudo-precision, connoting a humane, mundane, redundant, or emotional side of the project's representations.

Further, rasterized images solicit the community's imaginative participation, evoking a sense of their studios (the containers) as an artwork. The project has metaphors of building at its heart, appearing to be guided by the values of community, practicality, and improvisation to which Agents ceaselessly submit themselves. According to Meisiek and Haefliger:

> The community-orientation made Mission Eternity possible. The long-term interaction with the community led to a consistency and seriousness in Mission Eternity that points far beyond an initial provocation. … The user, the pilot, defines critical content of Mission Eternity and the community either endorses or rejects the pilot's content by storing the Arcanum Capsule in the distributed network of servers and private computers. A project that touches upon critical, culturally-sensitive issues benefits considerably from community orientation for two reasons. First, the community can signal approval, skepticism, or rejection and, second, the community can create legitimacy and sustainability. The first feedback shaped Mission Eternity into a modular and focused endeavor that could be implemented over the span of 10 years. The continued support by the community, epitomized by the donation of Timothy Leary's

ashes in 2007, allowed Mission Eternity to survive early financial crises and legitimacy issues with critics. (2011: 88)

Classification Practices as/and Conditions of Memory

While genuinely dedicated to unsettling typical deathwork practices, the project remains premised on the belief that documentation—that is, the assemblage of dispersed information, like scattered body parts—can contribute to the evocation of deceased personalities. This belief, that mapping and sequencing human material, digitizing people's bodies, voices, or images, can enhance the conditions of memory, is typical of our age. We need only think of the numerous indigenous groups attesting to their ethnic purity by undergoing DNA testing while claiming back human remains for ancestral causes. Equally, think of the numerous scientists dedicated to large-scale biomedical projects profiling the genetic characteristics and diversity of defined populations (as for instance in Iceland; see Palsson 2007) in the belief that they are not only enhancing but enabling "healthier" futures for (groups of) people. These etoy practices appear to be more paradigmatic than subversive of a moment in which the dead are routinely managed through reassociation, classification, and identification technologies.

etoy's shiny Sarcophagus walls provoke associations with other contemporary scientific encounters with the dead. In constantly throwing back visitors' reflections (similar to the effect of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, in interleaving the roll call of the engraved names of the dead with the visitor's image),[16] the mission statement of etoy's cybergravesite evokes the cryptically technical, hygienic vocabulary of the criminal forensics of the mass gravesites in postconflict Balkan countries. In the postconflict sites of Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo, postconflict justice and reconciliation is often imagined and put into action through the hygenized objectives of recovering, classifying, and thereby medicalizing war-sundered remains. Transnational institutions often metaphorically measure Balkan nations' progress in getting to grips with their recent past or reintegrating themselves into a European order by specific reference to practices in which bodies are retrieved and returned to family members (see Petrović-Šteger 2009). Likewise, the dissemination of etoy's storage

responsibility for deceased remains' among a network of users bears comparison to the para-state projects of memorialization based on bodily retrieval in the Balkans.

Anthropologists thus represent a "critical crowd" when faced with etoy's claim to be radically enlarging, subverting, or reconceptualizing our relation to memorialization practices and the dead. My description of etoy's practices, working language, and iconography can be understood as just one among many renditions of Western compositional and repiecing practices dealing with bodies and persons. At the same time, Project Mission Eternity's convocation of a social network attaching the dead to the living is by no means an obscure or isolated project on the contemporary art scene. One need only remember the artists referenced above, or the Japanese Biopresence project that creates human DNA trees by transcoding the DNA of the deceased into plants in order to create "living memorials" or "transgenic tombstones."[17]

Interactive Memorialization Practices

Yet in possible distinction to some of these analogies, M∞ Agents' engagement with the logic of memorialization and reassociation can be thought of as particularly creative on another level. Although the discourse employed by etoy resembles and exploits the standard use of technical languages in hygienizing the landscapes of death, it also offers a rare example of a liberating and nonmoralizing public discussion of social imaginaries of memorialization of death and dying.

Anthropological, and more generally social science, analyses of situations of death, dying, and deathwork, tend to attract a certain emotional charge, too often dwelling on the visual languages of memorialization, pausing over emaciated bodies or the relics of charred cities or stricken landscapes. The authors of these accounts of loss and death tend to adopt a highly emotionally invested, documentary manner. Such literature on grief, death, and dying continues to attract criticism (Fabian 1973; Palgi and Abramovitch 1984; Robben 2004) for its tendency to parochialize, folklorize, and exoticize death. Moreover, anthropology's traditional attention to non-Western mortuary rituals, situations of uncommon death, head-hunting practices, death-related taboos, and other arenas of social contestation over

loss and memory, has much changed over the past thirty years (see Bloch and Parry 1982; Rosaldo 1993; Sluka 2000; Klima 2002). Contemporary ethnographies inquiring into the diplomatic and political importance of burying and identifying war victims (Robben 2006), examining brain death in North America and Japan (Lock 2002), analyzing the funeral industry (Suzuki 2002), or following tragic stories from the AIDS crisis or apartheid era (Fassin 2007), to name just a few, are all exceptionally important, insightful, and challenging. It is clear, however, that analytical approaches to the study of death in general remain regimented by the expectations and obligations researchers feel toward their informants. Some of the studies, appear to be attempting only to schematize situations of loss, evoking the keenness of people's suffering or offering up suggestions for ameliorating people's grief. Although this work is often explicit in its politicization of distress, dead bodies for example tend to be construed according to an evidentiary function. Alternatively, some researchers mimic the genre of activist writing, as if only an emotionally aestheticized—that is politically correct—involvement with the dead and dying could impart a legitimacy to their analysis of situations around death.[18] This work tends, then, to rehearse familiar conceptions of death in striking the tone of voice its readers expect—one that is grave, sententious, and (in some political contexts) frequently overlaid with sensationalism.

In the case of M∞ project, however, a mass gravesite becomes a creative object made by artists and demanding the interaction of future inhabitants. Although cast in a highly technical language and bearing the imprint of a hi-tech ideology, and technocratic optimism (Graham 2002), etoy's work seems to some degree to float free of the more disciplinary, or easily disciplined, forms of deathwork in contemporary legal or scientific culture. In rematerializing death, M∞ allows audiences to partake of the project both emotionally and cognitively.

Conclusion

This is the sense in which etoy perhaps offers something to the anthropologists. It is potentially enormously transformative to be able to discuss the whereabouts of human remains in terms of beta and alpha computer languages, as opposed to facing narratives of loss, traumas, and rights phrased

exclusively and refracted through ancestral objects or body parts. It can be a relief to shed or to suspend the moralizing languages of identity or sometimes reconciliatory politics that more usually attempt to articulate remains in some form of sequence. It is analytically helpful to know that people recognize metaphysical qualities in the Sarcophagus, that they want to touch the Terminus, travel with it, or meditate for hours in the tank. In this sense, etoy's artistic strategy of outsourcing the memory of people's lives to digital devices, that is to structure a collection of electronic footprints, trails, and residual bits and bytes, to guard against data loss, works against the authorized spaces of death and memorialization. Based on open software, the etoy structure ironizes some contemporary aspects of commercial deathworks, trying to rethink and reconfigure, rather than offer a prophylactic for, people's loss of their notion of a self. Moreover, the M∞ project bypasses sensationalization in favor of using death as a polysemic placeholder to set into motion a number of features or traces of artistic subjects.

On 2 April 2009, in a performance forming part of the Museum of Communication's Goodbye & Hello show, eighty-five-year-old M∞ test Pilot, Mr Sepp Keiser, selected the pixel that would become his final resting place. He specified the exact place for the Terminus that will in future house his ashes. Moreover, as some of the Agents later reported, Mr Keiser cleverly chose a pixel next to one of the screws propping up the whole Sarcophagus, thereby assuring his support for Mission∞ as long as it lasts. This Pilot then, as it were, already inhabits his mobile, digital grave. The Pilot's visual pun on "support" raises the question of what overlaps properly obtain in etoy's equation of the materiality and informatic aura of remains.

The article has demonstrated that contemporary articulations of life and death are often premised on and based within informational economies. Art often renders, portrays, and understands life and biological material as information. Equally, death may be treated as social software, as art, or as information.[19] Human remains are not only imaged as bones and decomposing corpses, but frequently envisaged as digital remains. Human remnants in the case I have described may be found in the Terminus plugs, in rasterized images flicking on the Sarcophagus walls, and in the pixels chosen by people approaching or thinking intensely about their own death. I have noted that this is not an image exclusively belonging to an artistic world, but one that operates also in contemporary scientific spaces. DNA-identifying forensic laboratories in postconflict situations construe dead

bodies as information. However, unlike these practices of the attempted translation of bodies into information in order putatively to settle questions of people's identity and crimes, etoy "tombs" and proposed sets of interactive memorialization practices work not as final but starting places of imagination and practice.[20] The project therefore appears genuinely to lend itself to philosophical inquiries into death, perhaps especially in leaving open the question of what kind of knowledge new information-centered art practices offer us in rethinking death and memorialization practices in the twenty-first century.

Acknowledgments

Notes

1. Part of this description was published in another detailed analysis of etoy encapsulation practices; see Petrovi -Šteger 2011.
2. The open-source software and code created by etoy is not in the public domain, because of a number of rules that regulate copyright issues. etoy source code is copylefted, in order to grant users more rights to the work. etoy uses the GPL for source-code (executables), and the CC-NCND 3.0 for "static" data, e.g. the content of the Arcanum Capsules. The rest of the project is copyright etoy (http://missioneternity.org/licenses/ accessed 17 November 2008). It is foreseeable that etoy's work, including the source code, will automatically go into the public domain after a certain period of time, which will differ across different countries from fifty to hundred years.
3. In February 2007, etoy prereleased a functional prototype for alpha testing. The tool and the source code are available at http://angelapp.missioneternity.org/, accessed 03 February 2008.
4. Visitors of the Sarcophagus may access and interact with Arcanum Capsule via their

mobile phones (WAP/XHTML) or a web browser (XHTML).

5. The second version of the Terminus replaced the first version on 16 February 2008 in a show that took place in Madrid.

6. In a play on numerology, all the project's computer memory systems are based on number 8, with 8 x 4 terminus ceremonies and a resolution level of 32 x 32 pixels.

7. RFID devices in the concrete and M∞ Plaque—including both an alpha numerical and semacode—on the surface identifies and assigns each M∞ Terminus Unit to its Arcanum Capsule online. A status LED on each unit indicates visitor traffic and the back-up status (distribution factor) of the digital Arcanum Capsule. To prevent data loss, it is envisaged that the LED will send out a blinking SOS signal, together with a minimal sound system call for help (see etoy *LOGBOOK* 2007).

8. etoy's work has been documented online (http://www.etoy.com/projects/) and in a number of essays and edited volumes. See Grand (2008), Grether et al. (2001), Fan and Zhang (2008), Tribe, Jana and Grosenick (2006) and Meisiek and Haefliger (2011).

9. Excerpt from the VIDA jury statement.

10. Especially when referenced with titles such as "Good Friday—Ash Transfer."

11. For an interesting treatise of the archive of publicly donated materials known as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Collection, which consists of all the objects visitors have left at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, since the early 1980s (Curtis 2010). The collection contains a number of objects such as military clothing and insignia, letters and poetry, religious paraphernalia, photographs, original artwork, money, a Harley Davidson motorcycle, as well as a letter from a former US president.

12. From the *Mission Eternity* documentary directed by Andrea Reiter and produced by Hugofilm (2007). See http://hugofilm.ch/filme.php?id_film=24&f=Dokumentarfilm& lang=de.

13. For another art project, which has received considerable national and international media coverage, and sets out a commercially affordable and "democratic" version of a tomb for people of all ethnic, ethical, and religious backgrounds, see http://tgp.hei-destrasse.com/en/a-tomb-for-all-people?post_name=a-tomb-for-all-people, accessed 9 March 2008). The Great Pyramid Monument, a project conceived by a group of German artists and entrepreneurs, is imagined as a cut-price necropolis in the shape of a pyramid where people might be buried as they see fit. Since the website launch in the early spring of 2007, about one thousand and six hundred of the many people whose interest has been piqued worldwide currently back the idea of such an alternative burial site and have taken out online a nonbinding reservation for a resting stone in the pyramid.

14. Many have observed (e.g., Carroll and Romano 2010; Diefenderfer 2011; Turkle 2011,) the rise of the phenomenon of memorial pages on the Internet. These are memorial websites where bereaved people can, as it were, virtually visit loved ones—sharing and viewing pictures, videos and recorded messages, lighting virtual candles, and even leaving comments. For examples of such memorial sites, see gonetoosoon.co.uk, muchloved.com, missyou.org.uk, tributetimes.co.uk, thelastrespect.com, remembered-forever.org, MyDeathSpace, or ILasting.

15. Indeed, the question of how to understand body parts in relation to the "whole body" has recently further figured in a number of legal, medical, and popular commentaries prompted by the ever-increasing sophistication of biomedical technology and the extension of concepts of ownership to body parts. In England, the UK Nuffield Council on Bioethics' Report (1995), or the new register of organ donations set up by the

Department of Health in the aftermath of the Alder Hey Hospital scandal (1999), are examples of such conjunctions.

16. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, designed by Maya Ying Lin and opened in 1982, is a 250-foot long memorial, made of polished black granite. Viewers see their own reflections in the stone as they read the fifty-eight thousand names inscribed there.

17. Biopresence is an art venture formed by Shiho Fukuhara and Georg Tremmel. In their work, Biopresence infuses the DNA of recently deceased loved ones into trees, turning the plants into living memorials. Human DNA trees are created in collaboration with scientist and artist Joe Davis and his DNA Manifold algorithm, which allows for the transcoding and entwinement of human and tree DNAs. The Manifold method is based on the naturally occurring silent mutations of base triplets, meaning that it is possible to store information without affecting the genes of the resulting tree). See www.biopresence.com, accessed on 2 December 2008.

18. It would not be too much to say that, similarly to anthropological documentation of orchestrated emotional responses to death—such as traditional, choreographed burial weeping in the Balkans or Middle East—anthropological accounts of dying in the Euro-American "West" seem to have passed through forms of regimentation, stressing restraint in the face of a "graceful" death.

19. Range of art strategies that explicitly deal with the biological disciplines is known under the generic term *bioart*. Conceptual and digital, network and video bioartists, to name just a few categories, incorporate, use, and manipulate biotechnological methods, techniques and knowledge as their main means of expression (Hauser 2008: 83).

20. A further question to ask is whether the parsing of bodies as information is a reductive or enhancing concept, and what kind of consequences might such conceptions have?

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