

# Millennial Spurn

Tom Sherman

## **A Circus of Compliance**

I know there are excellent business opportunities in new media, but what other kinds of opportunities are there? I'm not interested in business.

Everybody says new markets are emerging and developing at breathtaking speed in the digital age. Well, I don't want to move more quickly. I like to move at my own pace, the way I feel comfortable working. As far as I'm concerned, mobility and speed add up to nothing but new levels of superficiality. Timely superficiality is still superficiality.

All this hype about how we're living in exciting times is just another way of saying there's absolutely no sense of history today.

People say that things are moving so fast that being and staying nimble is the key to survival and growth. Being nimble means one is lively and agile. Being nimble is a mindset. The nimble must also be realistic and objective when confronting changes in the environment. The nimble are willing and capable of making adjustments. They are pliable and malleable.

The future will be run by compliant contortionists.

## **The New Media Are the Fried Chicken of the Information Age**

People say things are moving so fast that it's a waste of time to write up proposals, because other people will just move on things, and you'll be left behind in the dust. This reasoning seems to be a very good argument for doing nothing or everything immediately. We seem to be witnessing the "maturation" of a volatile, half-baked culture. If everything is so rushed, it'll add up to something like a fast-food culture. Industrial-strength, dim-witted gestures will prevail. The junk will pile up. This junk culture is mounting at an accelerating pace right now, day after day after day.

Everything seems to be in translation. Nobody seems satisfied with original material. Everything is a twisted version of something else. Content, like chicken, is being transformed into new media, the fried chicken of the information age. Information is being processed and served on assembly lines. Industrial centres for new media production and distribution have

been miniaturized to desktops and even laptops. Individuals are organizations, solo incorporations.

If you are reluctant to invest in such a culture, invest in something else, like flowering trees or canola oil.

### **What We Lose in Depth We Gain in Range**

The culture of convenience is superficial, more than anything else, so why try to hide the fact?

We are moving toward a world where everything is available 24/7, whatever the long-range consequences. Do people really want to go faster and farther at all cost? We will find out soon enough, because nothing grows very quickly, or spreads very far, unless there is a time and space for it.

We're heading toward a paper-thin culture, but what we will lose in depth, we will gain in range. Although culture today may seem instantaneous on the surface, behind the scenes there is planning, planning, planning, and more planning. Today's superficial culture may look quick and dirty, but it is not. We've got to automate some of this planning to get the costs down.

Automating culture requires scientific management techniques. Management today is a science, after all. (Some feel this progress toward scientific management is society's greatest problem.) We can deny it, but more and more management is taking on the ideology and methodology of science.

Business today is not about keeping your word or building trust. Today, businesses are run on math. Once, the bottom-line was the almighty dollar. Now, it is the almighty algorithm.

### **Management as Historical Agency**

Managerial responses to present-day reality are always problematic, because we have nothing but old techniques to apply in completely new circumstances. This complaint is the main beef of youth: old ways of doing things are applied inappropriately to their realities. Paradoxically, management science tries to maximize profits by applying new techniques to old problems. The past and future, memory and hope, are defined to a great extent by the inadequate responses of management science, resulting in the aggravated frustration of youth. This outlook may yield some useful insights in terms of anticipating, controlling, and subverting currently unmanageable emotional behaviour in the future.

We always fail when we apply old management techniques in new circumstances. We can choose to see this failure as an unavoidably flawed but logical, pragmatic attempt to solve today's problems, or as a simple exercise designed to moderate the uncertainty of the future by historicizing the present.

### **Acceptable Levels of Raw Personal Material**

Even though we live in a junk-food culture, where life is squeezed out of the product before it reaches the consumer, significant levels of raw personal content will permeate the market as the tools and means of production and distribution continue to be decentralized and become ubiquitous. Information providers work at home. The information factories are miniaturized as desktops and laptops. Such a vastly decentralized production and distribution system cannot be regulated easily. Raw personal material (RPM) is fast and vibrant and abundant. Raw personal material will continue to seep into the streams and torrents of junk culture.

What's surprising to me is how intolerant most people are when it comes to accepting raw personal material in their cultures. Even though computers have completely eliminated the differences between ordinary telephone lines and broadcast channels, people are still reluctant to embrace real, ordinary humans in their entertainment and art. They treat raw personal material like unwanted insects in a perfect nature. Most people are disgusted or horrified by flies, mosquitoes, and ticks in the garden.

Closer to home, it's like finding insect parts in a jar of peanut butter. Government regulatory bodies determine the acceptable or tolerable levels of insect parts in peanut butter. Basically, the insect parts have to be imperceptibly small. It is impossible to produce a jar of peanut butter without including a certain amount of raw insect protein, parts of legs, wings, bodies, and so on, but if they are ground up fine, a small percentage of raw insect material in peanut butter is acceptable. It has to be.

It's like this in culture, too. It's impossible to produce culture, entertainment, or art that doesn't include raw personal material. Entertainment and art formalize, fictionalize, and dress up RPM. People still like the idea of a culture springing forth from the people themselves. Before cultures were dehumanized and totally artificial, cultural trends used to emerge from the people. Today, raw personal material is usually categorized as interference or noise. Talk shows, reality programming, and listservs feature raw personal material groomed or organized for consumption. With the blurring of telephone lines and broadcast channels, governments seem content to let markets set the limits. Junk-culture markets dictate acceptable levels of raw personal material, whereas regulatory bodies set the limits in other, more stable sectors.

### **Quick and Dirty Perfection**

Ideas are ten a penny. Actually, the reverse is true. There are damn few ideas that'll hold any water. But being light as a feather has its advantages. Economies and markets are like anchors. Conceptual art never had any real economy, and look how it took off. Network art has the same upside.

Nobody gives a shit, but it is spreading like wildfire. It makes you think twice before you make something heavy to carry and difficult to store.

In this light, let's examine the drawing versus painting debate. If you ask people what's more important, they'll pick painting because colour is hard, painting techniques are more difficult to master, mistakes are often permanent, and so on. But let's face it: craft time is overrated, and material persistence and permanence are outdated concepts. In other words, why move beyond the sketch? If people have so little time to digest their culture, then why spend time making things that last?

So much of what artists create is the result of taking the time necessary to see or recognize something as it is, and taking the time to represent this something elegantly, or taking the time to tweak it until this something sings—the time spent on the work is somehow saved or “banked” in the work and presented as the basis of the work's value.

We learn to appreciate things over time as our experience builds or accrues in layers. With information refreshment, there will naturally be layering through multiple points of view.

It is one thing to make art in materials that last, creating the illusion of permanence. It is another thing to plan ongoing maintenance for a work of art, so that the work will be cared for and maintained in the future. This plan conjures up images of works of art that come complete with custodians or maintenance workers contracted to care for them.

Much conceptual work is a documentation of ongoing obsessions, taking time and compressing it to create value through documented procedures and processes.

Time-based art, improvised in real time, features the artists making the work in the same time it takes to experience the work. In a culture of convenience, 24/7 culture, it makes sense to produce information in the exact amount of time it takes to consume it.

When business-oriented people talk about demos, pilots, and sketches, they say that everything is fair game when you're putting together a pitch. If you need a soundtrack, use a track off your favourite CD. Steal what you need. Cut and paste. Move as fast as you can to make your point. The question I have to ask is why move beyond the sketch?

### No Secrets

In the mature information economy, information will be exchanged, information-for-information, and those without information to trade will be dirt poor. As it is now, most people only have a tiny bit of personal information (raw personal material, RPM). It makes you wonder what will happen when they lose all their privacy.

People will get food stamps for telling others their deepest secrets—things like how they have been having sex with their mothers or their disconnected princess telephones.

Exchanges of information are economic transactions, plain and simple. The obsession with translating information into money, into financial currencies or commercial properties, is only meaningful in this period of transition, and it is overrated.

A transaction is a transaction. In a mature information economy, information is exchanged directly without being tethered to money.

Those without information will be poor, as is already the case, and those who lose their privacy will be the poorest. What will happen when people have no information and no privacy?

In the information economy, people are harvested like trees or minerals or fish.

Right now, people are being harvested like trees, but soon they will be cultivated, planted, and harvested like an agricultural product. Then, in turn, they'll be manufactured, enslaved to provide a service, and then turned into outlets for the accumulation and release of something called knowledge.

### **Accordion Structures (Ports, Vorts, Horts, -Orts) of Augmented Human Development**

There is a sexy sense of fragility in the electronic, digital culture. Coupling is necessary. Being and remaining aloof is too risky. This vulnerability is reflected in our tentative, shifting identities. It's a sketchy existence at best; such a shaky cognitive in-firm-a.

People are trying to charge magnetic sites, where eyes are drawn, sucked into the quicksand of attractive images. Portals are the sites of general communal interests: water, food, shelter, companionship. The vortals, vertical portals, are where social selves are transformed into individuals. The vortals are intimate spaces, the private rooms. Then in hortalts, the reflattened vortals, the temporarily definitive selves are let out into a more spacious uncertainty, like range animals, encouraged to collect and cultivate their cohorts and cults, to re-establish societal integration, within concealed limits.

In other words, the human development scenario is now regulated and paced by technology. People alternate between introversion and extroversion, exercising their instincts when facing accelerated cycles of self-definition and self-disintegration. They re-establish, then reject, social ties, rediscovering the feeling of belonging, then escaping commitments, vanishing into thin air.

Restraint, not tight bondage, is in order. The gap is always where it's at, even if it's tethered at both ends. The objective is to grab people and hold them without letting them know they are captured, permitting them to move in a loop, struggling without too much discomfort. Appropriate or sensitive containment should provide all the trappings of being held. Give them the illusion of choice. They must think they can unplug or escape whenever they want, but they can't without terminating themselves. This entrapment is like living in television at the end of the day, holding the remote, scanning, roaming the channels; being completely exhausted, yet unable to hit the power button, to kill the television and by extension oneself, ending one's engagement with the "world."

Thus people experience the feeling of being restrained by a firm embrace of their consciousness, not a comforting embrace, but an embrace nevertheless. The somewhat comforting, uncomfortable sense of being held. Arrested. Industrial-strength belonging.

In vortals, people are rediscovering the feeling of belonging. Then before things get too chummy, they are re-dispersed, sent on their way, hortalling out into another void.

We value the vacuum or draw of empty space, as we move out into an area of low pressure, where our ideas are extracted, drawn like the wind, depending on the prevailing conditions or circumstances.

We are talking about the development, the manufacture of an essential frontier: reverse-engineering a private space.

Portals, vortals, hortals, and subsequent -ortals. We move through an expanding and contracting spatial labyrinth, an accordion-like sequential structure for harnessing human development. Ports, vorts, horts, and -orts.

We witness the oscillations of animal magnetism (attraction, confusion, boredom, rejection, repulsion) in these accordion structures of augmented human development.

### **Cultural Geology, Chemistry, and Biology**

When I think about content aggregators, the fabricators of digital multimedia, I get the feeling they are making or forging new rocks, not cultural objects. The word aggregate is so closely associated with geology.

Humans now exert geophysical forces, forging new aggregate compositions. This process isn't about sticking things together with a glue gun, but it is an act of fusion, the permanent bonding of previously discrete elements. And in terms of the geophysical, it is the elimination of geography, of specific location. It offers the view from the microscope. The different kinds of rocks and their respective mountains are compressed, and locales, definable differences of place, are eliminated.

What is the magic process, the power that forges aggregation? Is it a massive, sustained pressure, like the power that crushes carbon into diamonds, or is it a sophistication of knowledge, simply knowing precisely how to do it?

So much of the electronic culture is paper-thin, only skin deep, or diluted, like the weakest solutions. The music, TV, movies, whatever, all seem incredibly thin, adhering inadvertently to the 20 per cent rule (cultural elements today generally have only 20 per cent resolutions). Today's pop music, sitcoms, and movies are empty, formulaic time-expanses, the dilute cultural products of industrial artists going through the motions. These incomplete cultural facades are just the right consistency for mixing. Everything has to be nice and thin and dilute to be mixed together productively, successfully.

The predominant idea in digital multimedia is the creation of density and mass through aggregation, although in biological terms, genetic engineering permits the fusion of biological traits through a physically articulate, more precisely targeted process of aggregation. The idea of accelerating evolution or simply growing varieties of Frankenstein is far more sophisticated than multimedia's characteristic parallel sources and overload (content aggregation via density and mass).

### **Hybridity, Transparency, and Loss**

Increasingly, there is nothing new to watch, or to listen to, or to think about. This loss is due to the homogenization or blend of cultures. It reminds me of the announcers on a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation radio program saying we no longer have to call world music "world music." Canada is a multicultural nation; therefore, world music produced and appreciated in Canada is "Canadian music."

Nationalism is the ultimate aggregator. Diverse cultures are amassed and totalled into composite national cultures.

### **The Cost of Killer Apps**

People are exchanging messages in record numbers, writing and speaking in the language-of-the-gap. English is the filler between cultural differences and diversity. The machines speak English. Machine English is in its own way a kind of valley speak, because even the machine voices lift the end of their phrases, making statements that sound like questions, telegraphing that they are not through talking yet, they have more to say. As with all in-between languages, there is a radical, breathless evacuation of meaning.

English is the linguistic commons, like the sea, or a tract of land jointly owned by neighbouring parties. Nobody really owns it, and thus nobody

cares for it or protects it. When speaking the language of the gap, of the commons, whether it is English, or video pouring from a digital spigot, or the rigid, universal design protocol of the Web, there is an unending sameness. Anyone refusing to conform, acting in an anomalous, gritty, or jagged manner, is seen as an anarchist, as the incomprehensible enemy. Creativity is also viewed this way by conservative, traditional minds.

It's the Monoculture with a capital M versus cultural diversity, the social descriptor for biodiversity. It's suffocating. Didn't there used to be more noise? The all-pervasive English and ubiquitous video and endlessly uniform Web design are oh-so-common and virtually free for everyone to invest in. Except with digital talcum, you have to be able to afford access, and you are best served by driving a big, fast machine, a G4, or G5, or G6—whatever is faster and cheaper, cheaper per memory unit. Demands for speed and scale and range increasingly dictate more and more overall expense: faster and cheaper, except when there are elaborate architectures of thought to convey; when the ideas exchanged are more and more complex and elaborate in scale; ideas best conveyed in a multidimensional display.

To remain optimistic, we must never underestimate the human imagination, even though we seem to be at the end of our tethers as fewer and fewer people seem to be able to imagine anything other than the models or templates for creativity and invention they have been provided with or force fed, by Disney or Universal or whomever. Industrially produced architectures of thought generate imaginative uniformity. Universal architectures of thought are generated by universally linked or shared minds. Common architectures of thought are valuable in that they create order and allow coherent, complex thoughts to be communicated, transported from like mind to like mind. Stereotypes, after all, are useful knowledge structures.

### **Super-morphing Saga**

New technologies will come and go, but human nature advances or regresses slowly. We always look to new technologies to stimulate social interaction. We want to buy friendship, dialogue, community, presence, influence, and ultimately respect.

We are the content of any new medium. First, the content is the people; then the medium itself; and, finally, people emerge again as the content of any new, but aging, medium.

It's a story of people transcending or overcoming media. It is a kind of supermorphing saga where people transform into and emerge from inanimate objects.

We are just as genetically hardwired as the birds and bees, with our instincts, our most fundamental behaviours, plus we have our religious conditioning, family values, societal engineering, class status, and politics.



We carry large complex architectures of thought with us wherever we go: architectures of thought unique in detail, but surprisingly uniform in architecture and overall assembly.

### **T Not P**

Increasingly, we are bored stiff. We may be leading longer lives, but our lives are increasingly empty. They have a monotonous, flaccid tone. We are tired, made weary of constantly adapting to change. We are constantly asked to accommodate technological change, apparently arbitrary change. This flatness or deadness of heart is unnerving. Don't check for my pulse. I just want to be a dial tone.

### **Special Effects**

Special effects are no longer special. They are expected, as the manufactured frontier of the explicit-unreal replaces the real and ordinary domain of the physical. With computing power becoming faster and cheaper, there will be even more computer-generated films with more and more elaborate special effects. And these special effects will become less and less special as we, in our physical domain, become more real and ordinary, and less special, every day.

The expansion of the human experience will be the materialized imagination. By firming up a mould or template for the imagination, we will guarantee the total collective uniformity of fantasy.

### **Interactivity and Vectors**

The key to new media is interactivity, and the basis of interactivity is cause and effect. Being able to make a difference, even the tiniest difference, is what people want. They will accept, even relish, being a tiny speck of difference in a world of gigantic, all-pervasive sameness.

When we step back from direct person-to-person experience, our effect on the world is reduced in scale. It is as if we get excited about being insects again — being able to inflict mosquito bites — but we would be so much more impressive if we could deliver West Nile fever or malaria. I want to be a vector, so when I make my little dent, or bite, it has big, magnificent consequences.

We like interactive media experiences. We like to be able to make a little dent in our reality. Interacting with the world helps us form and reform our identity. Some are satisfied constructing their identity with cheap kits, like a handful of choices we can click in a menu, or the inane questions of a public opinion survey. Remember Mr. and Mrs. Potato Head?

Cheap kits don't help us to refine our identities. We need to be recognized, documented, insulted, assaulted, and attacked to sense our presence in the world.

There is nothing worse than facing indifference head-on and realizing you are being ignored; that you are invisible, totally inconsequential. In the information age, the struggle is between difference and indifference.

Hence the deadly little bites of terrorism. All little bites that make a difference are problematic in the state of indifference, whether they maim or kill or gum up the works or simply manifest in unorthodox behaviour.

### **Bored People Are Dangerous**

People want to be mind readers. They're nosy. They want to invade other people's consciousness. They want to control mindshare. Ultimately, they want to remote-control people. Exploitation is constantly being redefined by advancing technology.

On the question of how to leverage eyeballs to your Web site, what are we looking at? We're looking at a mob of exhibitionists vying for your attention, constantly upping their levels of exposure. They're playing chicken with the real probability of psychological implosion.

Plucking eyeballs out of the skulls of the on-line masses is disgusting, by the way. This obsession with attention is sick.

Once they have the attention they so desperately seek, they'll turn aggressive.

They'll flip from desperate exhibitionists into control freaks. First, they'll author media releases that function like hypnosis. They'll cast a spell. Then they'll fashion media packages that pack the wallop of a stun gun.

Control is based on predictability. Surveillance and reducing uncertainty is at the heart of the matter. Eliminating risk and theft and loss is the main obsession. People want to know what's going on when they have something at stake. Otherwise, they couldn't care less. Unless they are bored stiff. Then they'll watch anything. Bored people, given the opportunity, will just bug people at random to find out what they are doing.

### **Bulk Erasing and Repurposing**

People say that information garbage disposal and recycling are not yet profitable. But I've seen forecasts of massive recycling campaigns generated by the people for the people, where everyone recycles cultural garbage for their own amusement. They will make things out of abandoned software the way people used to make floor mats out of bottle caps, or decorative chains of dead novelty watches from fast-food outlets. And then there is the information-demolition trend. Blowing up or otherwise disintegrating rotten information is very entertaining, and it is a service our societies obviously need.

## History Is Spatial

In China, you've got free enterprise zones, totally wired zones where pan-capitalism is practiced in support of the larger communist project. In the same country you've got fifteenth-century farming and twenty-first-century electronic commerce. History is spatial.

In North America, you've got people heating with woodstoves and riding only bicycles, and some of them are still living with single, fixed telephones or no phone at all. And then you've got people obsessed with digital communications, living with wireless phones, e-mail, satellite dishes—you name it. Sometimes this contrast is still the difference between urban and rural realities, but it is more fundamentally a decision people make to define what kind of life they will lead. History is an elective option. People define their lives by how many layers of technology they have between them and their neighbours. Of course, these decisions are often income-driven and have status written all over them. People struggling to make a living don't have the privilege of being able to determine their teledensity. In this technological age, there are going to be anachronisms in your neighbourhood. History is spatial, but you can drive the time machine if you have the means to do so.

So there are those with the options and those not having the privilege of choice. And there is imprisonment inside these technological systems and in an exclusion from these systems. There is the difference between being able to make a difference and choosing or inheriting indifference.

In the developed nations, a number of people get to choose these differences. But in the developing world, where teledensity is low and the infrastructural gap makes being wired expensive or impossible, it is not a matter of choice.

Different levels of teledensity, whether chosen or not, define the time, the relative history, we live in.

Today, in the developed world, teledensity is sometimes determined by urban density and infrastructure but more often microsocially by human initiative and choice. People distinguish themselves from one another by adopting or rejecting technological time and space, the new territory. Choosing to adopt technology is associated with progressive open-mindedness (get with the program! jump on the digital bandwagon!), the utopian power of positive thinking. If people choose to hold back, to reject technological progressions, they are labelled Luddites, traditionalists, and conservatives. This liberal and conservative labelling is in fact misleading, given what used to be understood as the left and right. Being critical of or unwilling to adopt the latest technologies is generally associated with the traditional political left. In fact, there are high levels of ultra-right-wing-conservatives among the digital literati. The evil dig the

power surge as much, if not more, than anyone else. We see a lot of people using the new technologies to preach hate and maintain an unjust status quo. This demonstrates that life in the information age is not black and white, and leads to the argument that technology is neutral, followed by technology is always linked to military concerns, technology is gender imbalanced, and so on, and so on.

### **Parents, Police, Advertisers, and Marketing**

Parents, police, advertisers, and marketing agencies are strange bedfellows, but they are clearly the purveyors of order in pan-capitalistic societies. Parents and police are countersupported by advertisers and marketing agencies, as designers and demographers work hand in hand to stimulate and maintain consumer demand and economic activity. Keeping people busy shopping and consuming, chasing their dreams and desires in work and play, supplants the enforcement of law and order.

### **News Music**

I've been thinking about delivering a newscast set to music, serious music. Right now, music is used to introduce the news, or to segue between the news and the ads, or vice versa. Alarming events like giant earthquakes, hurricanes, transportation disasters, or military campaigns have their own theme music, usually an elevation of horns anchored with dramatic pounding drums. But such conventional news-music isn't mixed into or run under the delivery of the news because it would emphasize the show-business side of the news. Music would undermine the authority and weaken the integrity of the plain and simple truth represented by the nakedness of the newscaster's voice. The news could use some music, to move it along and make it more like a movie or a song. I know it's difficult to imagine the news delivered with authority in a musical voice. But I think it's going to happen. It's just a matter of time. Serious news-music just hasn't been written yet.

### **Intelligent Shopper-Agents**

People say there is only room for so many markets. If digital talcum spells the end of geography, and market congestion and crowding isn't the problem—in other words, if space and traffic are not significant factors in market failure—then there are simply not enough shoppers. The Western economy suffers from a serious shortage of shoppers. That's why the ballooning middle classes in India and China are so tantalizing. Look at the numbers. Shoppers everywhere are looking for the same things. We're all hungry for identity props. We're shopping to shore up our identities. Opinion polls and consumer behaviour surveys abound. People crave

feedback that will tell them who they are and what they are supposed to be interested in buying. People are like kids with Christmas catalogues: they want everything but have limited resources. They have to make intelligent decisions. Artificial intelligence research, and specifically the development of intelligent shopper-agents, may be the way to generate larger numbers of shoppers quickly. Intelligent shopper-agents, computer automata that shop 24/7 and never tire, could mushroom into a vast army of supershoppers, a formidable wave of aggressive surrogate consumers. Initially, these intelligent shopper-agents could fill and buoy failing markets. Eventually, such artificially intelligent shopper-agents could augment human shoppers in the West, permitting outnumbered Western shoppers to compete successfully for goods and services against the surging demands of the Indian and Chinese.

### 24/7 Culture

The new media business rides the new culture of convenience. All network culture is about making connections and getting what you want. Immediately. Everything in the world is potentially available 24/7. Content is important, but content is useless unless it is easy to access and a pleasure to consume.

Our data-mining operations currently focus on twenty-four-year-olds. That's the vein of gold in terms of demographics. Twenty-four-year-olds are the trend-setters. The new media business continues to show downward trends in demographic targeting. The ultimate audience segment is the seven-year-old. The industry's goal is to seduce, manipulate, and exploit young children, and by extension their parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles. The demographic pressure points of the culture of convenience are 24/7.

We are in the process of forging a continuous, lifelong, twenty-four-year-old identity or sensibility. All kids will want to grow up to be twenty-four, until they've made it, and then they'll want to be twenty-four forever. Twenty-four-year-olds still have flat stomachs. They are the ones behind the proliferation of abdominal muscle displays, the bare bellies and midriffs. Abs are us! Part of the twenty-four-year-old thing is the pure attractiveness of young adult flesh.

We all need to know that we are valuable in our own way. There must be human values beyond income and wealth. If you want my attention, appeal to my vanity, address my needs for security, status, and companionship.

In the future, everyone will think they are the same age. Everyone will be twenty-four.

Before that, to meet the kids head on, the IPs call their new media projects their babies, and by making their projects their babies, their juvenile

agents, they send their babies out to make friends with and to seduce other children. Seven-year-olds, having only looked outside themselves, have no understanding of the strange feelings they have inside. They represent total emotional vulnerability.

Dinosaurs are very popular as friends for kids. Even monsters big enough to eat us are our friends. What a relief! The equivalent adult content would be a situation where major multinational corporations are shown to be our friends. They could eat us or squash us, absorb us, or crush us, but they choose to be our friends. How comforting. They could literally kill us, but some of them will even help us get rich.

This era marks the end of the idea of savings; no more security for the spendthrifts. Now it's gambling and gaming, the lotteries, and video bandits, and playing the stock market with reckless abandon. Going for broke.

They are now teaching market speculation in grade school and junior high. High finance is a form of play. Start them young. After all, kids have no fear. They play the market with cold blood.

### **Info-Feeders**

We need to develop bird feeder-like devices and things like duck decoys for humans. We have to learn how to make electronic- or media-birdfeeders, info-feeders, so that we may lure people into our neighbourhoods and by feeding them information, entice them to stick around. Images of flat stomachs with abdominal six-packs are excellent decoys for attracting twenty-four-year-old wannabes.

When people ask us what are we going to do in terms of stickiness, I tell them we intend to create a kind of cultural flypaper. Or for larger audience blocks, we've invented a new mousetrap. We are also developing digital decoys and duck blind-like cover, and for hostile audiences, we are experimenting with cyber-booby traps.

Info-feeders and all kinds of other info-devices are prone to breaking free from the world, and so info-devices can't really help connect us with nature. You know, the Land Rover is confined to the highway most of the time. Things always seem to slip farther and farther away as we get closer and closer to the perfect or absolute unreal.

Remember, if it looks like information, it probably isn't.

Reprinted from Tom Sherman *Before and After the I-Bomb: An Artist in the Information Environment*. Edited by Peggy Gale. (Alberta: Banff Centre Press, 2002).