

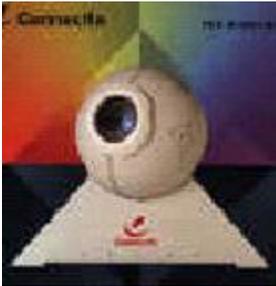
J. E. KNAUF

PRESS

Open Studio

"thoughts on an open virtual studio"

by J.E. Knauf



In June of 1998 my son Noah and I began toying with the idea of transmitting, globally to the Internet, live images from my studio in Phoenix, AZ. Aside from the obvious element of shameless self-promotion, I think the project merits examination. I've found myself intrigued with the following subjects as they relate to opening the studio to anonymous explorers:

In earlier centuries the process of making art was often more visible. Art Guilds and Societies, by their very nature, facilitated the transfer of technique and skills from one generation of artist to the next. Our perspective on Modernism points out the shortcomings of this arrangement but the current practice finds artists, dealers and collectors to some degree isolated from one another or from the creative process.

WebCams are only one aspect of today's technology that can offer each artist a choice about how public we wish to make that process.

It's interesting to consider the possibility that painters, sculptors or even composers might someday exhibit not only their product but their process as well.

Apparent interest in the JenniCam and The Truman Show highlights the use of technology to satisfy our voyeuristic nature, allowing an unprecedented anonymity.

The freeze frame live broadcasting of these images is ideally suited to my kind painting; large pieces which often proceed from blank slate to life size figures in the course of a day.

The computer archives an image every 3 minutes making the by-product of the project a series of still shots, images of work in progress, archived over a period of time. (Hours, days, years). This data may, as an adjunct to the finished pieces or as a stand-alone study, provide interesting exhibition possibilities. They can be printed as a series of vignettes or projected to a monitor in a time-lapse type fashion.

The cameras have been up and running for a week now. After working in front of them for several days I would make the following personal observations:

I was originally concerned about the prospect of having cameras lurking over my shoulder

while I worked. Would I find it uncomfortable? Would it interfere?

I have found it surprisingly unintrusive if not downright anti-climactic.

For several years now I have suspected that a painting or piece of art is in some sense incomplete until it is the focus of attention by viewers, collectors, dealers, critic's etc. It is at the moment it is observed that it becomes more than an artist's self-indulgent interaction with his medium. The process is complete when there is a consensus between artist and spectator that this piece of art was deserving of attention. (Good, bad or indifferent) It would seem likely that most artists create art with an audience in mind and that artists who have been able to recognize this audience are much more likely to take command of their vision.

I don't know when someone is observing me on the WebCam. I could have designed the project so it would have alerted me to the arrival of a cyber-visitor. I chose not to. I have found that the cerebral audience I have created over the years has simply absorbed my new Internet viewers.

These notes are a work in progress. If you have any thoughts on the subject, I would love to here from you.

Jim
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