Rockefeller Foundation New Media Fellowships 2003 Project Cover Form

JENNIFER MCCOY AND KEVIN MCCOY

Title Soft Rains

Genre interactive installation

Applicant's Role in Production artists and producers

Production Format interactive installation with robotics, miniature

sets, and screens

Anticipated Length variable

Color/BW color

Sound/Silent sound

Brief Project Description (do not exeed space given below)

Soft Rains is a robotic installation that miniaturizes and automates the entire film production process to produce a stylish film-noir tale. We will use custom computer software to control small moving cameras, moving set elements, and recorded dialog so that a short narrative can be projected in front of the viewer as they watch. The small, dollhouse scale set allows the viewer to spatially explore what they experience temporally through the video projection. We are interested in using computer technology to investigate what is called "film magic"- the propensity of even the most sophisticated viewer to understand and, at the same time, be drawn in by illusionistic cinematic effects. Soft Rains will create and reveal these effects simultaneously with their product. Newer media is often used to understand the cultural conventions of older forms. The history of industrialization and mechanization has often succeeded in miniaturizing, streamlining, and automating complex processes. We are interested in both the mythology of progress this presents and in the inherent pathos of its inhumanity. The title, Soft Rains, is taken from a Ray Bradbury story about an automated house that goes through the motions of serving its family, unaware that a nuclear apocalypse has destroyed its inhabitants. Like Bradbury's house, our robotic set creates its story absent of filmmakers and actors, creating narrative without human presence. Our script is also centered upon a search for human presence in an automated environment. Flashbacks and hallucinogenic imaginings are intercut with this simple narrative gesture. Shadowy interiors and tracking camera movements work together to create a noir-like, expressionistic atmosphere. The robotic set will create classic effects of the genre like the chase sequence, suspenseful cross-cutting between locations, and point-of-view carnera shots.

Installation Plan

For Soft.Rains the physical elements of the installation include:

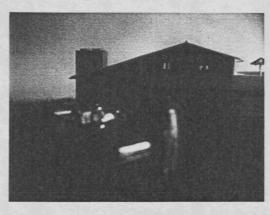
- a miniature set
- small lights, rigging, and metal track
- miniature video cameras
- an embedded micro-processor
- a sound source (CD or mini-disc)
- proximity sensors
- a display screen (or small projection)

These elements will all rest on, or be supported by, a table or platform structure. The set will have small cameras that move on tracks, focusing on different elements of the set (miniature people, interiors, cars, etc). The computer will control aspects of camera movement, shot duration, and lighting levels as well as playing back pre-recorded audio components.

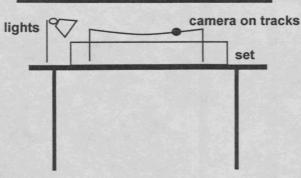
When a viewer enters the space, the project will be displaying an establishing shot on its screen. Proximity sensors will trigger the narrative. This narrative will have an algorithmic aspect to its structure. The chip will be set to trigger events (in this case scenes) in a variable sequence.

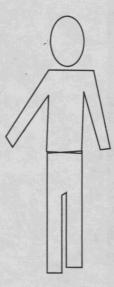
The type of imagery used in the installation is two-fold; the sculptural aspect of the robotic set and the screen image it produces. The length of the sequence will be under 15 minutes, but it will be variable and changeable in structure, with corresponding changes to the narrative.

Installation Diagram



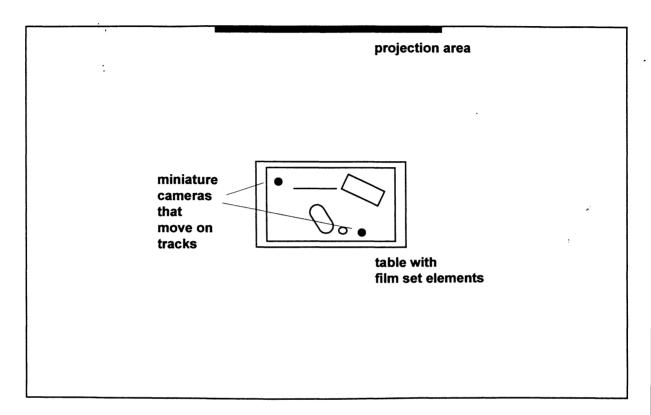
video projection





ELEVATION

Installation Diagram



PLAN

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Rockefeller Foundation New Media Fellowships 2003 Sample Work Form

JENNIFER MCCOY AND KEVIN MCCOY

If you are sending more than one sample, please copy this page. Sample(s) must be cued: indicate how long each sample should be viewed for a COMBINED viewing time of no more than 15 minutes. If slides are included in this application, please list the title and year of the work on this form.

Title Recent Projects		
Year 2000-2002		
Technical Info		
Original Format	Format Submitted for Viewing	Prefered OS
Software	Software	Windows
Web	Web	Mac
X Installation	Installation	Unix
Other	X Other VHS	•
Web Info (answer only if s	ample work is in Web format)	
URL	(if more than one please list them below)	
Browser requirement		
Plug-in requirement		
This sample requires bro	padband connection (fast Internet Connection)	
A local copy of the samp	ole work has been included with the application	1
Special Information F	For Viewing:	
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Description of Work (use an additional sheet if necessary)

This VHS tape (8:45) contains documentation from three installations:

1. Pink Light, 2000, computer controlled installation with robotics, light, and sound, dimensions 2' x 2' x 2.5'

Pink Light is a computer controlled robotic installation that delivers an audio/visual message to viewers in the gallery. Our proposed project for the Rockefeller will extend the things we learned from this work about the interconnection of motors, relays, electronic circuits and software. This is the first project in which we work with the idea of a "special effect" that occurs in real space. The simple interactivity of the project (the act of pushing an elevator button) is a counterpoint to the oddness of the miniature elevator's arrival. The sound element consists of twenty "aphorisms" about religion as information from Philip K. Dick's Valis and original music. The computer (which is on the

basement level of the gallery) chooses from among these phrases each time the elevator is called. A network of hardware sensors, switches, and motors synchronizes the arrival and departure of the object with the sound and flashing pink light.

- 2. Every Shot Every Episode, 2001, interactive installation, dimensions variable Every Shot... breaks film narrative down to a list of standardized techniques, drawing the viewer's attention to the tropes and methods of narrative film production. This idea of finding the basic gestures of story telling relates to the reduced film language that will be available to us when we work with miniatures in our proposed project. This is our first database driven artwork. To produce it, we engaged in a process of un-editing, compiling, and letting a computer find an alternative to narrative structure; in this case, the list. In the gallery, the viewer can select from about 300 discs. The interactivity is kind of like shopping, or playing records in that the viewer can curate his/her own selection. Although databases are most often experienced through a screen-based interface, we produced this project as an object because we wanted to visualize the database by making the range of choices and scope of material occupy physical space.
- 3. Horror Chase, 2002, computer-based installation with projection, dimensions variable Horror Chase is a one-shot horror film consisting of an endless chase sequence. Custom software plays the video sequence forwards and backwards at variable speeds. To film the sequence, we re-constructed a 1000 square ft set inspired by the film Evil Dead 2, by Sam Rami. Although on very different physical scales, both this project and our proposed work involve constructing a set and shooting a film with it. Both projects take a well-known film genre as a starting point horror and film-noir mystery respectively, and present themselves in real time through software control and algorithm. Horror Chase is a variable system, changing through an internal, code-driven dynamic. Our goal is to show a human-actor who is controlled by machinic vision in which the choreography of the movement gains a digital, fragmentary gait that is different than motion under human control.

As is typical with our work, all three of these projects develop custom technological systems of hardware and software for producing and presenting the work. Developing such frameworks through practical experimentation is integral to our collaborative creative process.

Artist Statement

We are interested in creating projects about how human thinking is structured through genre and repetition, and the role that technology plays in those processes. In order to focus attention on these structures, our work takes a formal analysis of narrative as a point of departure, reexamining television series, films and classic science fiction literature, creating installations, net art, or live events from what we find. Our method is to interpret mainstream visual culture from the pre-digital era by cross-referencing and reconstituting the original material into a non-linear repository of content available, much like all computer data, for selective viewing and manipulation. We are interested in adding to the history of machines used to create moving images, from magic lantern theaters and zoetropes through net art.

In New York City, our work has been exhibited at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, P.S.1, Postmasters Gallery, The New Museum, and Smack Mellon. International exhibitions include projects at ZKM, The Cornerhouse Gallery (Manchester, UK), and Van Laere Gallery (Antwerp, Belgium) and an upcoming show at F.A.C.T. (Liverpool, UK). In 2002 we received a Creative Capital Grant for Emerging Fields. Articles about our work have appeared in Art in America, Artforum, The Wire, dArt International, Spin, and The Independent.

We feel our contribution to the field has been the development of a distinctive artistic practice that brings the languages and techniques of digital production and Internet culture to the worlds of film and television viewing. In our work, the database is a collection of not only facts and files but also of more slippery ideas of genre, stereotypes, relationships, and representational techniques.

Project Narrative - Jennifer and Kevin McCoy

Description

Soft Rains is a robotic installation that miniaturizes and automates the film production process to produce a stylish film-noir tale. We will use custom computer software to control small moving cameras, moving set elements, and recorded dialog so that a short narrative can be projected in front of the viewer as they watch. The dollhouse scale set allows the viewer to spatially explore what they experience temporally through the video projection. We are interested in using computers to investigate what is called "film magic"- the propensity of even the most sophisticated viewer to understand and still be drawn in by cinematic effects. Soft Rains will create and reveal these effects simultaneously. The history of industrialization has often resulted in miniaturizing, streamlining, and automating complex processes. We are interested in the mythology of progress this presents and in the pathos of its inhumanity. Our title is taken from a Ray Bradbury story about an automated house that serves its family, unaware that a war has destroyed its inhabitants. Like Bradbury's house, our set creates its story absent of filmmakers and actors, creating narrative without human presence. Our script is also centered upon a search for human presence in an automated environment. The story centers on a woman in a house who defends herself against a possible assailant. Shadowy interiors and tracking cameras work together to create a noir-like expressionistic atmosphere. The robotic set will create classic effects of the genre like chase sequences, suspenseful crosscutting between locations, and point-of-view camera shots.

Within the context of our work, this kind of project became interesting to us in 2000 when we created a miniature elevator for *Pink Light*. There is an abject quality to the miniature that marries nicely with our interest in an un-heroic or even comic look at technology. In 2002, we made a life-sized film set for our *Horror Chase* installation. The level of cinematic control one has when all elements are designed and planned was revelatory to us. Our proposed project combines elements of both these two works. Additionally, we are interested in using the computer because of the transformative space it can create within an installation. In this case, we use the computer as a control device that adds motion to a still image. The real time aspect of this transformation is important to our work. We have often been involved in projects that are performative or improvisational. We think of *Soft Rains* as a performative object.

We feel this project is an important one to make at this time, when computer-based work has begun to become an established form and when many people are aware of it's myriad effects. Audiences are largely familiar with the capacity of the computer to fragment, to shuffle, to randomize, and to interact. In *Soft Rains*, we want to emphasize and re-introduce the pleasure of the story. We want to use the computer to trigger real time events and synchronize movements in real space, recompiling fragments in a way that generates meaning. Technically, the project's innovation lies in the relocation of many behind-the-scenes processes of large budget Hollywood filmmaking to visible processes that occur in front of the viewer. We will use relatively low-cost equipment to produce a seamless video projection. This relationship between the physical and the

screenal is also the formal surprise of the work- the construction of a story from miniature cameras, wires, wood, and paper.

This piece will be interactive in two ways: with the viewer, and with its internal system. First, when a viewer enters the space and comes near the set, the project will be displaying an establishing shot on its screen. Proximity sensors will trigger the narrative to begin. Second, the narrative will have an algorithmic aspect to its structure. An embedded microprocessor will be programmed to trigger events (in this case scenes) in a variable sequence. From the viewer's perspective, the narrative may never be quite the same twice. Although the set itself is the same, narrative fragments may join together differently on each encounter, from one person to the next. The story's tone and event structure can shift. We feel that the work's interactivity with its own system of creation (its dynamically generated playback in real time) is essential.

Feasibility Statement

We have begun camera tests and equipment purchases towards the completion of this project. In general, as a way to begin this project, we will break up the story into approximately six modular "narrative fragments". Viewing the sum of these objects will constitute the themes of *Soft Rains*. We are proceeding this way for a number of technical and creative reasons— primary among them, the need to develop new techniques on a small scale before implementing the full-scale movie. We plan to finish the modules during summer 2003 and begin to link of the components into an integrated whole the following winter. We hope to finish the larger project by the end of 2004, but feel that this mode of working, once developed will yield a cycle of related projects.

Use of Work

Our work uses both of our backgrounds in film and media theory to create projects that examine and critique popular forms of media. We want our work to trigger an interest in these critical skills in our audiences and encourage them to learn about and question technology. Our ideal audience is a mixture of people who are fans of fine art and popular media and who are interested in thinking about experimental means of production. We hope to reach this audience not only by creating works of art that are publicly displayed, but also by participating in artists talks, panels, conferences, and collaborations with other practitioners. The appropriate venues for our work are museums, galleries, and public art spaces. Specifically we are interested in venues that provide a history and context for emerging fields. We have on-going relationships with Postmasters Gallery, Smackmellon Studios, P.S.1 Center for Contemporary Art in New York, and the Foundation for Art and Creative Technology (FACT) in Liverpool, UK. All have made commitments to showing this work in the future.

Fellowship Use

We will apply the fellowship funding to expenses for equipment, materials, manufacturing and production, and possibly consultants. These consultants would play a role as we develop the interface between computer control and the mechanical and electrical systems necessary to move the cameras. We also plan to use the funding to cover our time, ideally with one or both of us taking some leave from our full-time jobs.

Project Budget

Preproduction		
\$ 200	motors	
\$ 500	camera & lenses	
\$ 300	controller circuits & software	
\$ 200	set materials	
\$ 250	electrical supplies	
\$1450	subtotal	
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Production		
\$2000	fabrication consultant	
\$3000	electrical supplies	
\$ 500	motors and rigging	
\$1500	cameras and rigging	
\$3000	computer/video equipment	
\$3000	computer x2 (production machine / exhibition machine)	
\$1500	model supplies	
\$1500	lights and rigging	
\$1550	lumber and materials	
\$17,550	subtotal	
Testing / Post-production		
\$300	misc supplies	
\$600	documentation	
\$100	software archiving	
\$1000	subtotal	
\$20,000	total production budget	
\$15,000	artists time / living expenses	
\$35,000	TOTAL FELLOWSHIP BUDGET	

Budget Notes:

As is fairly common with technology based work, the cost of materials is very high. Also, because of the significant time involved in developing a new formal strategy, we feel the project may take a serious time commitment. The budget listed above is a good amount to get us started and to finish a working version. The total budget, including more of our time is estimated at \$58,000. To date we have received one grant from The Creative Capital foundation (\$10,500) which paid for research costs not included in the budget listed above. If you need more information about this grant, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Education: Kevin McCoy

- Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, NY; Master of Fine Arts in Electronic Arts.
- University of Paris III, Paris, France; Dept. of Cinema and Audio-Visual Studies. 1990
- Whitman College, Walla Walla, WA; Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy. 1989

Education: Jennifer McCov

- Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy NY; Master of Fine Arts in Electronic Arts. 1994
- Cornell University: Ithaca, NY; Bachelor of Arts in Theater Arts, concentration in Film Studies. 1990
- University of Paris III: Paris. France: Critical Studies Film Program with CIEE. 1990

Awards

- 2002 Creative Capital Foundation Emerging Fields, New York, NY
- 2001 New Media Art Fellowship, Colbert Foundation, New York, NY
- 2001 Finishing Funds Grant, Experimental Television Center, Owego, NY
- 2000 Net Art Commission, The Alternative Museum, New York, NY
- 1999 New York Foundation for the Arts Computer Arts Grant recipient, New York, NY
- "World Views" Thundergulch Artist in Residence, New York, NY 1999
- "Emerging Artist/Emergent Media" Grant recipient presented by the Jerome 1999 Foundation through the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN.
- 1999 HarvestWorks Artist in Residence, New York, NY.

Solo Exhibitions

- "Jennifer and Kevin McCoy," FACT, Liverpool, England scheduled June 2003 2003
- "We Like to Watch" VanLaere Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium, October 2002 2002 "Love and Terror," Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, OH, October 2002 "We Like to Watch," Postmasters, New York, NY. April 2002

Selected Group Exhibitions and Screenings

- 2002 "Future Cinema." Zentrum für Medien Kunst, Karlsruhe, Germany "The Omega Manual," Smack Mellon, Brooklyn, NY. "Where Do We Go From Here?" Cornerhouse Gallery, Manchester, England. "Flay, Splat, Play", Espace Paul Ricard, Paris, France. (part of the Paris/Brooklyn exchange program). "New Acquisitions in Photography" The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY.
 - "The Armory Show," New York, NY.
- 2001 "Video Viewpoints," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, screening "Animations." PS1 Center for Contemporary Art, New York, NY installation "Video Jam", Palm Beach Institute of Contemporary Art, Lake Worth, FL, installation "The Brewster Project", Brewster, NY. performance/radio project "Mapping the Web Informe", New Langton Arts, San Francisco, CA. web project
 - "Trompe l'Oeil", Media Z Lounge, The New Museum, New York, NY. web project
 - "WRO Media Art Biennial", Wroclaw, Poland. web project
 - "Outsource". Flipside, Brooklyn, NY. interactive video installation
 - "The Armory Show", New York, NY. interactive video installation
 - "The BabySitter Tapes", Walden Gallery, New York, NY. performance

"Technically Engaged", A.I.R. Gallery, New York, NY. interactive video installation

- "Pink Light", Postmasters Gallery, New York, NY. electronic sculpture
 "Verbal 3", The Kitchen, New York, NY. performance
 "Dissection New Electronic Interaction", Macau Museum of Art, Macau. CDROM
 "B-2000", Centre Bruxelles, Brussels, Belgium, cd-rom
 "Through the Looking Glass", Beachwood Center for the Arts, Cleveland, OH,
 "The Skin Game", Smack Mellon, Brooklyn, NY interactive digital installation
 "Subject to Sound", The Rotunda Gallery, Brooklyn, NY. electronic sculpture
 "South by Southwest Interactive Festival", Austin, TX. web project
 "Tenacity", The Swiss Institute, New York, NY web project/sound installation
 "Greater New York," P.S.1., New York, NY. electronic sculpture/web project
 "Airworld Tonight," Postmasters Gallery, New York, NY. performance/tv broadcast
 "Arts Entertainment Network", The Walker Arts Center, Minneapolis, MN, web project
- "Viper International Media Festival", Lucerne, Switzerland. interactive installation
 "Virginia International Film Festival", Charlottesville, VA. media performance
 "Kino Vision", Gallery Fleur, Kyoto, Japan. cd-rom
 "Airworld", Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN. web project
 "The 1999 Robert Flaherty Film Seminar", Durham, NC.
 "WRO 99 7th Internation Media Art Biennale", Wroclaw, Poland. videoscreening
 "Toys and Noise", OK Center for Contemporary Art, Linz, Austria. interactive installation
 "Contact Zones", Centro de la Imagen, Mexico City, Mexico. cd-rom
 "Contact Zones", Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY. cd-rom
 "Fin de Siécle", Mire, Nantes, France. video installation
- "ISEA98", F.A.C.T., Manchester, England. interactive video installation
 "Trance Dance", Pacific Film Archives, Berekeley, CA. video screening
 "Tomorrow's Homes Today", Museum of Science and Industry, Manchester, England. interactive video installation
 "Touchware", SIGGRAPH '98, Orlando, FL. Interactive video installation.
 "Video Room Video Festival", Brooklyn, New York. video screening
 "European Media Art Festival", Osnabrück, Germany. video screening
 "Impakt Festival for Audiovisual Arts", Utrecht, Holland. video installation
 "Arts Edge", Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, Australia. web project
 "Viper International Media Festival", Lucerne, Switzerland. cd-rom
 "A Common Thread: Digital Media and the Creative Process", Fine Arts Gallery,
 Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC. interactive video installation.
- "Maintenance /Web", The Thing, NY, NY. Solo exhibition: web project
 "Small Appliances", The Light Factory, Charlotte, NC. Solo exhibition: video installation
 "Digital Studies", Alt-X web magazine. web project
 "Excavations", Bay Area Video Center, San Francisco, CA. video screening
 "Blast 5 Drama", Sandra Gering Gallery, New York, NY. web project
- "Cluster Images," Werkleitz Geselschaft, Tornitz, Germany. video screening
 "11th Fringe Film and Video Festival," Edinburgh, Scotland. video screening
 "The Next 5 Minutes, Tactical Media" V-2, Rotterdam, The Netherlands. performance

Selected Collections

- -New York Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York: permanent collection Speed Museum, Louisville, KY
- -Private collections

Selected Collaborative Works

The Kiss - 2002: algorithmic video projection with custom hardware/software

Horror Chase - 2002: algorithmic video projection with custom hardware/software

448 is Enough - 2002: interactive video installation

How I Learned - 2002: interactive video sculpture

Every Anvil – 2001; interactive video sculpture.

201: a space algorithm - 2001; interactive video/web project

Every Shot, Every Episode-2001; interactive video installation

The Babysitter Tapes - 2001; media performance

Pink Light- 2000: interactive electronic sculpture. light, and sound

Radio Wonderland- 2000; electronic sculpture, microwatt radio installation

Radio Frankenstein - 2000; electronic sculpture, microwatt radio/internet project http://www.radiofrankenstein.net

Airworld Probe- 1999; videotape, color, sound, 3:50.

Airworld Transit Lounge (sense of space)- 1999; interactive installation

Airworld - 1999; web project/mixed media project. http://www.airworld.net/

Sense of Space- 1999, interactive digital video installation

Replay - 1998; interactive digital video installation

Small Appliances - 1997; interactive video installation and CD-ROM

Transmission - 1997; videotape, color, sound, 7:00

Maintenance/Web - 1997; web project. http://www.thing.net/~m

Donor- 1995; videotape, color, sound, 5:00.

Critical Reviews, Press and Media Coverage

2002

"Jennifer and Kevin McCoy," 2002 Museum Preview, Art in America, (July 2002): p.42.

Jim Supanik "Pounding, Pulling, Slapping, Whacking: Jennifer and Kevin McCoy's Every Anvil", New York Arts Magazine (July 2002): p64.

Roberta Smith "Jennifer and Kevin McCoy," New York Times, (April 19, 2002): pE6.

2001

David Frankel, "Openings: Jennifer and Kevin McCoy," *Artforum* (November, 2001): pp. 136-137.

Anthony Huberman, "Ether Talk, " The Wire, (October, 2001): p82.

Stefan Caldana, "201 - a space algorithm," *el ciberPais*, (July 5, 2001): http://www.ciberpais.elpais.es/d/20010705/ocio/portada.htm

Carl Skelton, "aen.walkerart.org," dART International, (Winter 2001): pp.28-31.

Holland Cotter, "Events Listings," The New York Times. (January 25, 2001).

2000

Jeff Howe, "net.aesthetics," The Village Voice, (September 6 - 12, 2000): p. 85

James Oliver Cury, "Motion Pixels," Spin, vol. 16, no. 7 (July 2000): p.127

Claire Barliant, "The Challenge of Exhibiting a Supernatural Instrument," Feed, (May 31, 2000): http://www.feedmag.com/essay/es343lofi.html

Martin Spinelli, "Viva Frankenstein," (New York: PS1, 2000): http://www.ps1.org/cut/java/essavs/spinelli.html

Nicholas Noyes, "Frankenstein," (New York: PS1, 2000): http://www.ps1.org/cut/java/essays/noyes.html

Laura Marks, "Making a Scene With Live Video," The Independent Film & Video Monthly, vol. 23, no. 6 (July 2000): p.34-37

Lisa Curtis, "Subject to Scrutiny," Brooklyn Papers, (May 22, 2000): p. 9

Catherine Hong, "United Artists," Harper's Bazar, (May 2000): p.132 photo

Glen Helfand, "WebArtopia, The Art Entertainment Network has it all," San Francisco Gate Online, (April 26, 2000): http://www.sfgate.com/cgibin/article.cgi?file=/technology/archive/2000/04/26/webartopia.dtl

Rachael Stark, "Music in Wonderland," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, (April 20, 2000): J13

Howard Halle, "State of the Art," Time Out New York," no. 234, (March 16, 2000): p.80

Robert Cozzolino, "Airworld," Isthmus, (January 14, 2000): p. 22

1999

Laura Marks, "Low Tech is How Electrons Remember," Nach dem Film, no. 1 (December 1999): http://www.nachdemfilm.de/no1/mar01eng.html

G.H. Hovagimyan, "Jennifer and Kevin McCoy"

Collider (New York: The Thing, August 19, 1999)

The publication is a video interview published online at http://bbs.thing.net

Josephine Bosma, "Airworld: An Interview with Jennifer and Kevin McCoy" (Minneapolis: The Walker Art Center, 1999)

Published online at http://www.walkerart.org/gallery9/mccoy/bosma.html
Republished (forthcoming) in <a href="http://www.walke

Felix Stalder "Internet Retrograde: The Rise of the Net Infomercial", (Minneapolis: The Walker Art Center, 1999) *Published online at* http://www.walkerart.org/gallery9/mccoy/stalder.html

Steve Deitz, "Art.commerce," (Minneapolis: The Walker Art Center, 1999)
Published online at http://www.walkerart.org/gallery9/webwalker/ww_june.html#3