



IAIN BAXTER&, *Pile of Amps* (detail), 2008. Courtesy IAIN BAXTER&.

## Call for Participation

# interPLAY

between creativity & information

**A One-Day Symposium**  
**March 26, 2012**  
**York University Libraries**  
**Toronto, Canada**

**Keynote speaker:** Professor Richard A. Cavell, University of British Columbia

Our extended senses, tools, technologies, through the ages, have been closed systems incapable of interplay or collective awareness. Now, in the electric age, the very instantaneous nature of co-existence among our technological instruments has created a crisis quite new in human history. Our extended faculties now constitute a single field of experience which demands that they become collectively conscious. Our technologies, like our private senses, now demand an interplay and ratio that makes *rational* co-existence possible. (McLuhan 2002 [1962]: 5)

Inspired by Marshall McLuhan's transformation of information theory, from a "matching" model of communication to one of active "making," in 1966 Canadian conceptual artist IAIN BAXTER& began to explore the creative possibilities of "information" as a medium (Cavell 1999: 349). A 45-year process of exploration has led BAXTER& (a.k.a. Iain Baxter, a.k.a. N.E. Thing Co.) to engage with, and creatively reinterpret, shifting definitions of information across a range of disciplines, including business, computing, linguistics and theoretical biology. Like McLuhan, BAXTER& challenges us to re-conceive binary code as the stuff of dialogue and sensation. In the most recent work of BAXTER&, the Boolean operator "&" and DNA code are ciphers for what theoretical biologist Stuart A. Kauffman (2008: xi) has termed the "ceaseless creativity" of complex systems.

The ongoing publication of the *IB&raisonnE*—an experimental online catalogue raisonné being developed at York University Libraries, that seeks to expand and

transform traditional reference formats through exploratory methods of social production—provides the ideal occasion for responding to the visionary information art of IAIN BAXTER& with fresh approaches to information, information technology, and library and information science.

Notwithstanding the critical and creative models of information proposed by BAXTER&, McLuhan and others, Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver's influential "transmission" model of communication (1962) continues to dominate approaches to, and uses of, information across the disciplinary spectrum. A relative absence of critical and creative approaches to information is particularly notable in the field of library and information science, even as libraries face radical transformations in the information behaviours of users and to the overall information milieu. Setting out to challenge conceptualizations of information as linear, quantitative, neutral and context-free, interPLAY will probe the "resonant interval" between creativity and information as a noisy space for transdisciplinary and social experimentation, insight and intervention through a program of participants drawn from the digital humanities, information and library science, communication and cultural studies, art history and studio art.

interPLAY invites submissions for short (10-minute) and long (20-minute) presentations and creative interventions that respond to the themes below. Student submissions are encouraged.

### **Themes**

**Noisy Information** – Information is as much about noise, entropy and complexity as it is about pattern and precision: can the "noisy" character of information be harnessed as a creative and constructive force within the academic environment? Can information be conceived as non-linear, situated, embodied, physical or material, etc.?

**The "Information Landscape"** – How are information technologies transforming how creators, researchers and students conceive and intervene within the social and natural environment? What are the new information ecologies produced by the social media?

**Social Information** – How are information behaviours changing in response to social media?

**Interdisciplinary Information** – How are information and information technologies reconfiguring disciplinary boundaries, methodological tools as well as approaches to teaching and learning, both within the academy and beyond?

### **Submission Guidelines**

\*All proposals must include the following information\*:

- Name, title and affiliation of each author (please indicate student authors)
- An extended abstract (500 words) describing the presentation, including illustrations or diagrams for installation as needed
- Requirements for technical support (e.g., AV, space, electrical) required for presentation or installation, if needed
- First author's name and page numbers on all proposal pages

Please send proposals (as attachments to email) and other inquiries to:

**alauder@yorku.ca**

### **\*Deadlines\***

- Preliminary deadline for receipt of proposals: \*November 19, 2011\*
- December 5, 2011\*

### **References**

Cavell, Richard. 1999. McLuhan and Spatial Communication. *Western Journal of Communication* 63(3): 348-63.

Kauffman, Stuart A. 2008. *Reinventing the Sacred: A New View of Science, Reason, and Religion*. New York: Basic.

McLuhan, Marshall. 2002 [1962]. *The Gutenberg Galaxy*. Toronto: University of Toronto.

Shannon, Claude E. and Warren Weaver. 1962 [1948/1949]. *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.