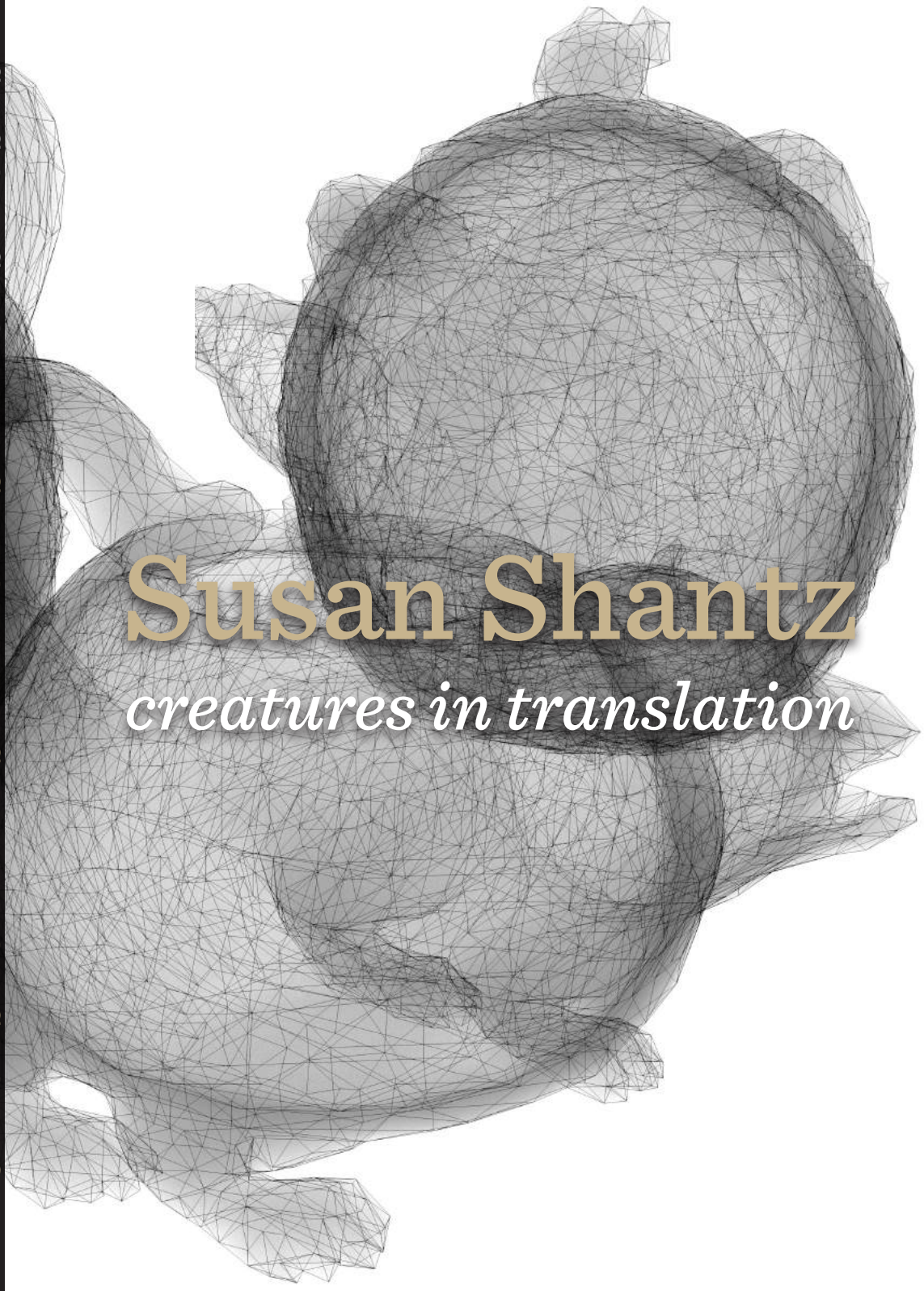




SUSAN SHANTZ CREATES TYPES IN TRANSLATION



Susan Shantz

creatures in translation



Susan Shantz

creatures in translation

April 27 – June 14, 2012
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T2N 4R3 Canada
www.acad.ca/ikg.html

February 21 – April 11, 2015
Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre
401 First Street SE
Medicine Hat, Alberta
T1A 8W2 Canada
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Susan Shantz

creatures in translation

Published on the occasion of the travelling exhibition

Susan Shantz: creatures in translation

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Foreword © 2013 Kent Archer and Wayne Baerwaldt
Invention, Error, and Evolution © 2013 Joanne Marion
Susan Shantz: Polytypes © 2013 Bruce Russell
A Third Space, X-Y-Z © 2013 Diana Sherlock

Co-published by: Kenderdine Art Gallery, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; Alberta College of Art + Design (ACAD), Calgary, Alberta; and Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre, Medicine Hat, Alberta

Edited by Lisa Vargo
Designed by Barr Gilmore
Printed and bound in Canada by Flash Reproductions and Anstey Bookbinding, Toronto
Photography by Trevor Hopkins
Publication co-ordinated by Kent Archer

ISBN 978-0-88880-586-7

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Susan Shantz: creatures in transition / foreword [by] Kent Archer and Wayne Baerwaldt ; edited by Lisa Vargo.

1. Shantz, Susan D. (Susan Dianne), 1957- — Exhibitions. I. Archer, Kent, 1961-, writer of added commentary II. Baerwaldt, Wayne, 1958-, writer of added commentary III. Vargo, Lisa, 1954-, editor of compilation IV. Marion, Joanne, 1959- . *Invention, error, and evolution*. V. Kenderdine Art Gallery, host institution, issuing body VI. Title: *Creatures in transition*.

N6549.S49A4 2013

709.2

C2013-907848-7



The artist would like to thank the Saskatchewan Arts Board and the Office of the Provost (Department Heads Research Support Fund, University of Saskatchewan) for grants towards the development of this project. A number of individuals provided invaluable production assistance: Jon Bath, Andreas Buchwaldt, Cory Schewaga, Joseph Anderson, Bruce Montcombroux and Patrick Bulas. Engineering Shops (University of Saskatchewan), Bit Services Company Ltd., Saskatoon, and Cimatrix Solutions, Oshawa provided 3D printing services; additional print production by Mondrian Hall, Saskatoon and Silver Fox Studios, Regina.

Foreword

Susan Shantz: Translating Artifacts: works-in-progress

KENT ARCHER + WAYNE BAERWALDT

Susan Shantz's current investigation and installation-in-progress, *creatures in translation*, presents digital computer clay-modeling tools to produce 2D to 3D outputs that imagine new ways of realizing form while simultaneously contemplating the loss of meaning and value. It is a significant creative and academic undertaking that the Kenderdine Art Gallery, the Illingworth Kerr Gallery and the Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre are pleased to support. Both the touring exhibition and the catalogue (with important essays by Joanne Marion, Bruce Russell and Diana Sherlock) will lead to debates on a range of subjects, from re-visioning the "original" artwork or artifact to the limits and industry applications of artistic experiments in 3D object fabrication. What is lost culturally in the process of mechanical alteration of image and artifact is a driving concern for Shantz that is equally challenging subject matter for all cultural institutions.

Shantz began her investigative process with a challenging proposition to address the changing value of the artifact as replica and the limits of referentiality. She began her search with the website of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria which re-presents a cross-section of the gallery's art collection in a digital format. Shantz was intrigued by one of several two-dimensional photos of Japanese Banko wear teapots that capture and animate the playful image of badger, sparrow and other animals. Her investigative challenge was led by a recurring question: what happens to form when limited visual information (as 2D documentation of an artifact) is translated and applied to a specific and rapidly evolving technology for 3D form building? The transformation of the two-dimensional

representation of a late 19th-century modernist Japanese export product is not as easy as it might appear. The profile of each object on the AGGV website is archived as a single, limited perspectival photo. The recipient mechanical 3D printer is largely left to interpret the information and cast a new version of a quirky modernist teapot. The pre-programmed path of the 3D printer and resultant imperfections in form is exactly what Shantz aims to track. The limited range of visual information is mechanically reformulated however into a surprisingly accurate replica of the original 3D teapot. The 3D printer literally calculates known and unknown vectors to translate information from a single image and spews out the image's information as thin layers or strings of plastic compound. While the general level of accuracy in delivering a teapot of semi-translucent faux porcelain is uncanny, Shantz was not interested in realizing an exact replica. Imperfections and deviations from the exact replica gave her much pleasure and fed her interest in referentiality, the limits of the derivative and systems of imminent collapse and failure.

It is when the translation of image and process to a material application appears "natural" that it may provoke viewers to contemplate the gaps between the so-called 'original' and new forms and materials that figure in a process of translation. Although we as viewers and makers are familiar with the shifting values of measurement of form in one material to another, could Shantz' process of translation signal a paradigm shift? How so and on what grounds? Perhaps one is no longer able to identify a paradigm shift in the technology around 3D object making. However, viewers might contemplate as Shantz has the subtle and not so subtle impact of the translation process and ongoing automation of the manufacturing sector on an emerging artistic critique. Shantz proposes to track the process and track the loss of cultural information associated with digital translation. Is the process-oriented work a post-modern creation whereby critique is practically eliminated or at least no longer focused on a results-based craft object? The artist's investigation in fact encroaches on and expands the framework for critique to connect creative playfulness and innovation, both concepts attracting increased attention in both post-secondary education research and industry circles. Shantz' work signals an expanding role for critique to track and assess the many shifting voices that are commenting on the loss of cultural values invested in the ideas and forms of artifacts *and* artifacts in translation. This is the enlightening gift of Shantz' work and makes her exhibition and ongoing investigation an exciting one for viewers from all disciplinary backgrounds.

We would like to thank Susan Shantz for her contribution to the investigation of the dynamic concept of loss of cultural information that occurs in the translation of one cultural form or idea to another. It is essential research around the creative process that induces clarity around new forms of critique in mixed-media art as well as critique that must guide creative research in design, advertising and the industry and manufacturing sector in Canada and abroad. This publication would not have been possible without the support of a Rawlinson Creative Initiative Award at the Alberta College of Art + Design and funding through the University of Saskatchewan to Shantz's research and the Kenderdine Art Gallery. In addition to our catalogue writers acknowledged earlier we would like to thank all the institutions and associated staff members for their sustained participation. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the support and keen eye of book designer Barr Gilmore. This beautiful publication would not have been possible without his creative guidance.

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Susan Shantz has exhibited her work across the country in artist-run, public and commercial galleries. Recent bodies of work include *chamber* and *canopy* (Art Gallery of Regina and Mendel Art Gallery), *technologies of tenderness* (Medicine Hat Museum and Art Gallery and the Art Gallery of Prince Albert) and *e(ate)n* and *Satiate* (Art Gallery of Hamilton, Ste Hyacinthe Art Gallery and Southern Alberta Art Gallery). She has received grants from the Canada Council, Saskatchewan Arts Board and the B.C. and Ontario Arts Councils. She teaches sculpture in the Department of Art and Art History at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon.

For more information on Susan Shantz and her work please visit:
www.ccca.ca (Centre for Canadian Contemporary Art)



Invention, Error, and Evolution

Susan Shantz's *creatures in translation*

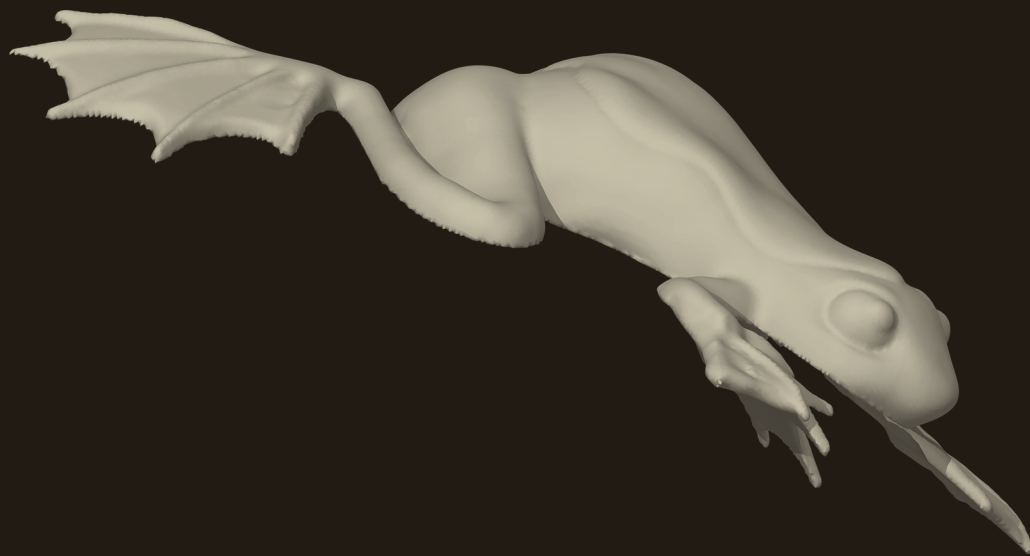
JOANNE MARION

creatures in translation teems with life, mammalian and amphibious, avian and marine. The works swarm from frame and flatness as from the egg or the primordial soup. Ranging from the endearingly miniature to the dauntingly enlarged, they are at once comical and uncanny, playful and eerie. But nothing actually moves in the room. All is completely static. One observes that Susan Shantz's two- and three-dimensional creatures are dissected and pinned, sliced and sampled, secured with steel knobs and encased behind glass.

In Shantz's elegant and engaging laboratory research is in progress: some works are complete, some partially underway, still others at the notational stage, germs of ideas. The liveliness which permeates the exhibition is new for Shantz, stemming from her expansive exploration of the creative and educational potential of fast-developing digital 2D and 3D imaging and printing technologies. It springs too from her creative entanglement with process, her embrace of the errors, mistakes, and failures inherent in these otherwise mordant processes of replication and iteration.

Shantz's previous work over the last decade--*canopy, chamber, and technologies of tenderness*--parsed contemporary intersections of science, technology, and art; cultural presentations of nature; and craft practice and domestic work in relation to the labour of mass production. These are dynamics very much of our moment. Yet the polemical framework underlying Shantz's work can be traced more than 300 years back into the past, even as it reaches forward into the quantum future.

In her fascinating and wondrously erudite examination of visual education in the eighteenth-century Western world, *Artful Science*, Barbara Maria Stafford describes the formation of two ways of understanding,



offering antimononic approaches to learning and knowledge. One is the path of a visual-oral culture characterized by the sensual and spectacular attributes of the Baroque; the other, the Enlightenment's reasoned and text-based epistemology. Stafford points to "cabinets of curiosities" of the time, collections of natural artifacts amassed by scholars and aristocrats, as epitomizing the distinction and the dilemma.

The optically-based rhetoric of being versus becoming can be situated within the larger debate concerning exhibitionism. Experimentation conspicuously reconfigured both matter and self. These promethean uses of technology also had an impact on systems of ordering. Were natural objects to be arranged ostentatiously according to their flamboyant materials or reticently disciplined by linguistic schemes?¹

"At present," Stafford proposes, "information is in transit, crossing over from 'hedonistic' oral-visual modes to 'serious' textual methods and back again."² Shantz's exhibitionism too is informed by this restless passage between being and becoming.

Shantz began the work in *creatures in translation* by accessing online images of four ceramic artifacts in the collection of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria. Part of a large collection of nineteenth-century Japanese Banko ware, the four tea pots are characterized by creatures such as badgers, birds, frogs, and sea creatures, which connected loosely with Shantz's ongoing interest in cultural uses of natural imagery. In a process quite opposite to the precision, preservation, and copyright protection inherent in a museum's mission, Shantz and her students used clay modelling software and a haptic tool to replicate the teapots. The replications are necessarily imperfect as Shantz explains:

*We were working at a distance from objects archived in a public collection, so the limitations of online visual source material became part of our content. For example, we could not see the inside or back of the teapot and had to imagine them. Invention took over where methodical reproduction encounters limits and this, along with errors and mistakes, became our creative edge.*³

As part of her thinking process Shantz digitally sliced the images of the pots and drained them of their ebullient colour. The website collage renderings were then printed and used as the bases of Shantz's own relief collages. A pair of digital collage prints was also handed to artist collaborator Joseph Anderson to work with, resulting in a series of delicate

watercolours akin to the Victorian animal illustrations which are the subject of Anderson's own research.

The eighteenth-century creator of modern collage, Mary Delaney (1700 - 1777), also chose natural subjects for her more than 1000 renderings during a prodigious, late-life production of floral specimens. Floating on a dense black watercolour and constructed of coloured tissue with such fine attention to minute detail that they were said to be fit for scholarly botanical study, Delaney's collages were facilitated by her free access to the Duchess of Portland's extensive natural and horticultural collections. Like Shantz's works, they relied on fecund display: Delaney "was an early admirer of Carl Linnaeus's so-called 'sexual system,' a method of classification based on the numbers of reproductive organs of plants--the stamens and pistils. As dainty as her art might look at first sight, it was based on the nimble cutting and counting of the sexual organs of flowers."⁴

Three hundred and fifty years later and a continent away, Shantz split her creatures into their component segments, as an earthy globe is splayed into cartographic flatness (*3D Rendering: Sea Creature Teapot, Fragments*), and re-constituted her 3D digital frogs into a 2D relief collage that romps and swirls (*3D Rendering: Frog Teapot*). Shantz then hand-rubbed pastel along the vestiges of clay lines in the pale halftone prints to sculpt their papery surfaces, and subtly imbued the collages with a sense of human touch as delicate, transitory and intimate as the tiny snips of Mary Delaney's scissors.

Subsequent Shantz experimentations, the *AGGV Website 3D Fragment renderings*, share the Delaney specimens' rich black backgrounds. Shantz's digital creatures hover in an inky void, their isolated electronic forms now third generation variants of the original Banko ceramic artisans' hand-glazed mammals, birds, amphibians, and sea creatures. Shantz had observed the surface neutralization common to 3D prints in thermoplastic, so her selection of the "third stage" Banko ware was based not on their decorative glazing but rather on the pots' imagery of a domesticated nature in appropriately sculptural modes. In the Banko teapots, relief creatures are laid atop a vessel structure, as in the *Teapot with Raised Frog Design* and *Teapot with Sea Creature Motifs*, or comprise the form itself, as in the *Teapot in the Shape of a Badger*, and *Teapot in the Shape of a Sparrow*. Beyond these pragmatic considerations however, Shantz's selection of these particular artifacts has proven peculiarly apropos.

As curator Barry Till describes in *Fanciful Images: Japanese Banko Ceramics*, Banko ware has a multivalent history beginning in the eighteenth

century when Nunami Rozan, a wealthy eighteenth-century Japanese merchant with an interest in horticultural design and ceramics, imprinted *banko* and *fueki* stamps, meaning “everlasting,” “enduring,” and “changeless,” on his own vessels. The four stages of Banko ware production since then have each been characterized by imitation, amalgamation, and innovation in form, technique, molding, decoration, and glazing. By the beginning of the twentieth century, domestic popularity spurred production of Banko ware for export to Europe and the United States, with an explosion of fanciful forms and finishes. Appropriately, in relation to their iterative issue at Shantz’s hands, the third stage Banko ware of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria’s collection has been described as “imaginative, bizarre, whimsical, fantastical and charming, but sometimes grotesque.”⁵ Banko ware has proven everlasting and enduring--but changeless only in its capacity for endless variety.

All of Shantz’s 3D thermoplastic prints poetically gesture back to their Banko ceramic origins through her rubbing of light-toned clay slips onto their surfaces, her intention being to bring out surface textures, emphasize forms, and return to these glowing plastic progeny a sense of earthiness and the human hand.⁶ The multiple hues of the clay slips serve as well to individualize the iterations. So does the variety of print sizes, which in the case of Shantz’s sparrow and sea creature pieces, ranges from full scale to 1/3 to 1/2 to 3/4 of the estimated real dimensions of the original Banko teapots. Shantz simply wanted to see how these scale shifts, which were selected as logical for the technician, would look. In contrast to the rationale behind their dimensions she arranges the *3D Prints (Sparrows)* in life-like little groupings. One can almost hear the pecking, chirping and cooing - except of course that they are mutant “replicants,” luminous, silent, and still.

Mutagenesis is a process by which the genetic information of an organism is changed in a stable manner, resulting in a mutation. It may occur spontaneously in nature, or as a result of exposure to mutagens. It can also be achieved experimentally using laboratory procedures. In nature mutagenesis can lead to cancer and various heritable diseases, but it is also the driving force of evolution.⁷

Shantz’s other sparrow forms, *Slip-cast Teapots (Sparrow)*, are twelve small slip-cast pieces displayed inside a glass case. Poured a dozen times into seven part plaster molds of 3D prints whose surface lines remain evident, these little clay birds and their clustered arrangement are charming--disarmingly so. Although they initially appear identical, a

closer look reveals dysfunctional aberrations amongst the little flock: tops unfinished; heads and handles incomplete, gaping open or fused; and lids missing. Mistakes and failures of process produce unanticipated results, cartoonish mutations which Shantz employs to poetically comment on the underlying risks and opportunities of 3D printing. In a further creative entanglement, *3D Fragment Rendering (Frog Crown)*, pearlescent amphibians crawl over each other, emerging from their dark 3D print’s support matrix, a crystalline vestige of the 3D printing process retained by Shantz for its beauty and strangeness. She places this crown on glass above a thinner section of the same 3D print, an unredeemable error given to her by the production technician. Its segments replicated, iterations completed and incomplete, a hybrid mass of striving kitsch grotesquerie and jewel-like splendour, *Frog Crown* is fascinating, amusing and awful, a complex metaphor inextricably linked to, embodied by, its medium.

Perhaps less amusing are the enormous *Frog-alone A* sculptures. Made of styrofoam CAD router cut from Shantz’s 3D files, the two *AGGV Website 3D print fragments* are machined carvings which Shantz imperfectly covered with a drywall plaster material and sanded. Unfinished and blankly monolithic as they rise from the vestiges of their matrix supports, the frog forms, like the protagonist of David Cronenberg’s film *The Fly*, are clearly in the process of becoming monstrously akin to the imaging and machining processes by which they were created. So too is *3D Fragment Rendering (Badger Teapot)*, printed on paper and then hand-coloured in soft, grainy pastel at a scale which dauntingly dwarfs human viewers. The somewhat comical expression of the original Banko teapot badger is preserved through the multiple processes to which Shantz has subjected it, yet now its gaze is a little vacant, its spout/snout perhaps more of a gaping maw than one finds comfortable--and is its coloration, though a warm pale hue, rather... skin-like for an electronically-generated badger? Throughout *creatures in translation* the viewer’s uneasiness is gradually awakened, and our sense of the uncanny--the familiar made strange--permeates subtly yet palpably.

Cultural evocations of hybrids, mutants, clones, and replicants abound in modernity’s artistic, cinematic, and literary explorations: from Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* to Margaret Atwood’s *The Year of the Flood*; from twentieth-century Surrealist exquisite corpse drawings to Marcel Dzama’s, and Kiki Smith and David Altmejd’s sculptures and installations; from *The Fly* to *Blade Runner* and *X-Men*. Beyond such potent evocations and beyond out-sourcing the fabrication of their art, many artists now work

alongside scientists and researchers to investigate, to critique and pursue the research and application of contemporary scientific technologies. MIT Media Lab's Neri Oxman is an architect and materials designer, who, along with her collaborators, produces nature-based, self-modifying materials with medical, architectural, and engineering applications. These designs, such as *Ba'al Zbub (The Lord of the Flies)* or *Medusa 1*, are so potent in their technological and artistic rigour that her works have been acquired by MOMA and were exhibited at Centre Pompidou in 2012 in *Imaginary Beings: Mythologies of the Not Yet*. Oxman describes how some of her 3D printed molds are themselves altered by iterations of a cast: "The work is inspired by the Cartesian Wax thesis as elucidated by Descartes in the 1640's... According to Descartes, the essence of the wax is whatever survives the various changes in the wax's physical form. Not unlike the Cartesian Wax, "materials that think" embody processes of formation that have generated their physical form."⁸

Oxman exhibits the results and signifiers of her research's success, in keeping with her inspiration Descartes, for whom the "self-consciously systematic, ethical and linguistic Enlightenment intensified (the) conviction that error was the greatest evil."⁹

Other exhibitions of 3D printing such as *Industrial Revolution 2.0* for example, curated at the Victoria and Albert Museum by New York design maven Murray Moss in 2011 or the *3D Print Show* in London in 2012 also demonstrate that the technology and the artists and designers using it are already capable of creating impeccable works of the most remarkable intricacy and complexity. And in bio-printing researchers are building layers of living cells in a matrix into 3D structures such as functioning vascular systems. As marvellous as these achievements are however, their production is more akin to morphogenesis, in which the developing form of one organism is changed at a cellular level. This is vastly different from alteration at the level of DNA, which means the change is passed on to progeny. It is mutagenesis alone, change created through mutational error and iterative failure, which drives evolution.

The viewer's experience of Oxman's work and that of other 3D printing artists, designers, and researchers differs substantially from the experience of Shantz's *creatures in translation*. The restless energy stimulated by the antimony inherent in the disposition of her works and their embodiment of fragments, iterations, errors, and aberrations provokes a participatory excitement in its viewers. We are engaged in a rich and self-directed educational experience fired by a frisson of cognitive dissonance. Shantz

further extends this generous instance of Socratic education through her ongoing collaborations with her own students and upcoming onsite lab opportunities at the various galleries exhibiting *creatures in translation*. In these, Shantz proposes to make a basic tabletop 3D printer such as the MakerBot Replicator available to post-secondary students and the general public to produce works from their own digital files. This emancipatory "DIY" approach distinguishes Shantz's practice from that of most other 3D printing artist-explorers, just as its uncanny resonance distinguishes it incontrovertibly from the experience of increasingly available, commercialized 3D printing services.

Neil Turok, director of the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics in Waterloo, Ontario and a passionate educator, proposes in *The Universe Within* that we are analog beings living in a finite digital information age, moving rapidly towards a quantum future. Quantum information exists in superimposition *and* in parallel *and* in multiple entanglements, with a subtlety, depth, and delicacy far exceeding that of analog or digital information. Turok explains though that:

*... the laws of quantum physics imply it cannot be copied, a result known as the 'no cloning' theorem. Unlike classical computers, quantum computers will not be able to replicate themselves. Without us, or at least some classical partner, they will not be able to evolve. So it seems that a relationship between ourselves, as analog beings, and quantum computers may be of great mutual benefit and it may represent the next leap forward for evolution and for life.*¹⁰

Susan Shantz's meditations on digital iteration, error and evolution in *creatures in translation* prove prescient. Her interest in the immaterial limitations of digital information and the creative potential of failure in its material manifestation in 3D printing grapple with the most fundamental, complex, and advanced ideas about mutation and evolution. Turok quotes Einstein's reference to quantum entanglement as "spooky action at a distance,"¹¹ perhaps also an appropriate description of Shantz's mutant musings given her gentle humour, democratic disposition and the subtle waft of the uncanny pervading her experiments, back at the lab. •

NOTES

1. Barbara Maria Stafford, *Artful Science: Enlightenment Entertainment and the Eclipse of Visual Education* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1994), p. xxvi.
2. Ibid. p. xxvii.
3. Susan Shantz, unpublished manuscript, 2012.
4. Andrea Wulfe, *An Artist of the Botanical World*, New York Times Sunday Book Review of Molly Peacock's *The Paper Garden*. Accessed March 2, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/15/books/review/book-review-the-paper-garden-by-molly-peacock.html>.
5. Barry Till, *Fanciful Images: Japanese Banko Ceramics* (Victoria, Canada: Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 2013), p. 20. A fourth stage of Banko ware has been underway since the mid-twentieth century, with 133 factories currently employing 1,300 artisans, some of whom are acknowledged Japanese master craftsmen.
6. Susan Shantz, in conversation with the writer, Feb. 22, 2013
7. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mutagenesis> accessed Feb. 22, 2013. See also http://trshare.triumf.ca/~safety/EHS/rpt/rpt_4/node14.html, accessed March 1, 2013.
8. <http://web.media.mit.edu/~neri/site/projects/cartesianwax/cartesianwax.html>
9. Barbara Maria Stafford, p. 281
10. Neil Turok, *The Universe Within: From Quantum to Cosmos* (Toronto, Ontario: House of Anansi Press Inc. 2012), p. 238
11. Ibid. p. 234

Joanne Marion is the curator and director of the Esplanade Art Gallery in Medicine Hat, Alberta. She has curated many solo and group exhibitions at the Gallery since 1999, including the collaborative nationally touring exhibitions *Ian Johnston: Reinventing Consumption* and *Chance Operations 2: Rodney Konopaki and Rhonda Neufeld*. Recent texts on contemporary Canadian art for exhibition publications include "Winding Across History and Geography: The Art of Garry Newton," in *Garry Newton: Bon à Tirer* (2012), "Shift," in *Les Manning: Common Opposites* (2011), and "The Power of Imaginative Projection," in *Alison Norlen: Glimmer* (2010).



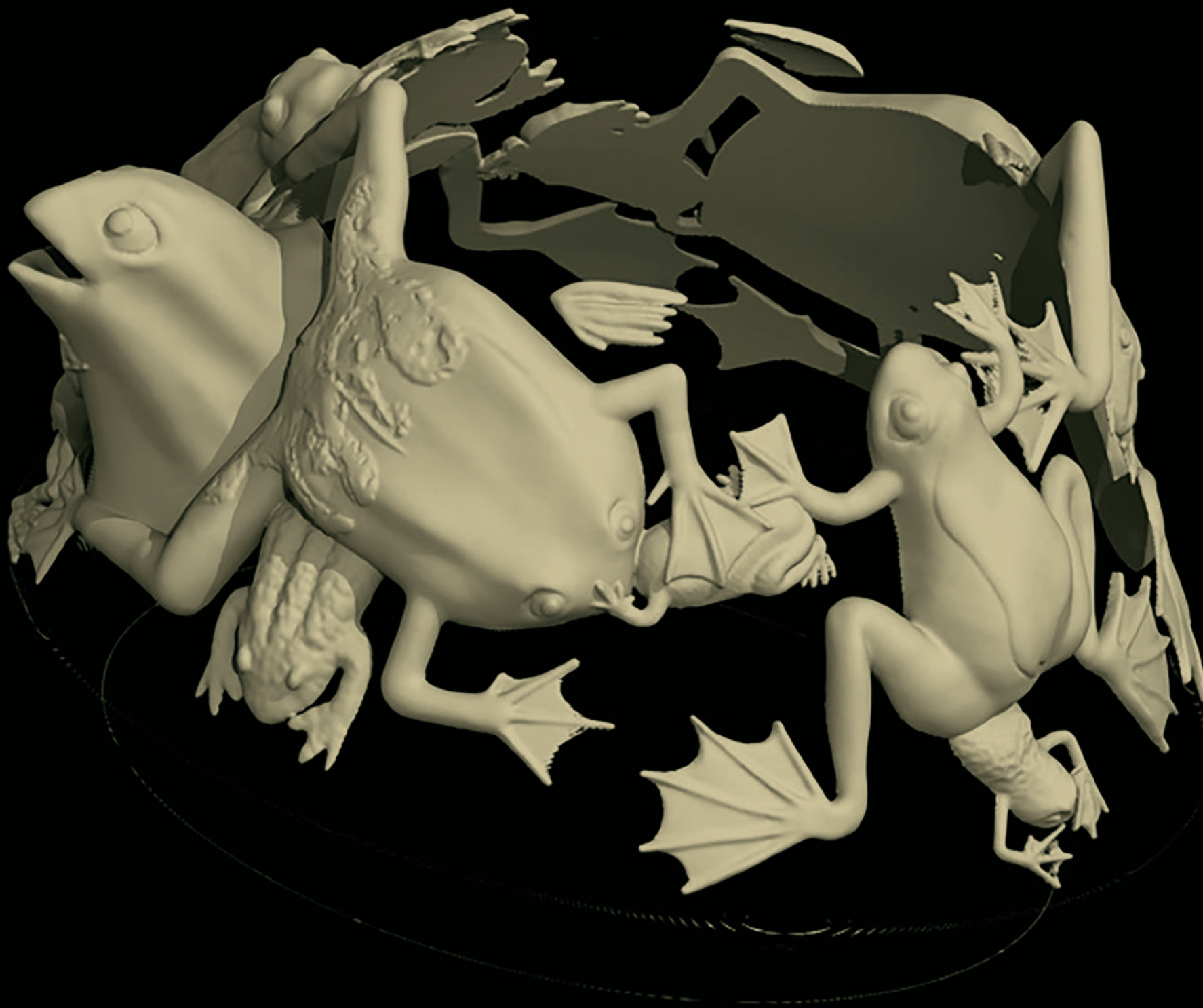
Banko Ware: Teapots in the Shape of a Sparrow, Badger, Frogs, Sea Creatures, 2008
Art Gallery of Greater Victoria (AGGV), images from the Collections on-line database





AGGV Website 3D prints (full scale pots with lids), 2009-12
top: Frog teapot; bottom: Badger teapot
thermoplastic, each approximately 12 x 15 x 12 cm

AGGV Website 3D prints (full scale pots with lids), 2009-12
top: Sparrow teapot; bottom: Sea Creature teapot
thermoplastic, each approximately 12 x 15 x 12 cm





previous spread: *Frog Crown Rendering*, 2012, archival inkjet print, 100 x 123 cm

installation view of *Susan Shantz: creatures in translation* at the Dunlop Art Gallery, 2012





AGGV Website 3D prints (3/4, 1/2, 1/3 scale Sparrow teapots), 2009-12
thermoplastic, acrylic resin and clay, various sizes

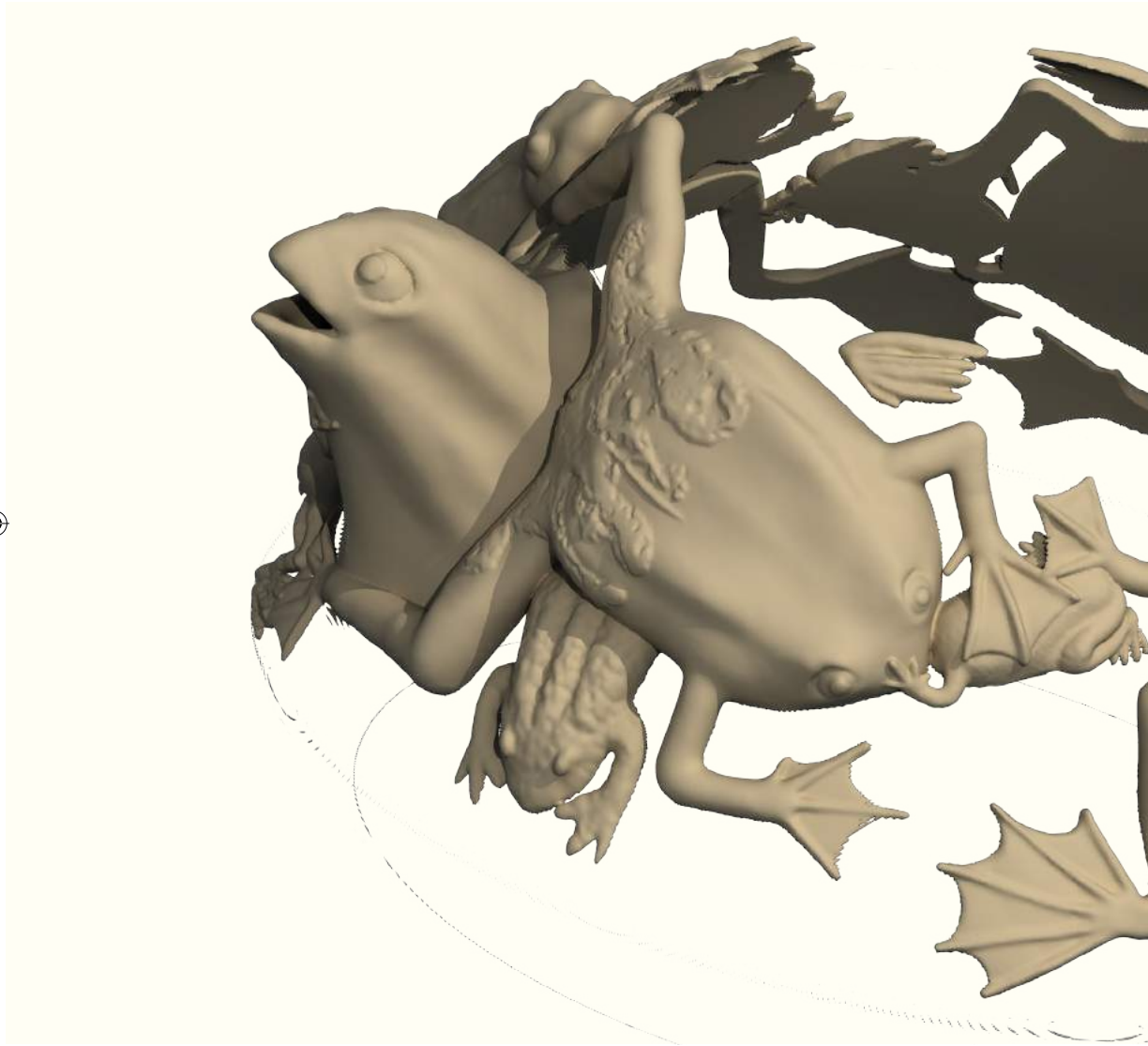


AGGV Website 3D print fragments (Frogs), 2009-12
thermoplastic, acrylic resin, clay, each approximately 3 x 10 x 5 cm



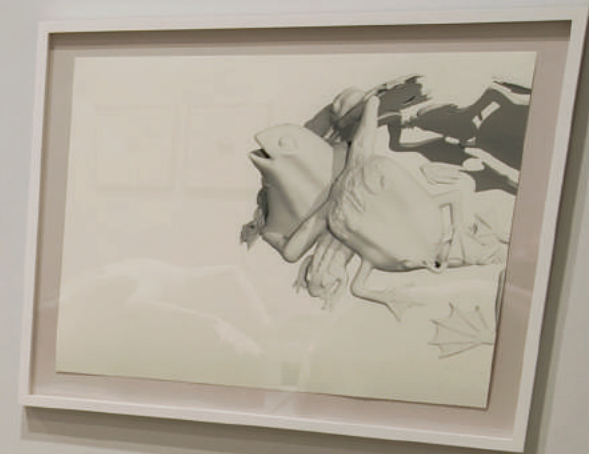
AGGV Website 3D Rendering (Sea Creature teapot, fragments), 2011-12
mixed media on paper, 156 x 100 x 7.5 cm





Frog Crown Rendering (detail), 2012
archival inkjet print, 92 x 73.5 cm

AGGV Website 3D Print Fragment (Frog Crown), 2011-12
thermoplastic, 18 x 35 x 35 cm





previous spread: *AGGV Website 3D print fragment (Frog-alone A)*, 2011, styrofoam, plaster, 39 x 61 x 84 cm each

installation view of *Susan Shantz: creatures in translation* at the Dunlop Art Gallery, 2012







Banko Ware: Frog teapot (from AGGV Collections on-line database), 2008
paper collage, 50 x 50 x 3.5 cm, framed



Banko Ware: Frog teapot (from collage of AGGV Collections on-line database), 2009
watercolour by Joseph Anderson, 50 x 50 x 3.5 cm, framed





Banko Ware: Sparrow teapot (from AGGV Collections on-line database), 2008
paper collage, 10 x 14 cm



Banko Ware: Sparrow teapot (from collage of AGGV Collections on-line database), 2010
watercolour by Joseph Anderson, 10 x 14 cm





previous spread:
 background: *AGGV Website 3D print fragments: Frog Crown in-progress*, 2011-12, thermoplastic, 47 x 40.5 x 2.0 cm each

12 AGGV Website Sparrow teapots (from 3D prints, detail), 2011-12
 clay, 10 x 14 x 10 cm each



Susan Shantz in the lab holding AGGV Website 3D print, full scale Badger teapot, 2009
Photograph by Dave Stobbe


Susan Shantz: Polytypes

BRUCE RUSSELL

In this new body of work, *creatures in translation*, Susan Shantz explores a wide range of ludic reproductions of a group of Japanese pots from the collection of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria. Her “reproductions” range from old fashioned, hand-rendered, 3D illustration technologies to a series of computer-generated three-dimensional printed forms using what is still an evolving technology. In a direct attack on high art notions, Shantz seems to cast back to the pre-photographic era with watercolour copies of the originals, which were in fact commissioned by her from another artist, Joseph Anderson. Computer renderings of the digital clay-modeling files are printed and manipulated as giant tole paper cutups, evoking not only this folk art tradition but also the humor and delight of children’s pop-up books. Old fashioned and kitsch media seem to mock the pretension of both heroic art and the latest high-tech modeling media.

Shantz’s new work demonstrates that “real” works of art can now be readily replicated, cloned as it were, from their cataloging data and manipulated into a plurality of new works. Just as Photoshop™ destroyed the *vérité* of the news photo, the artifact has become vulnerable to replication or distortion; the prototype becomes a polytype. But this is not necessarily something to be feared, as originality is no longer invested in the original but now blossoms in the diversity of the variations which derive from it.

The range and variety of “reproducibility” now explored by contemporary artists like Shantz, were unimaginable a hundred years ago when Walter Benjamin wrote what has become one of the best-known critical texts of the twentieth century. In the 1930s, Benjamin drew attention to “the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction.”¹ In this influential text he reasserts the degree to which the impact of original works of art cannot be



captured in printed reproductions. “In even the most perfect reproduction, one thing is lacking: the here and now of the work of art—its unique existence in a particular place,” which he termed “the decay of the aura...”² It was an evolving text with which he was never quite satisfied. Ironically, as Benjamin was voicing his concern, artists were increasingly exploring mechanical reproduction as a vehicle of art making.³

As early as 1930 the Paris avant-garde bookseller Adrienne Monnier had challenged what she considered the elitist premise of Benjamin’s position.⁴ The conversation between them took place in her shop where she sold and helped publish the *éditions de luxe* of avant-garde artists, both the Surrealists and others. Monnier pointedly raised the multiple nature of new art media such as photography, which she knew was a particular interest of Benjamin’s, indeed, in this passage he refers to it as his *bête noire*. But there were more radical developments; for example, Marcel Duchamp with his *Roto Reliefs*, *Green Box* and other pioneering multiples was charting a completely novel artistic praxis. Printed by commercial printers, these works deliberately eschewed the preciousness of the limited edition and traditional craft materials and processes of the fine art graphic media. The Russian and German avant-garde artists of the inter-war era were also using commercial printing and unlimited editions to circulate to mass audiences what were in effect original works of art which were no longer reproductions but original in themselves. Benjamin termed this development “the reproduction of a work of art designed for reproducibility.”⁵

In reality the uniqueness of the work of art was even in Benjamin’s time a relatively recent preoccupation. From the Renaissance onwards, well into the nineteenth century, artists and their assistants produced multiple copies of successful works which were sold to demanding patrons. For example Titian’s atelier produced numerous versions of his most acclaimed works, many of which are only known in these copies, and prominent patrons who could afford “originals” saw no disgrace in pursuing such works. The Emperor Rudolph II, as well as kings Phillip IV of Spain, and Charles I commissioned and proudly displayed such copies. Nor was it considered shameful for successful artists to copy the works of their predecessors. Such copies were considered original works of art in their own right as an homage to the prototype. As well, engravings and casts of both classical and contemporary works circulated widely and were avidly collected by discerning connoisseurs.⁶ All this would change when artists began to turn their backs on the academic tradition and novelty became the hallmark of genius with Impressionism and Post-Impressionism. The Modernist

concept of the distinctive autograph of creative genius further asserted itself with Abstract Expressionism. Subsequently, both Dada and Pop artists responded with hostility to this idea, appropriating subjects from popular culture, especially advertising, and circulating their work in prints and multiples. These artists also used assistants to fabricate their work, a practice that has become so commonplace in contemporary art to now pass without note.

Despite its canonic status, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* has continued to be a focus of controversy. In his equally signal essays exploring simulacra in contemporary society, Jean Baudrillard sees nostalgia in Benjamin’s approach which he would also characterize as melancholic.⁷ He traces the ubiquity of contemporary simulacra in everything --from the cloning body parts and animals to the replication of historic sites and landmarks by Disney World and Las Vegas—as an almost viral replacement of authenticity with a degree of alienation on a scale unimagined by Benjamin. “It is the real that has become our true Utopia - but a Utopia that is no longer in the realm of the possible that can only be dreamt of as one would dream of a lost object.” He argues that “we live in a world where there is more and more information and less and less meaning... where ‘reality’ had been replaced by information.”⁸

Shantz has previously explored the terrain of “inauthentic” mass-produced objects in her artwork. In *Satiate* Shantz appropriated industrially produced domestic objects, mostly culinary or decorative vessels, to create a vision of consumer consumption and abundance.⁹ And her *Technologies of Tenderness* explored not only new medical technologies but also employed industrial processes in the fabrication of the works presented.¹⁰ In her most recent corpus, *creatures in translation*, mechanical reproduction is not just an artistic medium; it has become the subject of her work itself.

In choosing these early twentieth-century Japanese Banko ware pots—portraying a badger, a sparrow, a cluster of frogs, and various sea creatures—for her exploration of new three-dimensional computer imaging technologies, Shantz has made an inspired choice. Banko ware itself reproduces the forms of the creatures it transforms into useful objects such as vases, pitchers, dishes and teapots.¹¹ Although produced primarily for export, catering to Western Orientalist enthusiasm, Banko carries forward older traditions of Japanese ceramics, which recast functional objects such as incense boxes and burners, vases, and culinary dishes with mimetic

whimsy. The use of animals as a vehicle for humor and satire by mirroring human society is a venerable Japanese tradition in the arts.

Consider one of the earliest surviving Japanese narrative picture scrolls painted in the mid-eleventh century by the Buddhist abbot Toba Sojo. Now often called the first Japanese manga, the *Kokuyu*, (*Frolicking Animals Scrolls*), depicts foxes, badgers, monkeys, deer and a profusion of rabbits and frogs acting out the conventional activities of monks and lay people in temple precincts or on pilgrimage. Toba Sojo savages the decadence of Heian-era religious life in pictorial rather than literary form, for example, by painting a frog bodhisattva sitting in the lotus position surrounded by his fawning acolytes piously chanting sutras, while other monastic beasts feast, get drunk, frolic, and fornicate.¹² Recasting his contemporaries as beasties enables the artist to boost the level of caricature and to portray activities which would have been too vulgar and scandalous if he had portrayed them as human activities.

Japanese potters over the centuries applied similar humor to their work, and when the age of European exploration created a new market for imported luxury goods, East Asian porcelain and Japanese ceramics were of particular interest. European and North American consumers were fascinated by Japanese exports, many of which were calculated to appeal to preconditioned Orientalist expectations. And by the end of the nineteenth century, Banko ware, while largely hand-decorated and formed, also involved mechanical processes, a very simple early form of industrial production – clay pressed into molds permitting the replication of multiples of the same form in quantities to meet this growing demand for *Japonisme* as a marker of advanced fashion.

It is at this intersection of “design for industry” and the artists’ multiple that recent exploration of new imaging technology by artists such as Shantz can be situated. Artists have always been drawn to new technologies; in the seventies, for example, avant-garde artists quickly assimilated Polaroid and video photography, as well as photocopying, in radical new forms of expression. The proliferation of personal computers and the potential of accessible software such as AutoCAD and Photoshop™ were also quickly assimilated by artists. Recent developments in 3D imaging and printing technologies have begun to be used by sculptors in their creative processes. Michael Eden’s variations on classical European porcelains made by Additive Layer printing, is an example, but such works seems to be primarily engaged with the interrogation of high art/craft distinction.¹³

While Shantz’ past work has considered aspects of fine art and craft, through appropriated domestic objects refracted through a feminist valorization of women’s creative work, there is a deeper ambivalence in *creatures in translation*. This is not nostalgia for a lost authenticity, Baudrillard’s melancholic perspective that can plague art/craft polemics. Rather what is evident here is a keen delight in the potential of these new technologies, which offer limitless possibilities for playful exploration. Like the abbot Toba Sojo, Shantz’s humor informs her exuberant response to her subject matter – these wild creatures formed into domestic teapots. Hers is a gentle interrogation of the aura of the art commodity in a time when fashion, media and industry are ever-increasingly aligned. The resulting work is sophisticated, witty and charming, not only employing new technologies, but profoundly engaging with their ramifications. •

NOTES

1. Third Version in Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, Vol. 4, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2003, pp. 251-283.
2. "The Work of Art..." p. 253, p. 255.
3. His concern is shared by his contemporary art historians; see for example Bernard Berenson, *The Italian Painters of the Renaissance*, London: Phaidon, 1952, p. x.
4. "Paris Diary", Feb. 4, 1930, in *Selected Writings*, vol. 2, Cambridge, 1999, p. 348.
5. "The Work of Art..." p. 256. For his discussion of Dadaism in this context, see: pp. 266-267.
6. Benjamin of course understood this, see "The Work of Art..." p. 252. All this would change when artists began to turn their backs on the academic tradition and when novelty became the hall mark of genius with the Impressionism and post-impressionism. It is perhaps indicative that it was not until 1895 that "art forgery" became a criminal offence in France.
7. *Simulacra*, University of Michigan Press, 1981, "Cloning," p. 91
8. Op cit.
9. *Satiare*, Lethbridge: Southern Alberta Art Gallery, 1998; with catalogue essay by Lucy Lippard and Renne Baert; see also *Satiare*, Regina: Mackenzie Art Gallery, 1998 with an essay by Timothy Long.
10. *Technologies of Tenderness*, Medicine Hat: Medicine Hat Art Museum and Art Gallery, 1998, with an essay by Sigrid Dahle.
11. Barry Till, *Fanciful Images: Japanese Banko Ceramics*, Victoria: Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 2013
12. A filmed scan of the first of the four *Kokuyu* scrolls can be seen on Utube. The third and fourth scrolls are believed to be later imitations by another hand. There is a facsimile reproducing all four scrolls with an introduction by Hideo Okkydaira, Honalulu: East West Press, 1969.
13. Eden's work is represented by Adrian Sassoon Gallery in London and can be seen on the Gallery's website.

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A Third Space, X-Y-Z

DIANA SHERLOCK

Produced during the past four years, Saskatoon artist Susan Shantz's exhibition *creatures in translation* investigates the "loss of cultural and sensory information that occurs as a result of digital reproduction of art and artifacts."¹ In a culture increasingly driven by its belief in digital technologies, Shantz's archive explores how digital translation affects the production and circulation of knowledge. Are there types of knowledge that do not translate into digital data—tacit knowledges that must be gained through imitation, practice, and experience within particular social networks—and how does one articulate these experiences so that they remain valued in a culture? Can digital haptic technologies visualize a thirdspace between tacit and codified knowledges? These and other questions are addressed in Shantz's latest body of work, which builds on her earlier postminimal and conceptual working methods, particularly serialization and remediation, to create *an archive of process*² that records how knowledge is shaped through digital translation.

The exhibition's museum-type display combines a series of 3D rapid prototyped models, inkjet prints and hand-rendered drawings that reinterpret online images of early twentieth-century Japanese Banko ware teapots from the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria's (AGGV) permanent collection. Crafted in the style of eighteenth-century Japanese potter Numanami Shigenaga,³ Banko stoneware and enamel overglaze vessels take the shape of popular human effigies or imaginative animal representations. Celebrated ceramic artists made first and second wave Banko ware, but Shantz has an ongoing interest in mass-produced, domestic objects and this work references third stage, factory-made Banko ceramics⁴ manufactured for commercial sale in early twentieth-century Japan and Europe. She was particularly drawn to the kitschy

badger, sparrow, frog and sea creature teapots because of how the shaped animal imagery reflects cultural interpretations of nature that circulate in consumer and popular culture.⁵ These Banko ware copies have already been reinterpreted and translated for mass production, but Shantz digitally retranslates and remediates these teapots to resituate them in a realm of experience and entertainment with formal and popular culture references to digital animation, Claymation, video gaming and virtual reality.⁶

At the exhibition's entrance, a series of archival inkjet prints reproduce the AGGV's website catalogue entries for each of the four Banko ware teapots that serve as the source material for all the other works in the exhibition. Four full-scale, 3D thermoplastic prints, tinted with a thin wash of clay slip are in a museum case adjacent the inkjets; they are translations—essentially new artifacts—paradoxically, original copies. A hand-lettered label identifies each form as a material manifestation of the digital artifact archived in a database, stored at a URL or rendered in digital space. Nearby an email from Shantz's assistant, Andreas Buchwaldt, to Cimatrix Solutions outlines the 3D printing instructions for the sparrow and frog pots, each source file a URL link that evokes infinite reproducibility to the point where the authenticity of the original becomes almost moot. Like the artifact labels, the email's computer font is meticulously copied by hand, this time using carbon paper. Each text, like the objects themselves, is a hypertext—a text that cross-references its original, translated source data and unfaithful copy. Using a pseudo-scientific working process, Shantz repeatedly translates one thing into another to reveal what is lost or gained between the real and the simulated, the original and the copy and the analog and the digital, to explore where the cultural and scientific constructions of tacit and codified knowledges overlap.

A Thirdspace

Shantz's earlier installations—*hibernaculum* (wall) (1994), *Satiate* (1998), *untitled (canopy room)* (2006-2007)—relied on labour-intensive, handworked material processes, many of which borrowed from craft traditions that rely on tacit knowledge to make meaning. One might assume her choice to use a digital haptic tool and 3D modeling software to create multiple thermoplastic clay reproductions of each Banko ware teapot from low-grade, online collection images implies a more distanced relationship to the material processes of making. Indeed this digital

technology does mediate the relationship the artist's hand has to the materialization of the virtual object. Through tactile feedback, the haptic tool maps the body's senses of vision and touch to simulate the physical and spatial experience of sculpting clay originally used to realize these objects. This data is then codified, mapped onto Cartesian X-Y-Z axes, visualized and manipulated in the abstract space of the computer screen. It only takes fixed form when extruded into striated, bonded thermoplastic layers or inked onto paper in a pattern of gridded pixels. Strangely, Shantz's digital translations seem to embody both the conceptual space of the original clay form and their new digital materiality, which invokes the technological processes that formed them.

Within *creatures in translation*, Shantz uses digital haptic technology to open up a *thirdspace* between body and mind, the tactile and the virtual, to create a point of intersection between subjective interpretive processes and seemingly objective technologies, and to level hierarchies between conceptual and material, digital and non-digital practices. Political geographer Edward Soja's book *Thirdspace* borrows from the work of Henri Lefebvre (*Production of Space*), Michel Foucault's idea of heterotopias, and Homi K. Bhabha's theory of cultural hybridization to describe a space in which:

*everything comes together. . .subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history.*⁷

A thirdspace, therefore, is an inclusive, hybridized space of potentiality that gives rise to a new trialectics of space that moves beyond dualisms—particularly thinking that divides the world into categories of either material or conceptual, tacit or codified and real or imagined—towards “an-Other” space that traverses binaries.⁸ This in-between space is constantly being constructed and reconstructed, mediated by technology and language, which both reflect and shape societies and their inherent ideologies. A thirdspace can also be a psychoanalytical space—a space of becoming—one akin to D.W. Winnicott's idea of the transitional space⁹ in object-relations theory that allows for the continual formation of subjects through their intimate and imaginative encounters with (art) objects in the world.

Remediation

Artist and craft theorist Amy Gogarty's essay "Remediating Craft" is useful in thinking about how Shantz uses translation in this work to open up a thirdspace between codified and tacit knowledges. In it Gogarty rearticulates Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin's idea of remediation from new media theory and applies it to contemporary craft practices. Briefly, they describe remediation as "The formal logic by which new media refashion prior media forms" using the "twin logics of remediation," immediacy and hypermediacy.¹⁰ Gogarty traces a history of mimetic representation in the West that attempts to evoke the real in evermore refined (codified) and immediate ways from the twelfth century to today's virtual reality. Paradoxically, this history of immediacy reveals the real is nonetheless always mediated by the medium—the contact point between the real and its representation.¹¹ Hypermediacy "acknowledges multiple acts of representation and makes them visible," within the same space and time to create a fragmented, heterogeneous representation that "makes us aware of the medium or media and ... reminds us of our desire for immediacy."¹² *creatures in translation* exercises an overt form of remediation in which the Banko ware teapots are refashioned entirely by 3D-digital technology while still referencing the conceptual space of ceramics and industrial slip-cast processes. Here a remediated copy can become more real than real—better than the original, an improvement on reality—but not without acknowledging the disjuncture between the two or creating a sense of hypermediacy. Conversely, Gogarty argues that "old media," can also remediate new media to draw attention to the technological and ideological limits of each by gauging what is lost or gained in translation. Historically this has been particularly true of ceramics, which has been used for centuries to model things to be made in another medium. In the case of *creatures in translation*, Shantz uses remediation to raise the possibility, as Gogarty suggests, that "handmade objects problematize concepts of reality and mediation,"¹³ which, in this case, might otherwise go unchallenged in a seemingly seamless digital world. Gogarty concludes, "All mediation is a form of remediation. Media constantly comment on, reproduce or replace other media, operating within webs of cultural meaning and social relations,"¹⁴ and it is through this process of remediation, or translation, that it becomes possible to reform reality.

creatures in translation

Shantz's exhibition design is modeled on the modern museum, which through its ongoing interpretation of cultural collections contributes to the construction of knowledge that shapes our reality. Her meta-museum suggests the digital reproduction of artifacts has implications for the future role of the museum, which relies on the authenticity of its original collections for its cultural authority. In recent years, the museum's encyclopedic collections and metanarratives have given way to an experience economy,¹⁵ which is often mediated by digital technology and online circulation. Aware that the modern museum's metonymical truth relies on the decontextualized fragment, but the authenticity of the artifact is increasingly less important than the cultural narrative it helps to construct, there has been a growing trend to use digital technologies including 3D rapid-prototyped artifacts to animate museum collections. *creatures in translation* investigates the implications of this for the future production, circulation and understanding of visual and material culture.

Pioneered in the late 1980s, 3D printers for rapid prototyping use an additive process to map and render points of the X–Y–Z axes of a virtual object onto the material world, effectively opening up new interdisciplinary approaches to conceptualizing and materializing forms. Shantz's *creatures in translation* are hybrids: they use 3D printers, haptic technology and modeling software to collapse the boundaries between what British craft theorist David Pye calls the "free" workmanship of risk—the handmade—and the "regulated" workmanship of certainty—industrial, or in this case, digital reproduction—which, according to Pye, are inextricably linked.¹⁶ Shantz's works are based partly on what is known from perceived experience and partly on what is imagined or constructed by the digital interface that renders them. Often the forms rendered would be impossible to produce using conventional industrial or artistic processes, thus making familiar forms unfamiliar, even uncanny. Take for example *Fragment Rendering (Frog Crown)*, an archival inkjet print of the frog pot's surface decoration floating, decontextualized, on a black background. The pot is implied by the negative space—there even seems to be a vague pixelated outline—but it is absent. Parts of the image, particularly at the edges of the decoration or where there is detail, are also pixelated due to a lack of data. The object's identity is even more ambiguous without the ceramic pot to give it context, and one is left to wonder if this *Frog Crown* could ever materialize as represented, without the pot's supportive form (a hypothesis Shantz tests later).

The equally ambiguous archival inkjet prints *Fragment Renderings* (*Crayfish A; Frog Alone B; Crayfish B; Badger; Frog Alone A*) and *3D Modeling in-Progress (Badger)* also document how 3D-print technology has to rethink the modeling process to render an existing clay form within the constraints of digital space. A commercial glass vitrine contains 1/3, 1/2, and 3/4-scaled 3D thermoplastic prints of these teapots and fragments. Multiple versions of different slices (views) and scales from each pot's rendering demonstrate the ease with which this digital technology can edit, re-scale and re-print reality, calling the authenticity of these, and all the other works, into question. Further down in the vitrine, 3D frog fragments that look as though they have been peeled off a missing vessel pepper the shelves, but closer to the bottom the shelves are empty. These missing artifacts (proofs) signal gaps in knowledge and cultural narratives, which are yet to be constructed and circulated by those with the power to do so.

Joseph Anderson's subtle watercolour interpretations, *AGGV Website Watercolours*, of Shantz's hand-cut, digital collages of the Banko ware collection images, *AGGV Website Collages*, reference a long historical trajectory of imitation and reproduction associated with amateur art and popular craft as much as digital reproduction, which is their source. Shantz also contrasts handworked and digital modes of rendering—particularly traditional perspectival conventions and those of Euclidian digital space—in her mixed-media triptych of the *3D Rendering (Badger Teapot)* and *3D Rendering (Frog Teapot)*, hand-rendered in pastel. Each rendering gives the illusion of three-dimensionality and completeness from a singular point of view, or as one might view it on a screen, but the illusion breaks down as you move past the images to realize they are gigantic, 3D paper pop-up drawings based on 3D wire-frame computer models. The *Badger Teapot's* exaggerated scale makes the distortion at once menacing and hilarious. Reminiscent of Victorian-type paper cutouts, *Frog Teapot's* trompe l'oeil decoration is cut out and superimposed, in real space, onto a shaped representation of the pot from which it was lifted. Caught between 3D digital model, drawing, collage and bas-relief sculpture, between an illusionary representation and a real material object, *3D Rendering (Badger Teapot)* and *3D Rendering (Frog Teapot)* become somewhat alien, exceeding the language of representation.

3D Print Fragments (Frog Alone A) also eludes easy categorization. It is a gigantic pair of hand-finished styrofoam and plaster 3D frog print fragments derived from the same digital file. Cut with a CNC (computer numerical control) router, it relies on a more traditional subtractive,

sculptural process that recalls industrial prototypes. Placed end-to-end on top of a plinth that descends architectonically to the gallery floor, these enlarged fragments seem to emerge out of the material like they are still forming. A subtle line traces the edge of the fragment, marking its separation from the supporting material from which it was cut. Shantz sanded the thin plaster surface smooth, but retained this line in surface of the final form as evidence of the CNC rendering, which in its final form, could be easily mistaken for a stone carving or bisque. Rather humorously, what was once a kitschy decorative element dematerialized through digital representation is now rematerialized as an almost monumental sculpture that exhibits signs of both its digital re-conception and its handmade nature.

As if engaged in a process of reverse engineering, in *Slip-cast Teapots (Sparrow)*, Shantz translates the digital model into clay once again to explore how the originals were likely made in sections using press-molds. These bisque-fired, clay slip casts were taken from a seven-part mold of a 3D thermoplastic print. The clay sparrow pots lack detail; they are soft, rounded, and imperfect and some are “cut off” near the top echoing the fragments and slices of the 3D digital prints. These copies fail to replicate their originals; instead they become perfect renditions of multiple imperfections, or lacks, encountered during the translation process. These imperfections point to types of tacit knowledge that are not digitally reproducible, but can still affect the ways we interact with technology.

What do these clay copies of a digitally translated ceramic teapot tell us about the original teapot that we might have otherwise overlooked or made different value judgments about? Does it redirect our attention away from the authenticity of the museum artifact and its aesthetic qualities to focus our attention on its conceptual and symbolic functions? According to critic Love Jonsson, “the visualization of abstract information does not lead us away from the real thing; it may actually make us return to it with fresh eyes.”¹⁷ Shantz's *creatures in translation* suggest a “conceptual’ primacy that resides in their digital coding,”¹⁸ but paradoxically, in the process of translation the conceptual processes and tacit knowledges engrained in the clay object's form are rendered visible. As opposed to assuming a loss of cultural information through digital translation and reproduction, these technologies might, in fact, create a thirdspace in which localized, cultural and material knowledges can be seen to operate, albeit differently, in a networked, distributed and dematerialized space.

Error and Potential

In her rereading of image into object, of remediating old media into new media and back again, Shantz stays particularly attuned to the *glitch*—errors and miscalculations that occur in translation—choosing to show these unexpected accidents encountered during the creative process. Referencing Dutch artist, Rosa Menkmen’s “glitch aesthetics,” artist Mikhel Proulx defines a glitch as the unique “aesthetic result of an error”; it is “endlessly producible, but by definition never reproducible—each a sudden crystallization of a data-flow.”¹⁹ The glitch signals what cannot be translated—a slippage in meaning, misrecognition, a conflict in the code—a failure in the highly systematized, accurate digital technologies that seamlessly shape our world. In this sense, glitches or failures in translation, record moments when technology is revealed to be incommensurate with other types of cultural knowledge. Proulx observes “artists exploit the capacities for glitches, error, noise (and similar ‘faults’ within digital systems) to enact a counter-force within systems that demand clarity, efficiency and certainty.”²⁰

In *creatures in translations* too, the glitch signals an unexpected interruption to the relentless repetition of modernist progress and technological certainty to open up an ambiguous space, a thirdspace. The certainty of the digital world falters in *Fragment Rendering (Partial Frog Crown)*, a black and white digital rendering of a teapot decoration that is a misprint; it is misregistered on the paper and disrupted by lines of errant pixels (digital noise). These glitches, or failures in translation, reveal technology’s inability to fully perceive and translate certain types of knowledge, but this lack opens up rich epistemological territory to be explored. Failure itself becomes productive and presents potential for new knowledge. Shantz’s artistic process also recalls how in the history of industrial production products and by-products often resulted from some *failure* so “[w]ith each translative turn, some signifiers are lost while others are gained.”²¹ In *3D Print Fragment (Frog Crown)* the printer nozzle spits and sputters shiny, crystalline thermoplastic, it slows, pauses and stops—translation fails—resulting in the failure to print altogether. There are three such aborted attempts before a full 3D print of the *Frog Crown* is completed. Fused to its digital substructure and lacking detail, it is difficult to tell if it is a finished object or a model for some sort of imagined, but unrealized, ideal.

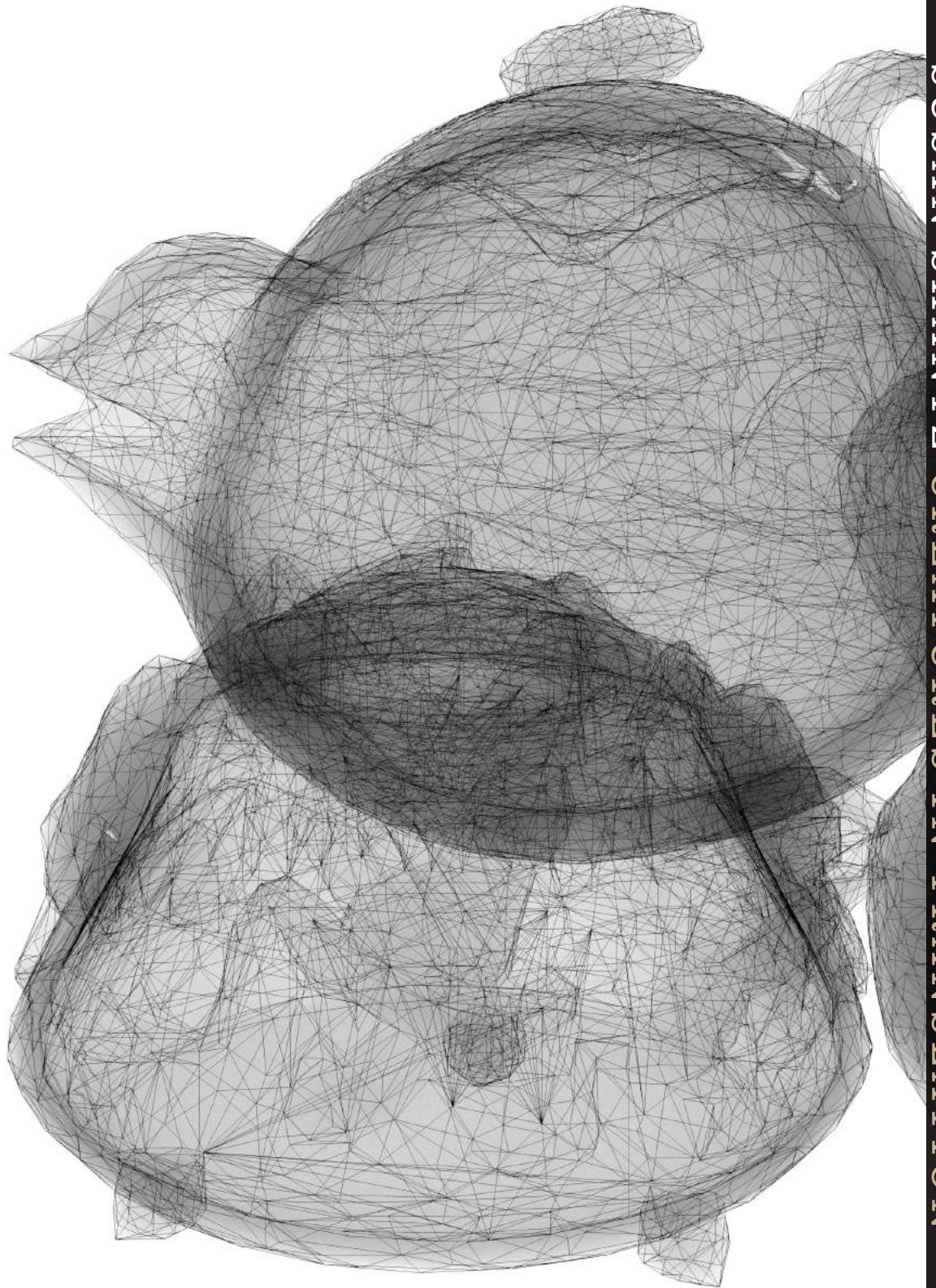
Susan Shantz’s exhibition, *creatures in translation*, reveals how knowledge is in a constant state of translation. In it, Shantz explores

how digital haptic technologies might be able to mediate and visualize a thirdspace between tacit and codified knowledges. Here, failures in translation are productive, indicating a conflict in the cultural code that demands a paradigm shift—models yet to be imagined. Shantz’s work suggests how we are all in a constant state of becoming, shaped by technology and language; we are all *creatures in translation*. •

NOTES

1. Susan Shantz, artist's statement, May 2012.
2. Blair Fornwald, Susan Shantz *creatures in translation* (gallery didactic), Dunlop Art Gallery, April 27–June 14, 2012.
3. *Online Encyclopedia*, “Banko ware,” accessed August 18, 2012, <http://www.encyclo.co.uk/define/Banko%20ware>
4. Blair Fornwald, Susan Shantz *creatures in translation* (gallery didactic), Dunlop Art Gallery, April 27–June 14, 2012.
5. Shantz, artist's statement, May 2012
6. Susan Shantz, author in conversation with the artist, May 19, 2012.
7. Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996), 57, quoted in “Edward Soja,” *Wikipedia, the free online encyclopedia*, accessed October 14, 2012.
8. Soja, *Thirdspace*, 61.
9. Sigrid Dahle, *Susan Shantz technologies of tenderness* (Medicine Hat Museum & Art Gallery, 1998), 18.
10. Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 273, 21, quoted in Amy Gogarty, “Remediating Craft,” *Utopic Impulses: Contemporary Ceramics Practice*, Ruth Chambers, Amy Gogarty & Mireille Perron, eds., (Vancouver: Ronsdale Press), 2007, 92.
11. Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation*, 30, quoted in Gogarty, “Remediating Craft,” 93.
12. Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation*, 34, quoted in Gogarty, “Remediating Craft,” 93.
13. Gogarty, “Remediating Craft,” 96.
14. Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation*, 55, quoted in Gogarty, “Remediating Craft,” 95.
15. J. Pine and J. Gilmore, *The Experience Economy* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999).
16. David Pye, “The Nature and Art of Workmanship,” in *The Craft Reader*, ed. Glenn Adamson (Oxford/New York: Berg, 2010), 341–53.
17. Love Jönsson, “Rethinking Dichotomies: Crafts and the Digital,” in *NeoCraft: Modernity and the Crafts*, ed. Sandra Alföldy (Halifax: Nova Scotia Art and Design Press, 2007), 246.
18. William V. Ganis, “Ars Ex Machina Digital Sculpture,” *Sculpture* 23:7 Spring 2004, 30.
19. Mikhel Proulx, “The Progress of Ambiguity: Uncertain Imagery in Digital Culture,” unpublished thesis, Concordia University, 2013, 23. Also see Rosa Menkmen on “glitch aesthetics,” <http://rosa.menkman.blogspot.ca/>.
20. Mikhel Proulx, 20.
21. Blair Fornwald, Susan Shantz *creatures in translation* (gallery didactic), Dunlop Art Gallery, April 27–June 14, 2012

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SUSAN SHANTZ / GREAT ARTS IN TRANSLATION

