EVALUATING THE M.F.A.
SAN DIEGO’S MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTS
ACADEMICS ON DISPLAY
CINDY SHERMAN’S MASS APPEAL
THE DRAMA OF THE PIXEL
JIM CAMPBELL’S MEMORY MACHINES
PERFORMANCE ANXIETY AND THE DIGITAL ARTIST
NEW FILMS BY JOHN AKOMFRAH AND LEIGHTON PIERCE
RETHINKING SITE SPECIFICITY
BOOKS RECEIVED AND NOTED
Economists predict that in the future, cash will be obsolete. That’s why we’re giving it away.
The playing board for O’Donnell’s game anders from the diem in which, like the Queen, she can move anywhere. It is no surprise that a King was responsible for one of the last hold-outs of the "Squares" side of the pixel, before the lock of Windows 95 became the new look of broadcast power; that is, the old monochrome of Larry King. The man of pixels—a mosaic of mosaic of blue and white uniform dots organized on a black, noiseless sea—into the form of a glowing geopolitical Mercator projection of the world. But the beauty of pixels is that their organization always implies its inverse, for example, the MasterCard composition of a dollar out of pixel-like elements facilitates a fragmentation and collapse of the dollar, which in turn, advertising, obscures the backbone. Even in the ’80s video, art of Max Almy, Joan Jonas and Laurie Anderson, digital preparation is used: non-violent, non-breakdown, loss of control, amnesia and generally unhealthy and irreversible immersion in some technico-corporate dystopia, or another. With advances in computer power and visualization technologies, the pixel threatens to disappear like the quirk checkered chess map. The death of chess, coincides with the victory of Deep Blue, might have less to do with who actually wins, and more to do with the fact that chess served its pur-pose in the early days of computer games. It was a context easily represented with the vis-ibly clunky old-time pixels. Now it is possible to render visible (and visceral) the moment of the King’s death with minute rendered three-dimensional representations of merceanaries storming the royal chambers and ending Highness’s body against the wall in a shower of blood with some super advanced top-play. Finally, after all these years in which the concept of the highest form of political violence, has been remade in innocuous by the word “check-mate” (the “check” conjuring up the checkboard pattern of chess and the “mate” being the final one) and the notion of the geological Penrose stool mate “the king is dead.” In the polite and somewhat an-ti-social context of the game, one is forced to admit that the visceral threat of contemporary computer games would somehow have to be given in order for its to count as a compelling media event, and indeed, through pixels and hype, it does seem as though IBM has been successful in dramatizing the irrevocable stales of a checkmate. Time magazine wrote, “Kasparov undertook a blinding of Deep Blue king’s the sor of hell-seen gambit that has devastated every single one in the chess world. ...” The program lacked heuristics—abilities of bit traps, hatch, picket, en-danger and generate the violent and para-noid predator from which the human race evolved to and to which all great chess players return” (March 10, 1997). Make no mistake, this simple-checking, checkboard game is the one in which Kasparov wages hi-tech war. In Web ads for the match the dire implication of checkmate is facilitated through a drama of the pixel, for example, we see a pixelated and close-up image of Kasparov’s eyes with the caption “You’ve never seen a computer game like this”-a fairly inaccurate but seductive tease. In the blizz of the new fusion of some Web “bill-boards,” this image loses its pixelated edges and Kasparov’s eyes become alarmingly fuzzy, if not riveted, on something intense. The caption then continues “...network has Kasparov.” What is Kasparov seeing? The fact is that this makes what this game a game unlike any we have seen before, not because it is, miserable, lifeless, game of computer chess; what transforms this game into a unique event is what goes unmentioned—Deep Blue’s “brute force search” (the juggernaut of combinations hurled upon the depths of a hidden machine accessed by a thin, unassuming monitor) and the intellectuality of Kasparov.

Kasparov’s pixelated image, then, is placed in the space of threat, what integrates his image, what synthesizes the pixel, the word— the idea that he is reactionary, squares, is precisely that which will test him beyond those squares. Computer power mediates his very body—we see the moving, because so utterly banal, video of the descent of his first move—if he is the protagonist of some more brazen version of Dostoevski. Even so, we are reminded that Deep Blue, like the sky itself, is somehow beyond the physicality of the world accessible to vision. Whereas in the past the bloody pixels were perceived to create larger aggregations of bloody pixels, yielding an approxi-mation of an image, what are we seeing here is a myth constructed of a non-pixelated exist. That is, it is as if the non-violent miraculously generates the visual out of thin air, and that the newly visual—no longer an apparatus, an apparatus, a sort of reality—becomes visceral, implicating bodies and the destinies of masters. There is more than meets the eye to this ability of simulating the coherent and embodied master to the pixels, once, contrary to popular views about the chaos of the body, it is disem-bodiment in chess that usher in the threat of breakdown. The image of the master to wholly inhabit the dislocated time of this 4-square board has made this whole game’s histo-ry a catalog of madness, dependency and sexual dysfunction. A degeneracy of the coherent image of Kasparov into pixels, given what the pixel has come to mean, might very well imply an erosion of some and a descent into some form of electronic madness or uninformedness (a state, needless to say, is completely antithet-ical to the image of IBM; it would obvious-ly be a liability to IBM if Kasparov were mentally destroyed by the match, even if he is the opponent of their technology and, as a result, Kasparov finds its qualities (over cold war ideas of technological or cul-tural competition).

Projected goals of technolo-gies like HDTV is to remove the disconnect- ing pixel from consciousness, and to return to the qualities of analog, while keeping the advantages of digital. Founding director of the MIT Media Lab, Nicholas Negroponte is invested in “the emergence of continuity from individual pixels.” Of course digitization of images requires pixelation and there is no way to give up one in favor of the other: the digitization of program and subsequent communication of image requires that each pixel be assigned a numerical value in the form of a lot of bits. In this marvelous version of pixels and images quality depends on the power of its generator: the more power there is, the more pixels and the more bits assigned to each pixel there can be. The “continuity” that Negroponte desires is win-ow in the pixelation of images into more pixels; the fragmentation; the high density in digital image; consequently male image, to this way becoming increasingly visible. While certain video artists and computer architects still enjoy the qualities of the visible digital image, and embrace it as the foundation of digital space, Negroponte finds its qualities noisy and ugly, for example, “digital arti-facts, like contours and blockiness.” He uses the word “artifacts” as if the digital world were already a thing of the past. In