

## **ARTIST'S STATEMENT:**

**THE MEDIUM:** Since 1998, I have been creating, curating, researching and developing new virtual worlds through found software architectures, web-site templates, manufactured chat-rooms, modified interviews, revised literary text documents, captured screenshots, compact audio discs, digital prints and customized interactive kiosks.

**THE SUBJECT:** My virtual character known as "Farzad al-Jaziri" claims to be the direct descendent of the Persian Prince al-Jaziri who commissioned the first automata in the medieval Arabic world. Farzad is an IT networker and a programmer for Music Composition applications. He is currently seeking recognition for his occupation as a management consultant. In this exhibition, Farzad is wishing to promote his new and innovative theories regarding the self-assembling process inherent in the managerial community.

**THE CONTENT:** My meta-world is inhabited by prolific international music composers and multimedia content providers. What I am referring to does not exclusively constitute a world (setting or stage) that is merely a virtual venue where actual international artists contribute their content to an online forum. When I exhibit as an individual for example, the collaboration takes place between the production of the work and its target demographic. In the case of the "Principles of Occupation" exhibition at the UBC Fine Arts Gallery, the products are the digitally printed sticker stamps and the target audience is comprised of those who are so immersed in the arts for their own sake, they may require some hints as how to best manage their creative output.

My personal mode of expression although still somewhat collaborative in nature, ultimately deals with a one-to-many presentation mode that filters down to a "captive audience" via a top-down filtration system. This system counters Farzad's hope to transcend the reductionist top-down paradigm. The specific content employed foregrounds the creation and characterization of digitally constructed inorganic/virtual composers and content providers themselves as protean subjects guided and molded by the archetypes and stereotypes manufactured and proliferated by our mediated "western" worldview.

Rather than being simply characters of literary fiction, these personality prototypes are seen as potentially autonomous beings set in motion in the 'actual' world with the hopes that when speculative technologies develop according to their promise(s), these characters may evolve into artificially intelligent agents that can communicate and act without the direct aid of a human puppet-master. Those aforementioned technological promises have been stated by the likes of K. Eric Drexler in his book, "The Engines of Creation" and Ray Kurzweil with his book "The Age of Spiritual Machines". In the meantime, my virtual composers and content providers assume the role of mirroring the protean self (myself, in this case) in all of its multiple manifestations. The philosopher and psychoanalyst Dr. Sherry Turkle, for example sees the online identity as a (re)cycling of various aliases and discontinuous selves.

**THE VIRTUAL:** As for the word virtual, I prefer the proper definition of the word by Pierre Levy where in his book, "Becoming Virtual: Reality in the Digital Age", he states that the virtual is not unreal or an almost real facade. Instead, contemplating the virtual itself brings the willed subject(s) and object(s) closer to empirical reality. As a composer for example, I have been preoccupied with the formalist aesthetic pursuit of creating virtual sound objects that strive to be autonomous from a dependence on the linear relationships identified as 'real music'. In every medium in fact, I am trying to embody objects and subjects with the full capacity and potentiality of properties that are simultaneously virtual, potential and actual. Just as all constituted reality can be seen as virtual and dynamic, history can also be seen and treated in this malleable fashion.

**- Jeremy Owen Turner – May 27, 2002**