

KATE WERBLE GALLERY

83 VANDAM STREET NEW YORK, NY 10013

SLASH MAGAZINE

FRAME BY FRAME

INTERVIEW WITH CHRIS BILTON

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JULIA DAULT

SUMMER 2007, VOLUME 1, ISSUE 6

FRAME BY FRAME

Gareth Long photographed by Julia Dault
and interviewed by Chris Bilton



According to Gareth Long's bio he's a video-based artist, but it's been a while since he has made a video proper. Whereas most of the planet has spent the past few years rendering everything to digital video for easy storage and transfer, Long has been spending his time reversing that process.

Specifically, Long is involved in an "ongoing investigation to locate an analog for the medium of video." Whether feeding video into an industrial embroidery machine with the Toronto-based video collective 640/480 for 2004's "True Love Will Find You in the End" or into a rapid-prototyping 3D printer for "Video Solid," Long explores the tactile and physical properties of digital media with varying results. He has also developed lenticular prints of the Challenger explosion footage and packed 40 seconds of video into a 350-page flipbook in an effort to dissect the relationship between image and viewer, along with the medium of video itself, one frame at a time.

"...Andy Warhol used lenticulars in 1970, I think, of some daisies, but it was really just a 3D effect."

Originally from Toronto, Long has recently finished an MFA at Yale where he has applied this aspect of translation to the spoken word, utilizing voice recognition software to render a textual document of spectators' dialogue during "Live Subtitles" and provide a new text of George Guidall's reading of Edith Grossman's *Don Quixote* translation. In the case of the latter, the software failed to acknowledge the word "Quixote," creating a strange new translation. He was chosen to be part of the First Look II show in upstate New York earlier this year where "Live Subtitles" was shown, and the MoMA library has just bought a copy of his "Don Quixote" book.

In terms of the "Don Quixote" project and some of your other work, where it almost comes across as a kind of science experiment, are you surprised by the results or do you kind of know what to expect?

I think in almost every instance I've been surprised by the results. I mean I'll do tests first as I'm going through the process but the results are always a little bit surprising. And that's one of my attractions to it—is that there ends up being this kind of poetry in the end. It's this thing that's kind of unexpected, kind of magical. If it was just purely mechanical and I could guess what the outcome was going to be it wouldn't be as interesting. Especially with all these different types of translation projects that I've worked on, so much about it is just the learning process of taking on this new technology and new software and a new approach. Because of that I'm always learning. If I had tons and tons of experience working with 3D printers when I did my ["Video Solid"] piece I don't think I would have been as amazed or as interested in the results, which means the piece probably wouldn't have existed. So that ultimate amateur-ness is what makes the results surprising and interesting for me.

What led you to these "analog outputs for digital video?"

When I was with the 640/480 collective we were making videos and then we started thinking about video as an art market, and the difficult place that video fits in the art marketplace because it's hard to sell video—the economics of it are really sort of strange. And so we got into this idea of trying to play that up—trying to play up the market, and trying to play up this idea of the artificial economics surrounding video. And that led to objects and to object-ness, because that's where the aura is in the art world, right. I kept thinking about it and that idea of turning video in to something that was able to sell without it being a video, which was absurd. I mean the whole premise is always a bit of a joke. But I just got really interested in that process of filtering media through other media to get a translation that is a whole other thing unto itself.

What do you see as the relationship between the actual clip that you start with and what eventually results?

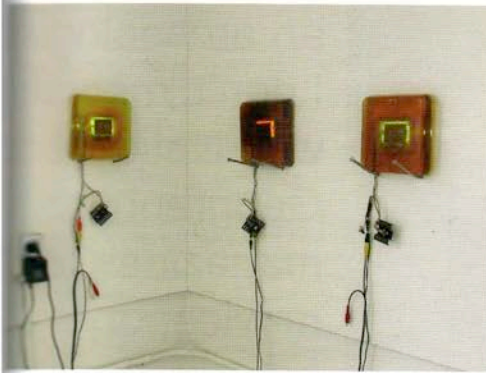
In each case, whenever I've done types of things like this I usually have the process sort of figured out. I know I'm going to take video and turn it into a 3D print or I know I'm going to turn it into a lenticular. Or I'm going to take an audio book and turn it into a book. Coming up with that gesture is usually the easy part. But then coming up with a content or a specific video or text is always the more gruelling part, the part that takes a lot longer because whatever that choice is, I really

KATE WERBLE GALLERY

83 VANDAM STREET NEW YORK, NY 10013



And She Was, 2005 Lenticular Print
(video source) 3.8' x 2.85'



Sugar For Sugar, 2002 1:00 :00 (looped).3 LCD screens, sugar-glass. A video installation with sugar-glass, this piece explores the ephemeral quality of the materials, video and memory.

Below & right: **Video Solid**, another piece in an ongoing investigation to locate an analog for the medium of video. In this instance a video is passed through custom software, ultimately to be turned into a video-still sculpture by a rapid-prototyping 3D printer.



want it to reflect the process that's happening or to point to some of the bigger issues that deal with that process. So with the Don Quixote text, so much of Don Quixote is about books and the reading of books from things like Don Quixote going crazy from reading too many books to Cervantes setting himself up as having found the text of Don Quixote, and having to get someone else to translate it and then he himself, his voice shows up as this fictionalized editor. It's so unabashedly Meta and so much is about books and reading. So in that case, if you're going to take an audio book and turn it back into a book, you're really going to have to point towards that gap. Usually the choice of the clip or the text comes second but it's hardly secondary. If the choice of the clip wasn't thought through I don't think the pieces would ever fly.

What originally attracted you to the lenticular prints?

It grew out of my trying to find an analog form for video, and one that could communicate more video than any kind of still—more than a 3D printer or embroidery. [Lenticulars] actually contain more than one frame at once. They're approximating video—it's getting closer while that distance is still massive. And I'd been trying to find a way to get video into the same place that the masses think of art—you know, that thing that hangs on a wall. I was doing all this research into crude animation things and effectively just remembered those little cards that I had as a kid that I got from my cereal box—the Transformers thing that you turn it one way and it's Optimus Prime as a robot and you turn it the other way and it's Optimus Prime as a truck. I started researching it and was able to work with a couple companies and really push the technology to get more than two or three images, but to start getting towards thirty images. And so once you get thirty images in one piece you're getting a lot closer to a moment of video. Not video, but a moment of video.

Do a lot of people use lenticulars in this way?

I've seen or read about a few other people using lenticulars in the "capital A" Art world. Usually it's in different things, like where people morph, or something turns into something else. But its never as dry as what I've been doing, which is just to try to get as many frames of video on there and to still communicate video ideas. People are using it as lenticular, as it's own medium. But I've been trying to use it articulate another medium. I mean Andy Warhol used lenticulars in 1970, I think, of some daisies, but it was really just a 3D effect.

How do you see this in relation to evolving technology's inability to recognize outdated formats?

So much of my work is playing at these slippages, these gaps and distances, and I think in that way it's doing it. If anything I think it's the other way around because lenticular was around before digital video, so I've sort of flipped it.

So where do you go from here with the work?

I've been enjoying books lately. Maybe it's getting away from that science fair feel. That's a hurdle that I've always had with getting into a conversation about my work that doesn't get past "Hey, that's cool."

Video Solid, 6 x 4 x 2' white pedestal with stills.

