

# New perspectives blossom in Wood Street cyberart exhibit

By Kurt Shaw  
TRIBUNE-REVIEW ART CRITIC

With so much digitally based art, or "cyberart" as it's called, being shown at The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust's Wood Street Galleries, Downtown, over the last couple of years, it's no surprise that the galleries' current exhibition, "Allure Electronica," follows suit.

But what's different about his show of digital art by six internationally recognized artists is that all of them are women.

"Women use technology in different ways," says Murray Horne, curator of the Wood Street Galleries. "This group show is all woman to point out that women can use technology in a very, very different way

## 'Allure Electronica'

**What:** Digital Works by Andrea Ackerman, Lillian Ball, Nancy Dwyer, Claudia Hart, Julia Hayward and Kiki Seror  
**When:** Through March 6, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays  
**Where:** Wood Street Galleries, 601 Wood St. (above the Wood Street T station), Downtown  
**Details:** (412) 471-5605 or [www.pgharts.org/art/woodstreet.cfm](http://www.pgharts.org/art/woodstreet.cfm)

than what men do, in the sense that each of these pieces has a narrative component. It's more about the content of the work

than the actual medium, which tends to be a prevalent preoccupation for men."

Hence the title, "Allure Electronica," which is a play on Ars Electronica, the world's premiere festival of media art held each year in Linz, Austria, which draws a mostly male, techie sort of crowd.

To say the works in this exhibition have a female predication is an understatement. Case in point is Andrea Ackerman's "Rose Breathing." A 3-D computer animation of a digitally created pink rose, it slowly blooms and closes to the rhythmic sounds of the artist breathing. "Every woman that comes in here knows this piece," Horne remarks about this visceral work, "and upon experiencing it, it's easy to under-

stand why — it's as if this classic symbol of female sensuality has come alive."

Quite the opposite, Kiki Seror explores sensuality through text; specifically through transcripts of online encounters with the strangers she has met in hardcore-sex chat rooms.

Although two of her works in this exhibition are abstract video animations, one incorporating text and the other digital photographs, one is simply composed of text that reads, "Your death waits here between my thighs, my cold fingers will close your eyes," which has been manipulated in 3-D software, and mounted on a wall-hung light box. It's disturbing



Andrea Ackerman's "Rose Breathing."

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yet decadent all at once.

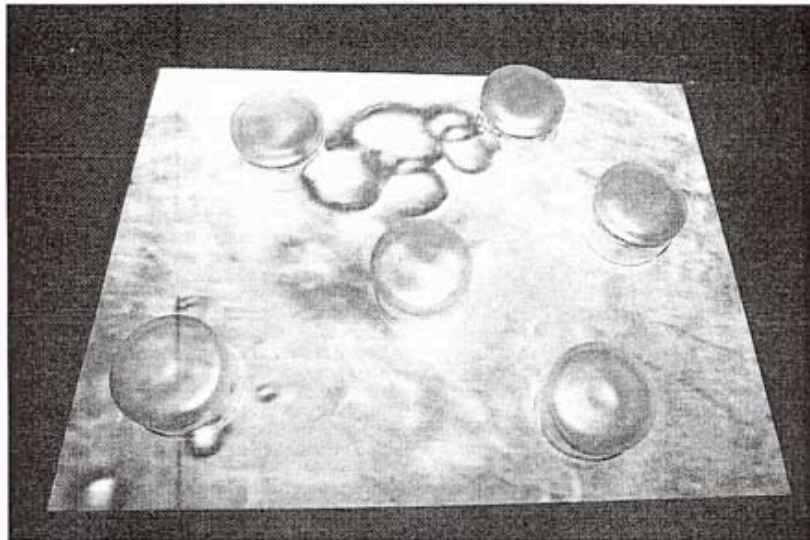
Not all of the works in the exhibition are sexual in nature. Claudia Hart has created an avatar named "E" that functions as sort of a cyber Barbie Doll that she has dressed in various couture and placed in urban settings. They are displayed as large-scale digital prints mounted on Plexiglas. Most notably among them: "E as Teenyhopper, 3x in Warhol Paper Dresses," which features E in a dress made of Campbell's soup labels. Horne made it specifically for this exhibition.

Nancy Dwyer addresses relationship issues in three thought-provoking pieces, two of which are digital animations and one titled "Selfish Idiot" that is a wall installation based on a pixilated digital model. Entirely sculptural, it is simply made of colored balls mounted on a wall. At a distance, they look like LEDs (Light Emitting Diodes). Squint at it, and you'll be able to read the words "Selfish Idiot." But move closer, and all will be lost in the beauty of colors and simple forms.

Lillian Ball turns all notions of domesticity upside down with her works, "Floating Worlds" and "Boiling Point." The former comprises three glass casts of kitchen sinks mounted on one wall onto which the artist has projected video of water going down the drains. The latter is similar in concept, but features glass casts of the bottoms of teakettles, which the artist has arranged on the floor. Video is projected onto them from above of water boiling at the bottom of a teakettle.

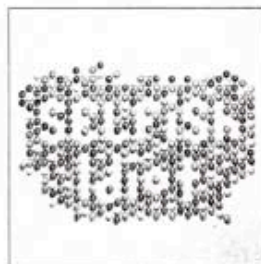
Aside from pieces' remarkable aesthetic qualities, what is equally remarkable is the artist's use of glass. She has used the material in a way that goes far beyond what most working in glass have done. Local glass artists should take note of these compelling works.

The exhibition culminates with an interactive video work



PHOTOS: WARREN L. LEEDER/TRIBUNE-REVIEW

"Boiling Point" by Lillian Ball.



"Selfish Idiot" by Nancy Dwyer.

by Julia Heyward titled "Miracles in Reverse." The piece, says Horne, represents five years' worth of work for the artist.

Basically a DVD filled with myriad interconnected images, it is navigated with a mouse that sits on a table next to an easy chair that is flanked by speakers. Move the cursor around any part of the projected image, and the piece advances to another related image. But the images move so fast while scrolling through,

and the audio along with it, that it reads like a flipbook or a movie.

Perhaps more like a horror movie, because most of the images are just plain frightening. For example, in one sequence a shrouded man rips his heart out and presents it. In another, a little girl screams as she is chased by a bogeyman in a forest.

Horne says, "You can spend 45 minutes with this and actually never come across the same image again. You just go deeper and deeper into the work."

It's like an inescapable nightmare.

But regardless of the narrative content in that piece, as well as all the rest in this exhibition, it's clear that these six artists are exploring the potentials of technology in a far more cunning way than most. They are using digital technology as a means to an end. Not the other way around.

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