Googleheim, InterAccess Electronic Media Arts Centre, Toronto, June 7 to July 13, 2013

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First in the sightline for those entering Googleheim, a group show curated by Horea Avram at Interaccess in Toronto: a wireless mouse on a plinth. It might have been a monument to audience engagement – a succinct overture to a show invested in dialogue between the museum’s interest in artefacts and the Internet’s provision of access. It wasn’t that, though; interaction was not particularly celebrated here. The mouse was a red herring.

The interactive wings of the art on view were often clipped. Some of the clipping was curatorial: exhibition-goers could use the mouse to peruse an archive of Noah Pedrini’s found Post-it notes, but the project’s sound track (though discussed in the exhibition text) was not played. The gallery didn’t proffer the opportunity to click through the rooms of Stephane Degoutin and Marika Dermineur, Googlehouse. The links displayed in Angie Waller’s Google Map icons, he has liquidated the landscape?

For what? Nothing rushes into its vacuum. And yet there is possibility: could Overdata help us conceive a map of Mars? Or might its whiteness figure the gallery landscape?

The Most Boring Place on Earth is similarly promising and similarly underdeveloped. Waller’s project spins around the world to hover above locations claimed by anonymous bloggers and commenters as the most boring. The topic is significant, and even crucial: as technology changes the ways we pay attention, the phenomenon of boredom becomes more interesting. But we don’t get even as close as Street View to the destinations that Waller sourced. Boredom is mapped but not really felt, or explored. Art should do more than code unusual applications for impressive software.

Software, after all, is quickly outdated. The newest works in the show are from 2010, which, in digital time, is eons ago. Snowden had not yet exploded today’s privacy paranoia; 3D printers had not laid such a shockingly easy path from image to object; Snapchat had yet to infiltrate, with its built-in ephemeralty, a medium obsessed with traces.

What’s good about the art and conceit of Googleheim is relevant to all of these developments. I can imagine Overdata expanded to illuminate the significance of metadata. I can picture printing Googleheim. I can wonder what museums might take from Snapchat. But my musings aren’t enough.

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