

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT: *NET CHICK*

JULIANNE AGUILAR, M.F.A. Student, Electronic Arts,
Department of Art and Art History, University Of New Mexico

In her seminal 1996 book, *Net Chick: A Smart-Girl Guide to the Wired World*, Carla Sinclair writes of the era's changing face of the modern woman: "Being a Net Chick is about having a modem. It's about being a grrrl with a capital R-I-O-T. It's about using your keyboard to navigate through the thousands of worlds floating in cyberspace. It's about becoming empowered by your access to and knowledge of the Internet."¹

I first gained access to and knowledge of the internet when I was a child, as we, for the first time, learned to accept the hyper-nowness of "the Internet" into our lives and homes. With it came home pages and online gaming, just two of an infinite number of modes of expression or disguise on the net. The technology and ideas of this era have influenced recent work that explores the possibilities of the future through the fifteen-inch tube monitor of the past.

Four Player Teleport Loop (For Don Judd, Space Marine) is an unplayable four-player video game that: questions the meaning of gravity and other basic laws of physics in an arbitrarily-constructed virtual space; explores the idea of "forever" as it applies to machines that are designed with the ability to run indefinitely; and speculates on the nature of computer anthropomorphization (Plates 5 and 6).

This virtual space was constructed as a custom-built gaming level for the 1996 first-person shooter Quake. The space consists of a single room with a teleporter in the floor. The player begins the level just below the ceiling, falls into the teleporter, and is sent back up to the ceiling (Plate 7). This falling loop continues for as long as the game is left to run, potentially forever.

Four networked computers (super-compact Raspberry Pi micro-computers) act as the "players" in this game. On boot up, one computer automatically creates a multiplayer game and the other three join (Plate 8). All four players

occupy the space and fall at different intervals. Each player's point of view can be seen in each of the four screens.

The computers aren't people but they are still players in the game, each with its own unique experience. They cannot shoot or otherwise interact with each other, but they can see each other, each represented by a glitched human form (Plate 9). It is my hope that this endears them to the viewer, so they can be seen not only as machines, but also as in-between creatures—not human, but not just machine, either.

CrimsunHue Remembers Jeremy is an incomplete web-based project that explores my first "relationship," a dalliance with an internet entity that called himself Jeremy. This project recreates the story of our doomed relationship through invented AOL chats on a backdrop of gifs mined from the mid-1990s-era internet via Internet Archive's WaybackMachine (<https://archive.org/web/>) (Plate 10).

Jeremy and I met in an AOL chatroom around the time of my tweens. Our romance began as innocuously as could a romance between two people who had never seen or heard each other, could neither confirm nor deny each other's stories or even existence, and could both claim to be fourteen (Plate 11). Pleasant emails were sent, Instant Message "meetups" were scheduled, pledges of lukewarm feelings were made. Shockingly, this did not last.

Jeremy dumped me, and I chose the reasonable reaction of sending him dozens of unsolicited emails over a couple days, to the point that his mother successfully had me banned from AOL for a week (Plate 12). Yes, I was "TOS'd," the term for falling prey to AOL's Terms of Service. I didn't tell my parents. I'm not sure if they were suspicious that I was all of a sudden not spending hours a day on the internet (Plate 13).

This project, like my memories of the event, remains incomplete. Perhaps I'm haunted by the memory; perhaps Jeremy remains too ephemeral a creature to commit to HTML; perhaps the gifs need be more Nickelodeon-centric to appeal to Millennial-style blasé nostalgia. I don't know. What I do know is that the lines of story I have weave a vague enough narrative, while still being ambiguous enough to be left to my memory to continually rewrite.

Perhaps I just don't need Jeremy. "What you *do* need," wrote Carla Sinclair on becoming a Net Chick, "is a sassy-ass attitude and a sense of adventure."² Indeed.

JULIANNE AGUILAR was born and raised in San Antonio, Texas. She earned her BFA in photography at the University of North Texas. She is a second-year MFA student at the University of New Mexico, where she is studying electronic arts. She often clicks on things that promise disbelief of what happens next. She remembers the Alamo, calls the internet "the net," and really likes holograms.

To see more of her work, including video of described projects, visit <http://hykul.org>.

NOTES:

¹ Carla Sinclair, *Net Chick: A Smart-Girl Guide to the Wired World* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc, 1996), 6.

² *Ibid.*, 7.