Pensive Disambiguation;
on the idea of the Homemade Polygon
by Lee Henderson

The common denominator among the works in Homemade Polygons that became most intriguing to me was all the familiar elements from digital graphics I saw recurring everywhere. I saw elements from the entire Adobe suite, Atari, avatars and all the rest of the applications of the new desktop landscape represented in these explicitly handmade works of art. I felt the connection between the artist's hand and the digital interface was ambivalent. I began to think about the role of the computer in visual art, and what kind of role technology in general might have as an extension of ourselves, physically, but also creatively. // It started with a few questions like, If the computer is an extension of our minds- and this is what theorists of Engineered Evolution believe is the case- then for every conscious interface we have with the computer, there is also a simultaneous subconscious action taking place? And if Engineered Evolutionists believe the computer is an extension of our brains, then have any psychoanalysts already set out to map the laptop's subconscious? The subconscious could in fact be visible right there on the desktop but we're not aware of it, and in fact cannot be aware of it. A complete record of everything we do at the computer, how we use files and applications, everywhere we visit on the Internet, might at least help to trace around the shadow of the subconscious. But if the operating system isn't full of repressed desires and undefined neuroses, then at the very least, the hard drive of the Internet are extensions of pure brainpower. And there seems to be one obvious side effect to this kind of Engineered Evolution. By expediting our access to knowledge,

this chip and that external server just as often replace the necessity for our own formation of memories. There is a clear irony embedded in the plot twist of human history, a story of ceaseless destruction and expansion, and that is how literacy and access to information has led to an unspoken tapering off of memory. Just anecdotally, in the days before literacy, the average illiterate's memory was often so regularly exercised and so strong that he could leave a political rally, for instance, and recite entire stump speeches back to friends, passing on the talk of the day. Far beyond the local square, and without the assistance of e-mail, cultures eventually defined themselves in great part thanks to strong memories. This is what life was like more or less, and for many thousands of years, until about 1995. In the last decade all that distance between information and its recipient has virtually disappeared. If we have a collectivized and digitized memory of the speech, what advantage is there, if any, for the modern literate guy to actually remember the words. // The so-called GRIN technologies, Genetics, Robotics, Information- technology, and Nanotechnology, have combined to create a new era of Real Engineered Evolution For Everyone, Remote-controlled. Specialization throughout society has hit the atomic level. Anagrams of specializations like GRIN are everywhere, not just in the science and art scenes or at business retreats, but in politics and terrorism across the spectrum. The Internet is so beyond the tipping point it seems like drowning just to attempt wade into the pool; but one thing that strikes me is how well it has succeeded in providing a working anarchist environment that allows for individuals to open a dialogue with the world. This wobbly utopia has so far evaded attempts at an undemocratic takeover, and nothing

but text. Real-world governments and populations were never able to deliver the kind of free speech a computer now offers. We live our digital lives in a new Spain, designed to be a more stable, more sustainable anarchist state for information, and industry and ideas. This anarchism might be our subconscious desire: a hierarchy where powerful systems respond as quickly as possible to shifting surges of innovation among a vastly decentralized people. // Because on the ethernet, everything in time exists simultaneously, everything is always relevant everywhere. The idea is to make everything we interface with always available everywhere in the form of reproduction. Cultures of pure ethos not circumstance exist online. In this predicament, what should I choose to remember and allow myself to forget? In a flattening of hierarchy, relevance becomes highly personal, granular in the extreme. Memory becomes supramnemonic, triggered by millions of reproductions rather than stored internally. // The laptop reduces the already small chance of a spontaneous gathering of many friends by atomizing the city square to a set of portals. To *see a friend through a window* once only described a physical connection to a reality, now it is also part of a metaphor. The experience of friendship is in the process of disambiguation, exactly like *horsepower*, to mean something else, and again less grounded. But this isolation has one very specific downside and that's the shallowing pool of shared memory. When you know the avatar, but don't relate to the identity of the homemade polygon, the friendship can never be properly relived, reinterpreted, and reinvented through time. And while these online relationships devour our time, the telepathic experienceis hard to verbally distinguish from monotony. It's hard to explain to someone -- it's hard to emphasize the value of an experience had online. The best we can do is send each other URL's. The more individual one's experiences become from physical surroundings, the less tied to the past, less satisfied with the present, and more ambivalent towards the future we become.