

Blanchette

Bruce's Studio News

Process • Concept • Evolution • Solution

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New Year... new goals... and much to think about!

When I started teaching art in Amityville, NY in 1964, I could imagine the specter of George Orwell's "1984" only twenty years hence and wondered what life would be like a score of years in the future. The ominous consequences that "Big Brother" engendered in his book never really seemed as threatening when we got there as it does today, 50 years later. The advent of the Computer Age was in its infancy in 1984, and the creative development of the personal computer and the internet, as well as the omnipresent cell phone, has finally gotten us there! Our personal lives clearly are no longer our own unless we choose to detach ourselves from all the electronic devices we have at our disposal (supposedly to make our lives better).

Interestingly, in 1964, I also remember the impact of writer/philosopher Marshall McLuhan when he wrote his important work "Understanding Media" which proposed that the "medium is the message".¹ This was a hot topic at the time. What he was generally talking about predicted our current circumstances with a perception that was ahead of his time. He observed that new innovations intrigue us because we see obvious possibilities to improve our lives, and although we realize that there may be some disadvantages in some ways, there may be more advantages that outweigh them. What we generally don't see are the "unintended consequences", or "unanticipated consequences" to be more exact. These are the unintended changes that affect society, culture, and even the global landscape of ideas, like liberty, personal freedom, and even artistic freedom.

It has come to pass that "Big Brother" is now with us... "At several recent junctures, the U.S. government has publicly sought to expand its power and control over the electronic privacy of its citizens."² The unintended effects of government surveillance and tracking of innocent individuals (even their conversations &/or their political leanings) through cell phone and internet use is now NSA policy. *Don't just ask Edward Snowden!* Orwell was about 30 years premature in his inspired portrayal of government control and overreach; but we are there now! For artists, journalists and writers this is a huge invasion of privacy, and more insidious because we no longer can know for sure who is spying on us or privy to our most personal data.

Paranoia? Some who feel they have nothing to hide might say it's necessary, but it is the reality of computer technology that has radically changed their thinking, as McLuhan suggested. The security of personal information is more vulnerable than ever before. There is reason to worry, and to be alert!

So... I continue to send these newsletters to you by email because I have a serious concern about the security and the transient nature of social media as a platform for worthwhile transmission of ideas. This PDF file, although capable of being reprinted, is a form that allows me more than Twitter's 140 characters to express myself and I can target my contacts individually!

In the end, the most permanent form of my expressions and thoughts take shape by hand in my studio. Whew!

¹ http://individual.utoronto.ca/markfederman/article_mediumisthemessage.htm

² <http://news.yahoo.com/nsa-never-takes-no-answer-220344825.html>



My newest small scale collage project using studio photos of models in combination with drawings from my sketchbooks is here shown in progress. I'm trying a new approach for mounting photos with an adhesive backed release paper and trying to work abstractly with the images.