

IN MEMORIAM

CHRISTINE TAMBLYN

1951-1998

Assistant Professor of Studio Art

Irvine

Artist and critic Christine Tamblyn died on New Year's Day 1998 at her home in San Francisco at the age of 46 of breast cancer. Committed to feminist politics and interdisciplinary experimentation, Christine achieved an international reputation for her work in performance, video, and digital media. Colleagues and students regarded her as an innovative scholar and a compassionate educator, who possessed an uncanny ability for conveying complicated issues with clarity and humor.

I first came to know Christine in the early 1980s, when I was an editor at *Afterimage*. Poignant in this context, she approached the journal about writing an obituary of a friend who had recently died of cancer. Christine immediately impressed me with her remarkable combination of professional commitment and ethical conviction, tempered with unrelenting generosity and good cheer. In those early days Christine staunchly avoided anything having to do with new technology, resolutely clinging to a typewriter to write her exquisitely crafted articles. When, after several years, I expressed concern about the time I expected it took her to prepare multiple drafts of her essays, she replied that she never revised. Writing had been a daily habit that she had practiced in journals since childhood.

Over the years Christine became familiar to readers of *Afterimage*, *Art News*, *Artweek*, and *High Performance*, among other periodicals, and her essays were widely used by colleagues. Eventually she changed her mind about technology, recognizing both the professional and political significance of challenging the heavily gendered domain of computer imaging. The result was more than a decade of insightful writing on video and performance, especially as applied to experimental narrative and digital media. Her articles on feminist performance and video are anthologized in *Illuminating Video* (Aperture Press), *Yesterday and Tomorrow: California Women's Art* (Midmarch Press) *Feminist Criticisms 2* (Harper/Collins) and *Resolutions 2* (University of Minnesota Press).

Christine received a BFA from the Art Institute of Chicago in 1979 and an MFA from the University of California, San Diego in 1986. Although Christine created work in a wide variety of genres, she achieved her greatest artistic prominence relatively recently in the CD-ROM medium. The first of her CD-ROM works, "She Loves It, She Loves It Not: Women and Technology" (1993) broke new ground by addressing the often problematic relationship of women to technological media. An instant success in the art and graphics communities, this occasionally comical critique of computer culture was exhibited internationally in "She Loves It, She Loves It Not: Women and Technology." It was shown later in "Seduced and Abandoned: The Body in the Virtual World" at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London; at Pacific Film Archives at the University Art Museum in Berkeley; at "The Illustrated Woman" conference held at the Yerba Buena Center of the Arts in San Francisco; at the San Francisco Exploratorium; at the Wexner Center for Contemporary Art in Columbus, Ohio; at the Ansel Adams Center for Photography in San Francisco; at the "Digital Identities" conference at the University of Nevada, Reno; at the Walter Phillips Gallery in the Banff Centre in Alberta, Canada; at SIGGRAPH '94 in Orlando, Florida; at the Australian International Video Art Symposium in Sydney, Australia; at ISEA '94 in Helsinki, Finland; in "ARS 95" at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki, Finland; at the Huntington Art Center in Huntington Beach, California; at Centro Cultural Caixavigo in Vigo, Spain; at "Cyborg Festival," De Balie, The Netherlands, Amsterdam; and at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia among other venues.

Christine's second CD-ROM, "Mistaken Identities," (1996) compared the biographies of ten prominent women. Premiering in a one person exhibition at the International Center for Photography in New York from March 29 to June 2, 1996. It was also shown at the First International Video Festival in Buenos, 1995, and during 1996 at the Mediopolis Videofest in Berlin February, the 14th World Wide Video Festival in The Hague, The Netherlands, "Moveable Feast: Camerawork's Inaugural Exhibition," the University Art Museum, Miami, the Brisbane Film Festival in Brisbane, Australia, the Dallas Video Festival in Dallas, Texas, "Techno-Seduction," Cooper Union, New York, New York, the University Art Museum in Berkeley, California. It was also shown at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C. in 1997. It won a Finalist Award at the 1996 New York Exposition of Short Film and Video, an Honorable Mention in the 1996 "New Voices, New Visions" contest sponsored by Wired magazine, Interval Corporation and Voyager Corporation, and First Prize in the 1997 International Festival of the Image, Universidad de Caldas, Manizales, Colombia..

In 1997 Christine received a National Endowment for the Arts Commission to produce a new CD ROM, "Archival Quality." Addressing the topic of Christine's own life, the project was nearing completion when she died. As a catalogue of Christine's writing and experiences--including the journals she began to produce at the age of 12--the

work also provides insights into the art world and women's movement during this turbulent period. Final work on "Archival Quality" was finished by friends and colleagues.

Although Christine taught at numerous institutions--most recently the University of California, Irvine--she achieved her greatest impact as an educator at San Francisco State University, where she served as graduate program coordinator and lecturer in the Inter-Arts Center from 1984 to 1996. When I joined the Inter-Arts faculty in the early 1990s, Christine's intellectual influence was omnipresent and her popularity absolute. This was largely due to the great care she gave in developing pedagogical approaches that would maximize the potential of every student. Her performative lectures were presented at many professional conferences: the Society of Photographic Education National Conference, the College Art Association National Conference, the National Alliance of Media Art Centers Conference and the American Film Institute National Video Festival. She was the recipient of the John McCarron Art Writing Award from Artspace in San Francisco in 1987 and 1990. In addition to her encyclopedic command of critical theory and contemporary issues, Christine was regarded for the encouragement she offered to younger artists and the efforts she made to bridge the often difficult gap between theory and practice. All of us learned from her. All of us will miss her.

Several months before her death Christine moved back to San Francisco to rejoin the remarkable community of friends she had assembled during her long residence in the city. The occasion of her illness brought them together again, as has her passing. The official premier of "Archival Quality" occurred late in 1998 in Southern California in at the Los Angeles Center for Photographic Studies, the organization that arranged the work's commission. A memorial Web site containing tributes, postings, and information about Christine's work has been created at: www.arts.uci.edu/tamblyn. The Christine Tamblyn Archive of original journals manuscripts, videotapes, and CD-ROM has been established at the library of University of California, Irvine.

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