

The Art Happens Here: Net Art Anthology

This richly illustrated volume retells the history of net art from the 1980s to the present day through thematic essays and interview extracts. It centers around the 100 works selected, restored and presented as part of the Net Art Anthology initiative, which originated as an online exhibition series in 2016 and continues with a touring gallery exhibition from January 2019.

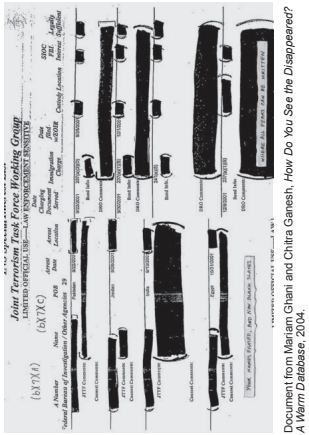
The book and exhibition are the work of Rhizome, the born-digital art organization founded by artist Mark Tribe in 1996. Leveraging more than two decades of experience with net art and digital culture, *The Art Happens Here* represents Rhizome's most complete effort to date to contextualize the art forms it champions.

Bringing to life the artistic communities, the surrounding social and political realities, and the changing technological contexts that have shaped artistic uses of the internet over a period of decades, *The Art Happens Here* features a unique design by Jiminie Ha/With Projects. Intended to function as an "informational object," the book boasts a chroma-key green cover, "scrolling" text that spills off the top and bottom of the page and wraps around the back cover, and images that ask the reader to rotate the book as they would a smartphone.

2.28 MARIAM GHANI AND CHITRA GANESH

How Do You See the Disappeared? *A Warm Database, 2003–2007*

How Do You See the Disappeared? A Warm Database, commissioned by the digital art organization Turbulence, responded to data-gathering and surveillance in the wake of 9/11, and its role in rendition, deportation, detention, and other forms of political disappearance. In opposition to state-sponsored processes of surveillance and erasure, the project proposed a concept of “warm data”—deeply personal but non-identifying information that spoke to the lived



experience of being subjected to political invisibility of various kinds.

The web-based project featured a hypertext essay, watercolor portraits of the Disappeared, a questionnaire, and visualizations of the answers, as well as accounts of activist efforts and links to political resources. Through warmth and subtlety, it sought to destabilize the cold, calculating logic of the archive, while including concrete calls to action on behalf of vulnerable communities.

This project, which was made with Rob Durbin and Ed Potter, marked the beginning of a larger, ongoing collaboration between Chitra Ganesh and Mariam Ghani titled *Index of the Disappeared*, an archive of “renditions, redactions, detentions,

and deportations.” Through this long-running effort, Ganesh and Ghani have explored the logic and limits of the archive, and its potential as a site for social change.

“Could I create a questionnaire, which no two people would ever answer in the same way?” —Mariam Ghani¹

From “Warm Data,” an interview with Chitra Ganesh and Mariam Ghani by Michael Connor²

MICHAEL CONNOR

What comes across is a sense of a failure of representation of the Disappeared—using warm data to counter the way they were depicted in lo-res, via bureaucratic mugshots and that sort of thing, or not at all.

afterwards when I was starting to work on the *Warm Database*.

[That’s] when we were really starting to understand how processes like special interest detention and special registration were really very much data-driven.



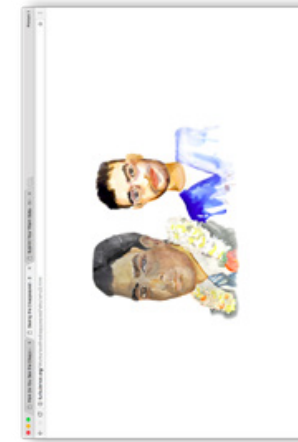
CHITRA GANESH

But also just very much caricatured and misidentified and mistaken, you know? For example, you will have a nomenclature like Muhammad Saleh Abdul Hussein, and they will pick up some person who they think has some version of this name, but they’ve picked up the totally wrong person.

That misapprehension, misidentity, all of these things that I think actually not only predicted the culture of racial profiling and of FBI targeting of Muslim student associations all over the city, but also drew upon what was already happening in the carceral politics of the US with the failure of witness identification, with unjustly convicting people, and so on and so forth.

MARIAM GHANI

Before everything that happened in the wake of 9/11, artists hadn’t really started to think about the politics of databases in the way that we started to think about them afterwards, especially about two-three years



We didn’t really start to understand that until some of the gag orders were lifted two years later.

Once that information started to emerge, for me and other artists also at the time, we began to look differently at the databases with which we had been working with as underpinnings of our own projects, in light of the official and commercial uses that were being made of databases and data.

The Warm Data questionnaire came out of three or four things. One was a series of conversations I had with a friend who had debriefed some of the special interest detainees before they were deported, and had found out what kind of questions they had been asked during interrogation. They had been asked the same questions over and over and over again.

Then it was looking at the questions that people were asked when [asylum seekers] went in for special registration in 2003.

It was basically trying to design something that was the opposite of these kind of interrogation and



Meriam Ghani and Chitra Ganesh, *How Do You See the Disappeared? A Warm Database*, 2004. Screenshot, 2018. Google Chrome 63 on macOS 10.13. turbulence.org/works/seethedisappeared/main.html.

same time, not identify them to anyone except maybe, maybe their closest friends and family. The idea was to create a data portrait that wouldn't be a data body.

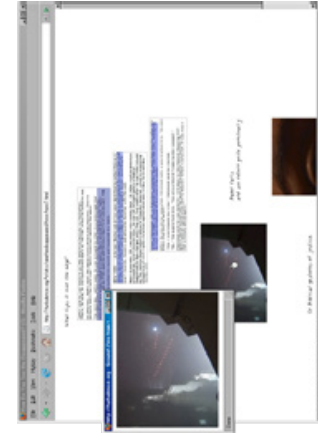
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For me, it was also about painting and the layering of individual strokes to create these portraits that emerge in the process of looking and thinking about these subjects, and also thinking about the relationship between figuration and the other. Thinking about how figuration and how the audience looks at it and confronts their own closeness and indifference to the human form.

We're both interested in connecting histories that might not necessarily be put together in the same frame, or thinking about a visual language that would better explore or expose those histories. Both of us are also interested the intersections of language and image, of text and image. Working with and within text and certain textual forms to create new meanings or new positions for the audience to enter a work.



Meriam Ghani and Chitra Ganesh, *How Do You See the Disappeared? A Warm Database*, 2004. Screenshot, 2018. Google Chrome 63 on macOS 10.13. turbulence.org/works/seethedisappeared/howhow2.html.



Meriam Ghani and Chitra Ganesh, *How Do You See the Disappeared? A Warm Database*, 2004. Screenshot, 2018. Mozilla Firefox 2.0 on Windows 86. turbulence.org/works/seethedisappeared/howhow7.html.

¹ Michael Connor, "Warm Data," *Rhizome*, November 3, 2017, rhizome.org/editorial/2017/nov03/warm-data.

² Connor 2017.

special registration questions, and instead was something more like what the asylum seekers were asking me to ask them.

The fourth factor was the desire that was constantly expressed by immigrant rights advocates, which was, "How do we put a face on the issue?"

It was a really thorny problem in that context because you want to personalize the problem or scale this big abstract debate down to individual and specific terms. But there were so many people who were truly afraid of losing their legal immigration status or revealing their status as illegal immigrants if they came forward and told their individual stories.

Others were part of communities where it really carried a stigma to be out of status. So many people didn't want to tell their individual stories and have them actually attached to their real names and real faces. That problem in immigrant rights advocacy led me to ask whether it would be possible to create a portrait of someone that would be specific and individual but at the

These were some of the things that we were thinking about in terms of what kinds of evocative memories would fall between the cracks of an official dialogue, that might be able to puncture the distance between the larger public debate around [immigration issues] after 9/11, and the actual lives and people being affected, who were never really seen.