The Compressionist: Dumb Type's Teiji Furuhashi

Cyberaesthetics, Bioethics, Digital-Autopsies:
Involution, Extramodernity, Compressionism

by
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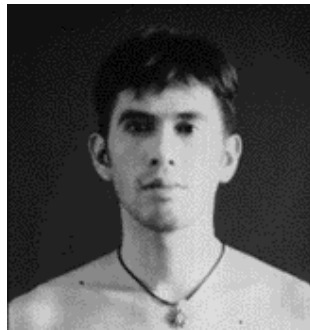European Graduate School

Fig. 1, Teiji Furuhashi

The picture is a model of reality.
To the objects correspond in the picture the elements of the picture.
The elements of the picture stand, in the picture, for the objects.
The picture consists in the fact that its elements are combined with one another in a definite way.
The picture is a fact.

Ludwig Wittgenstein[i]

What is the digital equivalent of lovely? He wondered. What are the digits that encode beauty, the number-fingers that enclose, transform, transmit, decode, and somehow, in the process, fail to trap or choke the soul of it? Not because of the technology but in spite of it, beauty, that ghost, that treasure, passes undiminished through the new machines.

Salman Rushdie[ii]

:Opening...

(fig_1)

       Being involved in a conversation about media is a way of opening a dialogue in order to communicate something about media. In this light, the timing and spacing of conversation becomes a matter of asking what media is open to question; Answers may appear in conversation itself, rather than in the media itself. Understandably, then, it is not clear that the medium is the message, as Marshall McLuhan has said, nor that the message is the message, as Manuel Castells has said. However, we may try to clarify the terms with which we can relate the message of a medium apart from messages of our conversation, were it opened somehow. The example of media that I would like to approach in order to illustrate my point regarding the timing and spacing of our conversation, if you will, is the artwork of Teiji Furuhashi, it is titled *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)*.

       Teiji Furuhashi died in Japan, the nation-state of his birth, at the age of 35: He lived from 1960 to 1995. The cause of his death was related to HIV induced septicemia, or blood poisoning, he "passed away in Kyoto on 29 October 1995 at 2:45pm."[iii] Furuhashi was one of the founding members of the artist-group Dumb Type. Dumb Type was founded in Kyoto in the early 1980s, somewhere between 1982-1984, as it was initially formed by students of Kyoto Art University. However, Furuhashi had produced, after the founding of Dumb Type's initial exhibitory efforts, *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)* as a solo artwork, in part because of the message that became the focus of the artwork itself. In this way, in part, Furuhashi's message in *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)* was of his immanent death, as it was produced in 1994, installed once in Kyoto at that time, and then exhibited internationally, and posthumously, in 1995 as well. This artwork now appears to have been exhibited extensively and is available for installation even today.

       As mentioned, *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)* was produced in 1994. Because it is Furuhashi's only solo work it can be seen, maybe only tenuously, as his first and last media production. *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)* presents problems for our discussion, for in this work representation becomes critical in the sense that it is an installation that is separate from the collaborative works of Dumb Type, and thus appears autobiographical, or as, we shall see, somewhat of a self-portrait. And, on the contrary, we must ask if there could be a work that is both, in any sense, first as well as last, that is from our vantage point regarding Furuhashi's biographical information. Indeed, Furuhashi inscribed *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)* with a message of death in the name of love. **(fig_2)** As we can see *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)* portrays several images of bodies moving across the wall of a gallery space. This is but one image, and does not yet express the extent of the artwork as an installation. At times, we can see, the bodies overlap. A description of this installation still appears on Dumb Type's website, it reads: [iv]

In a dark, square, otherwise empty room there appear images of several nude, near-lifesize men and women, walking, standing, embracing in slow motion. When the viewer approaches a wall to see the images better, a new figure appears-Furuhashi himself-moving slowly toward the viewer and then vanishing behind the viewer.

These images of embodiment, these figures, are lined within the gallery space by a surrounding darkness as well as more literal messages, linguistic in scope, and as such can be read apart from, yet connected to, the motions of the bodies. One linguistic message reads, and are the only two words that now appear along the wall with the installation at this time:[v]

-      Fear
-      Limit

As a video installation, this artwork regards producing a projection with technological material, especially in light of the technological material of the time. At the time of Furuhashi's death *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)* was an edition of 1. The material of the artwork involved the installation of the following equipment: "Computer-controlled, five-channel video/sound installation with five video projectors, eight-channel sound system, and slide projectors."[vi] And, it is in this sense that the material of the artwork was co-produced with Canon ARTLAB, in what was the Canon corporation's new media space in Kyoto: However, that space is now closed[vii], and such material we can now see as a sign of such a closure to the space, and I suggest more of an opening to our inquiry. Perhaps this sense of material co-production undermines, like Furuhashi's biography itself, the notion that Furuhashi had produced any artwork alone: However, to see this point we might take, as a source, what we may discuss, and as such, we must place *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)* in the context of our conversation.

       Following Dumb Type, what I would like to aim at is a formal complexity, insofar as such a complexity is socially involved. With this aim, then, what we may see are signs regarding an aesthetic of our involvement, and because of the digital information involved here I would like to expose to you what I think it is appropriate to consider as conversational, a cyberaesthetics of involution. Also, in order to display the political difficulty of recognizing Furuhashi's intentions in producing *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)*, what I would like to suggest is something of a bioethical perspective as if involved with the cyberaesthetics of involution, at least to the point of understanding a simultaneous existence with a non-Western modernity; Here, I suggest, we may see something of a Buddhist

visualization of an ethic. Then, I will show, briefly, that in light of our conversation, however tentative, we may see that the digital narrative I am speaking of regards a respect for a life lived, and as such this digital narrative is something of a digital-autopsy, whereby signs of our socially complex involvements lead us to see the cause of Furuhashi's death around us, or, at least, within the compressed perspective of love that signals what may lead us to view such causes and discuss them, relatively speaking, as effective.

Fig. 2, *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)*, Installation View

Involution: Cyberaesthetics

The science fiction writer Samuel Delany expresses what we may be able to communicate about such an installation as *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)*, but which he could not fully communicate and we may not fully as well, as we leave interpretation open. Delany wrote of involvement, he writes, after Marshall McLuhan's understanding of television, that video is about "Low resolution, high involvement," "Video is ultimately more engaging than film because we are given less information."[viii] Here, Delany's analysis involved a correct description of the following two characteristics of video art: "Two characteristics that video art shares with much other contemporary art, especially installation art, are a lack of permanence (the 'timelessness' that for so long has seemed essential to 'serious' art) and the use of movement-that motion in excess of the contained cycles and oscillations of the mobile, the sweep of movement and image that film, video, and certain large-scale mechanisms alone can provide."[ix] What this means, Delany writes further, is that "When such motion enters the exhibition space, it excludes a certain concept of history as a static moment to be considered, in all its elements, like a dioramic re-creation. We're still learning what concept of history is freed into play by these mobile images. But even as we are learning how to read them, my suspicion is that underlying them is a concept of history far more complex than most of us are used to."[x] Indeed, we might see what leads us to view this more complex view of history, now, with a critical history of the present, insofar as we may see reasons to discuss historical theories as reflected in video installations related to digital narratives about multimedia art, such as Delany's. Such involvement, such involution of technology, it's past resolutions and revolutions becoming apparent in contemporary conversations, appearances and disappearances: In this respect, history is about the very bodies upon which history is faded into and out of, that we can be led to see the minutia of the experience of the ephemerality of the present moment insofar as we are involved to some questionable degree: A degree nevertheless.

Indeed, on another hand, we face the online documentation and the surface of the process of the archiving of the installation in an involuted way: Yet, how is this precisely historical? To see this we must turn to the aesthetics of history, its inscription. A concept of space is necessary here, for historical representation requires it, and it appears three dimensional, with an elongated depth of length, width, and height. However, we must also speak of a similarity of perspective of such a view that is part of what we may see with online documentation, that is, we see the doubling of the three dimensional space just described with it's aesthetic composition of coordinates, it's commensurability with an ideal of reality. This doubling signals the temporal aspect at play with history since it is part of a time, time as a fourth dimension, with which the two three dimensional spaces are connected. In conversation, then, we are virtually there, with the installation as a work of art that had been created. Technology allows us some access to this notion of synchronicity, yet the diachronic point is critical since our view of history must neither rely only on the modern theoretical view that leads one to see the past as leading to our present[xi], nor the postmodern theory that leads one to see the present as leading to our view of the past[xii]: The digital narrative here is interesting, because there is a pivotal theory that collapses the notion of the linearity of historical narrative, it points to what leads us to see the past is not the historical narrative that caused the present to occur out of the past, but rather the other way around as well, that from the present we effectively represent the past as historical in terms of causal relations: These correlations of cause and effect are thus involved with the pivotal theoretical perspectives that revolve around linearity, like clock-work once had, and which real-time has yet to do completely without. If we think of this notion of the cyberaesthetic of *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)* the spatio-temporal obviousness of the feedback loop of the video projections

appears while the images themselves reflect it's obscure function of repetition, the simulation of embodiments passing through one another, ambiguously separating at a point where they are not oddly united as if, if we understand Furuhashi correctly, dying pictures and loving pictures. Like history at this pivotal moment, what appears is the perplexity of a time involved with the structure of a spatial picture, an image, of bodies passing for having been installed and also being described here and now by other means, through a digital narrative as such. Indeed, this is the historical imagination at work and at play.

      Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures) is exposed to what we can say, or can communicate, about cyberspace as if partially informed with temporal signs of a videographical past with which we see from a historiographical vantage point of realist representations, a rhetoric of reality, connecting to, for lack of a better word, the present. I think that this is the space of *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)* today, since its archive has opened up to questions that are involved when theoretical research easily exposes that so-called real-time is not realistically represented in a real space, we have, rather, cyberspace. Cyberspace appears as a temporal space, as Cathy Young says[xiii], meaning it makes sense that it takes time to identify something through it as related to another sense of time. The meaningful extension, and perhaps a meaninglessness as well, regards the notion that we produce what we understand as being involved with a multi-mediated installation such as *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)*. It becomes more apparent that cyberspace, then, is a hyper-mediated space, as Critical Art Ensemble may say[xiv], and that graphic media are part of an "expanded text," thanks to an aesthetic notion of history, its compositional synthesis of representations of imagery of bodies feedback into the loop of oppositional being, here figuratively run together from different perspectives of each other in the installation, yet meeting through such a separation, repeatedly: Figured here in the image we see now.

Fig. 3, *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)*, ARTLAB, Installation View

Extramodernity: Bioethics

My second point, taking what we see here as Furuhashi's work and our involvement in seeing its historical character, rather than only that of its technology, is about recognizing something of an ethical limitation. This limit can be drawn such that we see that we are not in the installation, nor totally in a situation in which the installation emerged, but rather in a situation of an alternate crisis in which not the gallery space, but the cyberspace of our limits are drawn. Our social reality is not precisely that in which Furuhashi had lived. We see his difference differently: Ours, perhaps, is an ethics of proximity. And, so, I suggest that we take up some notions that allow us to recognize any ethical sense of representation of Furuhashi. In doing this, I loosely follow Nilufer Göle, who wrote that we can see the following postulates that support a notion of extramodernity; Göle writes:[xv]

- "Decentering the West"

- "Introducing coeval time," which means a temporality of the simultaneous.

- "Replacing the perspective of 'lack' with 'extra' modernity"

- And that it is noted that "Dissonant traditions can provide some methodological foundations for an approach in terms of non-Western modernities."

Göle, in this way, can support a perspective of Furuhashi's normative stance regarding the making of artwork, and I quote from Furuhashi in order to make this point about his thoughts regarding Dumb Type more apparent, that the collaborative group he worked with involved, approximately, the following ethical situation. Furuhashi states:

We were frustrated artists, and wanted to start creating something new with our skills. Most of the time we spent discussing society or whatever, not specific art things. When someone had any idea it would be presented on a piece of paper. If the group was interested, we made it come true. At first the idea would be really open, then gradually it became something very specific. In this way, we're really democratic. Dumb Type is a collaborative; we don't want a king.

This quote is exemplary because I think it highlights a non-Western modernity, though not totally so, yet it decenters the West from the simultaneous point of view that democracies arise differently, under different conditions of a social reality. This social coevalness also allows us to draw a historical sequence such that we not see Furuhashi's "lack" but rather Dumb Type's "extra," for there is a more collaborative effort in *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)* than we may have seen at first glance. Instead, our gaze is turned toward a group's sense of democracy in Japan as modern, as extramodern.

(fig_3) The simultaneity involved, moreover, is one of being to some degree naked, even if only beneath the surface of the cyberaesthetic. This is what points to two senses of digital narrative: One Judeo -Christian, and one Buddhist, as Furuhashi was himself Buddhist and that historically Judeo-Christian culture informs many of us of many of our problems within part of Western culture itself. To illustrate this point we must not merely see the representations of naked bodies, but look to their overlapping, and in turn to our imaginative overlapping ethos of being naked in public. Again, the historical point is that we may be limited by the very ethos of Judeo-Christian culture if we see that *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)* was Furuhashi's first and last artwork, to some degree of approximation. Perhaps in a perverse agnostic way the subject matter of *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)* is seen as split representationally, as if under a notion of being simultaneous: On the one hand we may see a nudity as non-Western in light of Judeo-Christianity, and on the other hand we may see a Western perspective of an Eastern Buddhism. This is the perplexity of the moment that is both the first and last images of Furuhashi's work. Ethical distance, in this way, remains socially ambiguous.

We can recall that in Matthew 20:16, of the New Testament, the moral statement, "So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen"; in this narrative, laborers began work, and workers that had arrived early worked more of the day than those workers that arrived later in the day. When time came for all of these workers to be paid it was decided that those that had worked less would receive the same amount of payment as those that arrived earlier. There was a protest by the early workers because they had thought that the later workers should receive less, because they had worked less. However, the supervisor of all of the workers had decided that the last should come first, to the degree that it can be understood that it mattered not the amount given for the work but that the call to work was similar for all in light of a monotheism that spoke to issues of equality, "the few chosen." Thus, rather than see that the first receive more for their work we see, instead, that work itself knew no such difference with the irony that what should be done is consider that those who came last become the primary point of departure for the greater good of the group as decided with the promise of equal payment for services rendered. This is the Judeo-Christian perspective and it regards the permanence of an omnipresent point of view that is able to transpose the last into the social position of a first priority. However, if we take a Buddhist stance we see an impermanence, that first and last are equal for a different reason, for it is because such a cardinal rule is extraneously self-referential to matters of priority from the start and to the finish; if we were to miss this point we would miss a Buddhist possibility as well. In this sense, the Judeo-Christian ideal of a somewhat permanent, or shall we say omnipresent morality, where the last should come first, is undermined with a Buddhist point that signifies an ethic of simultaneous impermanence. Alternately, the historical vantage point of Judeo-Christian belief appears different: It especially appears different in terms of the canon of historical, or art historical, texts. To see this we must define what we mean by the canonical, the canon, or its formation. I borrow my definition from *The Columbia Dictionary of Modern Literary and Cultural Criticism*, published in 1995 in New York; It states:[xvi]

The term canon, from the Greek word for ruler or measuring stick, originally referred to the books of the Old and New Testaments of the Christian Bible that were approved by church authorities as the revealed word of God, the Holy Scriptures. [...] Canon has been adapted to literary criticism to designate those works and authors whom the literary establishment, through loose consensus, considers "major." [...] The process by which an author or work is established as "canonical" is called "canon formation." This is by no means a formal procedure but rather an accumulation of a number of factors, including repeated reference to an author or a work by critics and writers, the currency of an author or work within the general community, and the inclusion of the author or work in school and college curricula. In recent years, as literary and theoretical studies have become increasingly interested in the instiutional and ideological implications of distinguishing between "major" and "minor" works and authors, the process of canon formation has come under considerable attack. The most common charge has been that the canon of "great books" in literary study has been formed primarily by a privileged, elite group of white male critics and teachers. The result is that the canon

reproduces the shared interests of the members of that group and excludes the works and voices of other significant but marginalized groups such as women, homosexuals, or people of color.

And so at the very least the naïve point regarding "the canon" here is that it's Judeo-Christian structure, its line of reasoning, is decentered the moment that we consider Furuhashi in light of his cross-dressing[xvii], and not only nudist homosexuality, but also as though also undermining the sexual and race relations in Japan itself from a rather ambiguous Buddhist standpoint, where the impermanent point is precisely that which decenters the line of reasoning of the first/last binary structure, that there is no first/last cause and no first/last effect, for there are no permanent points along a line as such: Perhaps the Judeo-Christian illusion disappears insofar as we may ask if there can be a permanent meaning of impermanence? As Dorinda Neave writes, turning away from the just stated question, yet in reference to the problem of meaning involved with decentering "the canon":[xviii]

In spite of the fact that we live in a high-tech global society with easy access to information, people exhibit a strong desire to hide or distort what is deemed socially undesirable, such as homosexuality, AIDS, old age, and death. Furuhashi announced his HIV-positive status to members of Dumb Type in 1992, and what emerged was a collective commitment to explore such issues as homosexuality and AIDS.

But, our problem does not stop here because we also see that a corporate work ethic is involved with this decentering, it's simultaneity as being extramodern. **(fig_Canon Annual Report, 1998, p. 10)**[xix] This problem, to be sure, involves that of the shareholders of the Canon corporation itself and it's workers, who are at risk of being discussed transparently in Western multinational terms. This problem immediately throws into question, again, whether or not Furuhashi worked alone, for what we see is the Canon corporation on the one hand and the art historical canon on the other, meanwhile what arises is the question of to what degree the social democracy of Dumb Type actually worked in through cross-cultural Judeo-Christian and Buddhist relations such that the corporate and the art historical are not mutually exclusive. An answer to this problem, I think, is that the cardinal rule of designating what is first and last regards how artists capitalize an idea into the concrete commodity of the artwork, here an installation situated at the nexus of Canon, the corporation, and the art historical. This is seen by considering that *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)* is no longer so singular a concept, but in fact shaped in the formation of a series, a historical series that places both "canons," the corporation and the art historical or literary, into question. Indeed, the simple proof is the mere extension of the installation into editions starting with the first, its being collected, as it was in 1995 by the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and the underlying logic of the possibility of any number of editions being collected until the very last. This may prove to be yet an unresolved problem, but that may only serve to bring us to a Buddhist sensibility for impermanence: Thus it is perplexing to even say that we can, or have, seen Furuhashi's first and last work. However, this is the split subject that we now see involved in its production through cyberspace and into the digital narrative that allows us to see it archived there, with images of its reproducibility. Indeed, it is this corporate and perhaps quasi-religious literary notion of frustration at work with the artists' frustration itself. Such that we can say with Louise Dompierre that this frustration is one of an anxiety regarding Japanese art in the 1990s. Dompierre writes:[xx]

Understanding of current contemporary visual art activities as they relate to the complexity of life in Japan can be enhanced by broadening the discourse. What would appear to characterize Japan at this point in time is a sense of excess together with a feeling of anxiety about a society that appears not only to be pushing itself to the limits but also to be redefining itself as needs arise out of social change. Simultaneously, Japan is distinguished by remarkable technological development and economic prosperity. To the young artist working today, this confluence of factors, perhaps representing a turning point demands close attention.

And so we turn to the critique of the art historical canon as predominantly derived by heterosexist impulses, yet not to simply include Furuhashi, but rather to question the distinction of what should come first and/or last as if permanent, from a Westernity decentered. The anxiety Dompierre considers is still with us today and can be seen with the serene contemplation of the illusion of nudity with the manifest technological apparatus that must be worn as one enters the gallery space, or even doing online archival research. Nudity, in this sense, is just as well served in the eye of the beholder as beauty, and to some social and historical extent they are conceptually separated by the love that goes with a life lived into it's death, pictured here as a cause for the work itself: And that, I think, is the bioethic at play here in considering what is extramodern about *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)*. If we feel Furuhashi's and Dumb Type's frustration, then, I suggest it is because of, in part, a coeval ethical proximity to their work, as well as the work of others.

Fig. 4

Compressionism: Digital-Autopsies

My third point: **(fig_4)** If the digital narrative is to any degree different than other narratives I think it is because it is compressed. Narratives of life and death, as seen here, are to be gazed at then, accordingly. In this way, the cause of death is still acknowledged by artists groups, academia, corporations, religions, etc. In Furuhashi's case, this cause was blood poisoning: Our view of this cause is compressed as well, but in a particularly architectural fashion of technological importance, such as compression offers. We must understand that without flesh and blood there can be no gaze. And, even here, in *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)* we may see the silencing of blood in the name of love, the image of the coming of age of death as naked, a nude. To see this we must understand the danger of performing something of a digital-autopsy upon the figure of "the body" via time-space compression, or the implications of such a view of technology.

From our vantage point, then, the past is unwilling to wholly transpose its history into our relatively partial perspective: Rather we turn to the past and see it disappear. This image is staged with an "aesthetics of disappearance," after Virilo, and can be seen in Furuhashi's work according to Akira Asada.[xxi] In the fading in and out of the images of love there is a sign of the nude, the naked body made into an image: Here this image is of love, and it speaks to no one and so speaks to everybody. All in all, this videographical simulation of love as a language of a shared existence is more of a diasporic noise than a racial, or sexual, harmony: Hence Dumb Type's frustration. There is some theoretical support for this perspective, at least from contemporary neo-Marxism. Manuel Castells sees this culture of aesthetics that surrounds the disappearing historical figure, a figure to which contemporary identities are won and lost, he writes:[xxii]

The more that societies try to recover their identity beyond the global logic of uncontrolled power of flows, the more they need an architecture that exposes their own reality, without faking beauty from a transhistorical repertoire. But at the same time, oversignificant architecture, trying to give a very definite message or to express directly the codes of a given culture, is too primitive a form to be able to penetrate our saturated visual imaginary. The meaning of its messages will be lost in the culture of "surfing" that characterizes our symbolic behavior. This is why, paradoxically, the architecture that seems most charged with meaning in societies shaped by the logic of the space of flows is what I [Castells] call "the architecture of nudity." That is, the architecture whose forms are so neutral, so pure, so diaphanous, that they do not pretend to say anything. And by not saying anything they confront the experience with the solitude of the space of flows. Its message is silence.

Similarly, as we can read on Dumb Type's website: "The 'dumb' in Dumb Type thus does not denote a level of intelligence, but rather describes a desire to create without words."[xxiii] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri also see this contemporary phenomenon, following Agamben's notion of "naked life," which refers to "the negative limit of humanity" and the exposure of what is "behind the political abysses that modern totalitarianism had constructed the (more or less heroic) conditions of human passivity."[xxiv] In contrast, they write, totalitarianisms, such as fascism and Nazism, "tried in vain to destroy the enormous power that naked life could become and expunge the form in which the new powers of productive cooperation of the multitude are accumulated."[xxv] The point is that with Dumb Type's social democratic experiment, however minimal, we see something of a human power, in Hardt and Negri's sense, and that this means exposing signs of "an autonomous cooperating collective force, [and therefore] capitalist prehistory comes to an end. In other words, capitalist prehistory comes to an end when social and subjective cooperation is no longer a product but a presupposition, when naked life is raised up to the dignity of productive power, or really when it appears as the wealth of virtuality."[xxvi] This naked life, the representation of it as an "architecture of nudity," thus exposes a

communicative power of the meaning of words so that the vanishing-life (rather than a vanishing-point), its vanishing into love as death, and death as love, resounds with the gestures of the body language of contemporary artwork and the historical record of such work, both of which are compressed.

What do we mean by compression? In part, this notion is limited by our conversation, so that we may say that when "naked life" and the "architecture of nudity" appear simultaneously in an instant, we have, then, a compression; When the first and the last appear simultaneously in an instant we have a compression; When we have large scale correlations such as cause and effect reduced to the pivotal perspective that both lead to each other as if appearing simultaneously embodied with a past leading to a present and a present that leads us to see a past, then we have compression. And, after David Harvey, Manuel Castells tells us the following regarding time-space compression:[xxvii]

- "Compressing time to the limit is tantamount to make time sequence, and thus time, disappear."

- "The culture of real virtuality associated with an electronically integrated multimedia system...contributes to the transformation of time in our society in two different forms: simultaneity and timelessness."

- "Timeless time belongs to the space of flows, while time discipline, biological time, and socially determined sequencing characterize places around the world, materially structuring and destructuring our segmented societies."

Is our conversation informed by such compression? Indeed, it is at least the digital narrative that signals so, though we may deny it, and that is what is at risk by not discussing compression regarding late twentieth century and early twenty first century work that relies upon communication technologies. To quote Castells again, for this speaks to a notion of a temporality of cyberspace, or the real-time aesthetic of culture:[xxviii]

Time is compressed and ultimately denied in culture, as a primitive replica of the fast turnover in production, consumption, ideology, and politics on which our society is based. A speed only made possible because of new communication technologies.

But this is precisely the point, that we have a limited lifetime with which to understand contemporary compression as laboriously divided (capitalistically and communally), no less the socio-political compassion, of others. Yet, it is this search for life, perhaps the approximate good of an ethical life, that may see that causes of death are to be understood from some distance: With Furuhashi this distance was the poisoning of the blood, as regards *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)* we may see that we deny acknowledging its cause if we do not see that Furuhashi had produced this work in part, because he was dying, that he wanted to publicize along with Dumb Type an understanding of HIV, AIDS, etc. And so, with this presentation I think that there is an ambiguous truth to the notion that a digital-autopsy is at hand as a digital-narrative, cutting across cultures, perhaps beyond a kitsch-gaze, seeking their dying historical light as a living question.

...Closing:

Following Dumb Type, what I would like to have aimed at is a formal complexity, insofar as such a complexity is socially involved. With this aim, then, what we may have seen are signs regarding an aesthetic of our involvement, and because of the digital information involved here I would like to have exposed to you what I think is appropriate to consider as conversational, a cyberaesthetics of involution. Also, displaying the political difficulty of recognizing Furuhashi's intentions in producing *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)*, what I would like to suggest is something of a bioethical perspective as if involved with the cyberaesthetics of involution, at least to the point of understanding a simultaneous existence with a non-Western modernity; Here, I suggest, we may see something of a Buddhist visualization of an ethic. Then, I showed, briefly, that in light of our conversation, however tentative, we may see that the digital narrative I am speaking of regards a respect for a life lived, and as such this digital narrative is something of a digital-autopsy, whereby signs of our socially complex involvements leads us to see the cause of Furuhashi's death around us, or, at least, within the compressed perspective of love that signals what may lead us to view such causes and discuss them, relatively speaking, as effective.

As mentioned, *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)* was produced in 1994. Because it is Furuhashi's only solo work it can be seen, maybe only tenuously, as his first and last media production, for this is the image of eternity written ephemerally with the body. *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)* presents problems for our discussion, for in this work representation becomes critical in the sense that it is an installation that is separate from the collaborative works of Dumb Type, and thus appears autobiographical, or as, we have seen, somewhat of a self-portrait of not being, and this is its cyberaesthetic; As Sandy Stone writes, "In cyberspace you are everywhere and somewhere and nowhere, but almost never here in the positivist sense," and writing further, " 'To-not-be' in cyberspace then would require a

different sense of whereness in cyberspace since it can be found in cyberspace as it positions a body, identity, and technology in a positivist sense."[xxix] And, on the contrary, we must ask if there could be a work that is both, in any sense, first as well as last, that is from our historical vantage point regarding Furuhashi's biographical information, its potential impermanence, its "extra," as it may resist the permanent designations of a beginning and an ending, such as "first" and "last" signify as a question of an order otherwise "lacking" historically. Indeed, Furuhashi inscribed *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)* with a message of death in the name of love. **(fig_2)** As we can see *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)* portrays several images of bodies moving across the wall of a cyberspace. This is but one image, and does not yet express the extent of the artwork as a presentation. At times, we can see, the bodies overlap. A description of this presentation still appears on Dumb Type's website, it reads, as if simulating the installation, represented as such:

In a dark, square, otherwise empty room there appear images of several nude, near-lifesize men and women, walking, standing, embracing in slow motion. When the viewer approaches a wall to see the images better, a new figure appears-Furuhashi himself-moving slowly toward the viewer and then vanishing behind the viewer.

These images of embodiment, these figures, are lined within the cyberspace by a surrounding darkness as well as more literal message, linguistic in scope, and as such can be read apart from, yet connected to, the motions of the bodies. One linguistic message reads, and are the only two words that now appear along the wall with the installation at this time:

-        Fear
-        Limit

As a cyberspace document, this artwork is about producing a projection with technological material, especially in light of the technological material of the time. At the time of Furuhashi's death *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)* was an edition of 1. The material of the artwork involved the installation of the following equipment: "Computer-controlled, five-channel video/sound installation with five video projectors, eight-channel sound system, and slide projectors." And, it is in this sense that the material of the artwork was co-produced with Canon ARTLAB, in what was the Canon corporation's new media space in Kyoto: However, that space is now closed, and such material we can now see as a sign of such a closure to the space, and I suggest more of an opening to our inquiry. Perhaps this sense of material co-production undermines, like Furhashi's biography itself, the notion that Furuhashi had produced any artwork alone: However, to see this point we might take, as a source, what we may discuss, and as such, we must place *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)* in the context of our conversation, its questionable historicity.
Teiji Furuhashi died in Japan, the nation-state of his birth, at the age of 35: He lived from 1960 to 1995. The cause of his death was related to HIV induced septicemia, or blood poisoning, he "passed away in Kyoto on 29 October 1995 at 2:45pm." Furuhashi was one of the founding members of the artist-group Dumb Type. Dumb Type was founded in Kyoto in the early 1980s, somewhere between 1982-1984, as it was initially formed by students of Kyoto Art University. However, Furuhashi had produced, after the founding of Dumb Type's initial exhibitory efforts, *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)* as a solo artwork, in part because of the message that became the focus of the artwork itself. In this way, in part, Furuhashi's message in *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)* was of his immanent death, as it was produced in 1994, installed once in Kyoto at that time, and then exhibited internationally, and posthumously, in 1995 as well. This artwork now appears to have been exhibited extensively and is available for installation even today. In presenting the work here I have tried to address some notions that allow us to see an extramodern character, for it is additional and uncommon in comparison to the Western canon, perhaps to the extent that we, after Göle, may see Ackbar Abbas's description of city life nowadays: "a space traversed by different times and speeds, where change has no clear direction...a weakening of the sense of chronology, of historical sequentiality, so that old and new are easily contemporaneous and continuities and discontinuities can exist side by side...pre-modern and post-modern join hands without having to acknowledge each other."[xxx] Yet, to work with this notion of city life an ethic is implied with the visibility of reasons for thinking such a way, and this bioethic is of making visible the same-difference that, not only the art historical canon and the Canon corporation share, but also Buddhism and Judeo-Christianity. From the Western perspective, then, we may be able to say that we do not precisely see a Buddhist dead-end with Furuhashi's cosmopolitan work, but rather a coming of age narrative.

     Being involved in a conversation about media thesedays is a way of opening a dialogue in order to communicate something about media as working with compression. In this light, the timing and spacing of conversation becomes a matter of asking what media is open to question as compressed; Answers may appear in conversation itself, rather than in the media itself, and so any attempt to articulate a connection may rely on a digital narrative as a fictional equivalent for a cyberaesthetics. Understandably, then, it is not clear that the medium is the message, as Marshall McLuhan has said, nor that the message is the message, as Manuel Castells has said. However, we may try to clarify the terms with which we can relate the message of the medium apart from the messages of our conversation, were it opened somehow to a search for the causes of death and love, a digital-autopsy as such. Slavoj Žižek, following Janet Murray, speaks to this issue of (in)commensurabily of perspectives, by seeing that there are two

uses of the cyberspace narrative: "the linear, single path-maze adventure and the 'postmodern' hypertext undetermined form of rhizome fiction."[xxxi] Žižek writes further:[xxxii]

The single-path maze adventure moves the interactor towards a single solution within the structure of a win-lose contest (overcoming the enemy, finding the way out...). So, with all possible complications and detours, the overall path is clearly predetermined: all roads lead to one final Goal. In contrast to it, the hypertext rhizome does not privilege any order of reading or interpretation: there is no ultimate overview or "cognitive mapping," no possibility to unify the dispersed fragments in a coherent encompassing narrative framework, one is irreducibly enticed in conflicting directions - we, the interactors, just have to accept that we are lost in the inconsistent complexity of multiple referrals and connections...The paradox is that this ultimate helpless confusion, this lack of final orientation, far from causing an unbearable anxiety, is oddly reassuring: the very lack of the final point of closure serves as a kind of denial which protects us from confronting the trauma of our finitude, of the fact that there our story has to end at some point - there is no ultimate irreversible point, since, in this multiple universe, there are always other paths to explore, alternate realities into which one can take refuge when one seems to reach a deadlock. - So how are we to escape this false alternative?

I think this is the ethical point that Žižek makes by relying on Janet Murray's notion of the "violence-hub," meaning for Žižek that "an account of some violent or otherwise traumatic incident[...]is placed at the center of a web of narratives-files that explores it from multiple points of view." And so here we point out the danger of picturing a model of reality, as Wittgenstein might put it, if one were to say, virtually, or as Salman Rushdie might ask of computer science if there is an intellectual danger of saying " 'I love you' to a total fucking stranger."[xxxiii] Exemplary is what Janet Murray insights might leads us to see, perhaps counter-intuitively, that is that Dumb Type's website makes visible a compressed view of social democracy, with the minimum of time being informed in order to maximize the space of information about their efforts, and this is may be how a majority of digital narratives appear such as Furuhashi's, Murray writes:[xxxiv]

The proliferation of interconnected files is an attempt to answer the perennial and ultimately unanswerable question of why this incident happened./.../ these violence-hub stories do not have a single solution like the adventure maze or a refusal of solution like the postmodern stories; instead, they combine a clear sense of story structure with a multiplicity of meaningful plots. The navigation of the labyrinth is like pacing the floor; a physical manifestation of the effort to come to terms with the trauma, it represents the mind's repeated efforts to keep returning to a shocking event in an effort to absorb it and, finally, get past it.

The example of media I have approached in order to illustrate my point regarding the timing and spacing of our conversation, getting into and maybe past it, is the artwork of Teiji Furuhashi, it is titled *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)*, and in this light, Furuhashi can be considered a compressionist, however tentative the insight suspended there regarding Furuhashi's intended messages of loving and dying. Yet, this involves our asking more questions. The predictable question, then, regards how we might, in the future, so to speak, reach such a state that the first and last work of any artist or artist group will be, under a different sense of capitalism, collected with a simultaneous difference in respect to art history as if filled with art collections thus far, filled with earlier and later works by artists, first works and last works, editions, etc.; With this type of new collection (relying on the past to some extent), then, I think there will be a change on a cultural level if that first and last work, its being one and the same, allows for the societal and economic support of such artists over their entire lifetime, thus perhaps bringing an altogether more problematic sense of love and death together.

Fig. 5, *Lovers (Dying Pictures, Loving Pictures)*, Installation View

[i] Ludwig Wittgenstein, C.K. Ogden (trans.), Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Dover Publications, Inc.: New York, 2001, p. 33
[ii] Salman Rushdie, Fury: A Novel, Vintage: Great Britain, 2002, p. 8-9
[iii] Dumb Type website, http://dumbtype.com/intro/intro.html, 9/27/2004
[iv] Dumb Type website, http://dumbtype.com/intro/work.html, 9/27/2004
[v] As written to me by Yoko Takatani of Dumb Type on October 28, 2004 :

Now, there are only two words projected on the wall of LOVERS.
fear and limit

But, the other many words existed when Teiji created LOVERS
such as;

Eternal Lovers -
Love is a movement affecting limits
In Love, nothing is negative
Love affirms
No limit can restrict this affirmation

censor/sensor

Love under surveillance
Love becoming surveillance

Do not cross the line do not cross the line or jump over

The best way to calm the feelings of an anxious, fearful child
is to embrace the child tightly, to give his body a clear outline.

Each human being begins to love.
LOVE POLY-TICS
Can love be reduced to information?
Can love be reduced to the body?

love is everywhere

There is still an unbridgeable gap in dimension between
information and the body.
In that gap hides the human essence, which has not yet been
given a clear mechanism to its desire.

Love exists in an unending succession of seduction

trans- limit

To traverse the system of borders/difference with all of
one's imagination.
The courage to examine once more the saturation of meaning
that ruptures us and the restoration of humanity that arrives
at last.
A sublimating power spiraling into a pure white horizon from a
pitch black plane composed of all manner of lines.
This perhaps approaches the image of an as yet unknown
"invention of humanity."

...........................text by Teiji Furuhashi, excerpt from LOVERS exhibition catalogue in 1994, Tokyo

[vi] Video Spaces: Eight Installations, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, June 22-September 12, 1995,
http://www.moma.org/exhibitions/1995/videospaces/furuhashi.html, 9/27/2004

[vii] Ozaki Tetsuya, "Canon ARTLAB's 'Retreat' (Part 1)," Out of Tokyo, August 2, 2001,
http://www.realtokyo.co.jp/english/column/ozaki17.htm, 9/29/2004. Note: Tetsuya's follow-up article, "Canon
ARTLAB's 'Retreat' (Part 2)," Out of Tokyo, August 16, 2001,
http://www.realtokyo.co.jp/english/column/ozaki18.htm, 9/29/2004, Also note: "Future Unclear for Canon ARTLAB,"
Japanese Art Scene Monitor, August, 2001, issue 14, p. 4, the brief text of which is:
"The future of Canon's internationally renowned program for technology art, ARTLAB, is unclear after a dramatic
chang in management attitudes resulted in the resignation of its two specialist curators, Yukiko SHIKATA and
Kazunao ABE. Both curators were present from the outset of the program in 1990. In total ARTLAB has provided
technical and financial support to ten main projects, most of which have gone on to receive international acclaim.
Knowbotic Research's IO_DENCIES (1997) was shown at the Austrian Pavilion in the 1999 Venice Biennale, Koichiro
ETO's SoundCreatures (1998) went to Ars Electronica in 1999, and Teiji FURUHASHI's Lovers (1994) was
purchased by New York's Museum of Modern Art. While the future of ARTLAB is unclear, it seems there are no
immediate plans to employ specialist curators. SHIKATA and ABE with both go freelance. SHIKATA comments that
the recent appearance of many new public and university-based centers for media art will see an end to the corporate-
dependence experienced in the 1990s."

[viii] Samuel Delany, "High Involvement," Video Spaces: Eight Installations, The Museum of Modern Art, New York,
June 22-September 12, 1995, http://www.moma.org/exhibitions/1995/videospaces/delany.html, 9/27/2004

[ix] Ibid. Delany

[x] Ibid. Delany

[xi] Perez Zagorin, "Historiography and Postmodernism: Reconsiderations," History and Theory. Wesleyan University:
Middletown, 1990. pp. 263-274

[xii] F.R. Ankersmit, "Historiography and Postmodernism," History and Theory. Wesleyan University: Middletown,
1989. pp. 137-153 and F.R. Ankersmit, "Reply to Professor Zagorin," History and Theory. Wesleyan University:
Middletown, 1990. pp. 275-296

[xiii] Cathy Young, "A Kinder, Gentler Glossary for Net Neophytes, and Others," Women and Performance: A Journal of
Feminist Theory, Issue 17, 9:1, Women and Performance Project, Inc., 1996

[xiv] Critical Art Ensemble, "Utopian Plagarism, Hypertextuality and Electronic Cultural Production," Critical Issues in
Electronic Media, 1995

[xv] Nilufer Göle, Wil Arts (ed.), "Global Expectations, Local Experiences: Non-Western Modernities," Through A
Glass, Darkly: Blurred images of cultural tradition and modernity over distance and time, Brill: Boston, 2000, pp. 40-
55

[xvi] Joseph Childers and Gary Hentzi (eds.), The Columbia Dictionary of Modern Literary and Cultural Criticism,
Columbia University Press: New York, 1995, p. 37-8

[xvii] William Hamilton Armstrong IV, Neo-Onnagata: Professional Cross-Dressd Actors and their Roles on the
Contemporary Japanese Stage, (Ph.d. dissertation, Louisiana State University), 2002. Direct acknowledgement of
Furuhashi's work in regard to cross-dressing occurs in Chapter 6 as well as Chapter 7, the concluding chapter.

[xviii] Dorinda Neave, , "Meditations on Space and Time: The Performance Art of Japan's Dumb Type," *Art Journal*, Spring 2001. http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0425/is_1_60/ai_77374287/print, 9/27/2004

[xix] Canon Annual Report, 1998, p. 10, http://www.canon.com/ir/annual/1998/entire.pdf, 9/27/2004

[xx] Louise Dompierre, "The Age of Anxiety," *The Age of Anxiety*, The Power Plant: Ontario, 1995

[xxi] Akira Asada, Seiji Mizuta Lippit (trans.), "Dumb Type, Lovers Installation,"
http://epidemic.cicv.fr/geob/art/dtype/prj/loversgb.html, 9/27/2004

[xxii] Manuel Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture: Volume 1, The Rise of the Network Society*, second edition, Blackwell Publishers: Malden, 2000, pp. 449-50

[xxiii] Dumb Type website, http://dumbtype.com/intro/work.html, 9/27/2004, "Text adapted from the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago's"

[xxiv] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Harvard University Press, 2001, p. 366

[xxv] Ibid. Hardt and Negri, p. 366

[xxvi] Ibid. Hardt and Negri, p. 366

[xxvii] Ibid. Castells, pp. 464, 491, and 497 in order of appearance.

[xxviii] Ibid. Castells volume 1, p. 493

[xxix] Sandy Stone, "Split Subjects, Not Atoms; or, How I Fell in Love with My Prosthesis," *The Cyborg Handbook*, Routledge: New York, 1995, p. 398

[xxx] Ibid. Göle, p. 53

[xxxi] Slavoj Žižek, "The Cyberspace Real," http://www.egs.edu/faculty/zizek/zizek-the-cyberspace-real.html, 9/27/2004

[xxxii] Ibid. Žižek

[xxxiii] Ibid. Rushdie, p. 70

[xxxiv] Ibid Žižek, where Murray's quote appears