

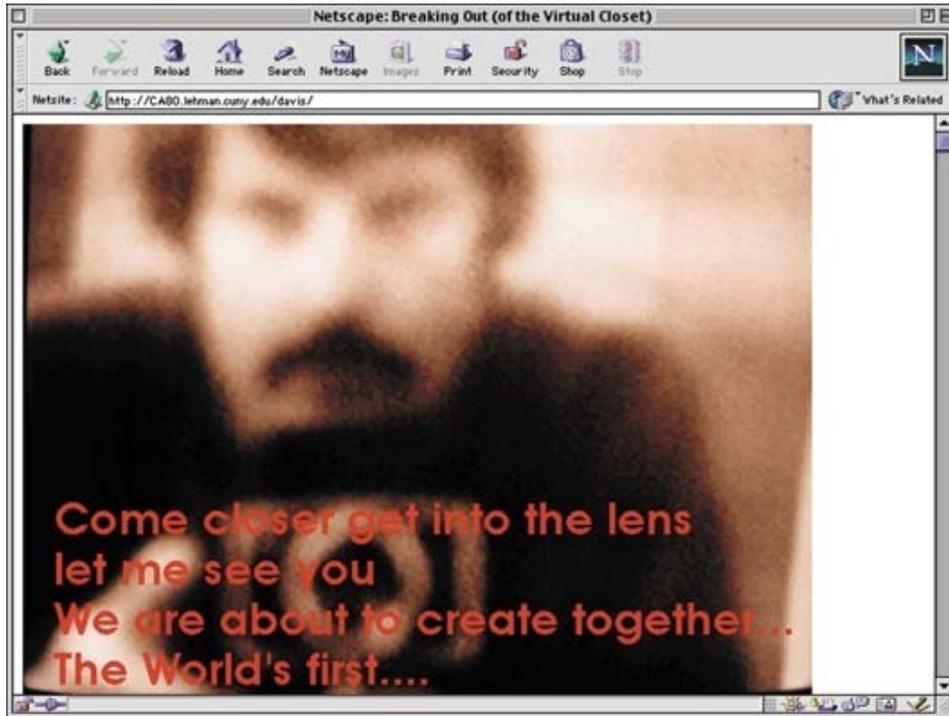
WHITNEY

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PRESS RELEASE



The Whitney to Relaunch Douglas Davis's *The World's First Collaborative Sentence*

New York, NY, May 31, 2013—After a year-long project to restore a visionary work of Internet art, the Whitney has relaunched Douglas Davis's *The World's First Collaborative Sentence* (1994). Comprised of more than 200,000 posts in a dozen languages, the Sentence is a living document of the Internet's evolution, capturing an early era of online communication. The work is now viewable in both a historical and a live version, to which visitors can contribute again for the first time in years, at whitney.org.

"The Sentence, as plain as it may look today, is a truly visionary project in that it anticipated today's collaborative online writing environments," says Christiane Paul, Adjunct Curator of New Media Arts at the Whitney. "The project posed a few of the core technological and philosophical questions that the conservation of early net art has to address -- how do we preserve the ephemeral nature of the Web and should we? The decision to create two versions of the project is an unusual preservation strategy, enabled by the potential of born-digital art to create multiple identical copies. The project creates one potential model for the preservation of early net-based art, which is rapidly disintegrating."

Davis (born 1933) launched the sentence on Dec. 7, 1994, as part of a survey exhibition of his work at Lehman College Art Gallery, which commissioned the piece. With the help of Gary Weltz and Robert Schneider, both Lehman professors at the time, Davis created a webpage through which people around the world could add their own contributions to the Sentence. Submissions were accepted by e-mail, phone, fax, and even through the mail, with one caveat: they could not end in a period. The prescient work harnessed the collaborative nature of the Internet that years later would find its form in blogs, wikis, and social media networks.

The following year, the Whitney acquired the work through a generous donation by Barbara Schwartz in honor of Eugene M. Schwartz, her late husband. Mr. and Mrs. Schwartz had purchased the concept and a signed disk with recordings of the first days of the sentence.

The piece continuously expanded over the next decade, as it was included in the 1995 Gwangju Biennial in South Korea, and its renown spread within online communities. But over the years the Sentence disintegrated, its links broke ("link rot"), anachronistic coding made it hard to read, and it became impossible to contribute to it. "When Christiane knocked on my door and said she wanted to discuss 'link rot' I didn't know at the time that it was a conservation problem. That came later," said Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, Associate Director for Conservation and Research at the Whitney.

In early 2012, a team led by Paul and Mancusi-Ungaro, began the process of relaunching the sentence. With the help of Farris Wahbeh, Manager, Cataloguing and Documentation, and implemented by Ben Fino-Radin, digital conservator at Rhizome, along with members of the Whitney Digital Media staff, the team was able to restore a historic version. This version, displayed through an old browser, shows the Sentence as it looked at the time of its creation, with links to archived web pages retrieved through the Wayback Machine of the Internet Archive. In addition, the Whitney restored a live version of the Sentence, which allows visitors to contribute anew to the work, perpetuating Davis's intent for the piece.

To view the "The World's First Collaborative Sentence," go to <http://artport.whitney.org/collection/DouglasDavis/live/>.

About the Whitney

The Whitney Museum of American Art is the world's leading museum of twentieth-century and contemporary art of the United States. Focusing particularly on works by living artists, the Whitney is celebrated for presenting important exhibitions and for its renowned collection, which comprises over 19,000 works by more than 2,900 artists. With a history of exhibiting the most promising and influential artists and provoking intense debate, the Whitney Biennial, the Museum's signature exhibition, has become the most important survey of the state of contemporary art in the United States. In addition to its landmark exhibitions, the Museum is known internationally for events and educational programs of exceptional significance and as a center for research, scholarship, and conservation.

Founded by sculptor and arts patron Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney in 1930, the Whitney was first housed on West 8th Street in Greenwich Village. The Museum relocated in 1954 to West 54th Street and, in 1966, inaugurated its present home, designed by Marcel Breuer, at 945 Madison Avenue on the Upper East Side. While its vibrant program of exhibitions and events continues uptown, the Whitney is moving forward with a new building project, designed by Renzo Piano, in downtown Manhattan. Located at the corner of Gansevoort and Washington Streets in the Meatpacking District, at the southern entrance to the High Line, the new building, which has generated immense momentum and support, will enable the Whitney to vastly increase the size and scope of its exhibition and programming space. Ground was broken on the new building in May 2011, and it is projected to open to the public in 2015.

Current and Upcoming Exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art

Jay DeFeo: A Retrospective	Through June 2, 2013
I, YOU, WE	Through September 1, 2013
Stewart Uoo and Jana Euler	Through August 2013
David Hockney: The Jugglers	Through September 1, 2013
Hopper Drawing	Through October 6, 2013
Robert Irwin: Scrim Veil—Black Rectangle—Natural Light (1977)	June 27-Sept 1 2013
T.J. Wilcox: In the Air	Sept 19 2013-Feb 9 2014
Robert Indiana: Beyond Love	Sept 26 2013-Jan 2014
Rituals of Rented Island:	
Object Theater, Loft Performance, and the New Psychodrama—Manhattan, 1970–1982	
	Oct 31 2013-Jan 2014

The Whitney Museum is located at 945 Madison Avenue at 75th Street, New York City. Museum hours are: Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Friday from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m., closed Monday and Tuesday. General admission: \$20. Full-time students and visitors ages 19–25 and 62 & over: \$16. Visitors 18 & under and Whitney members: FREE. Admission is pay-what-you-wish on Fridays, 6–9 p.m. For general information, please call (212) 570-3600 or visit whitney.org.

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Douglas Davis (b. 1933), *The World's First Collaborative Sentence*, 1994–, conserved 2012. HTML and CGI script. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of Barbara Schwartz in honor of Eugene M. Schwartz 95.253. Originally commissioned by the Lehman College Art Gallery, The City University of New York, with the assistance of Gary Welz, Robert Schneider, and Susan Hoeltzel