

running (posthu)man_

an exercise in re-embodiment information

As techniques were developed to paint (and then to photograph) realistic images, as mobility was implied by changes in lighting (and then cinematography)-- the observer became more immobile, passive, ready to receive the constructions of a virtual reality placed in front of his or her unmoving body.
-Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping*

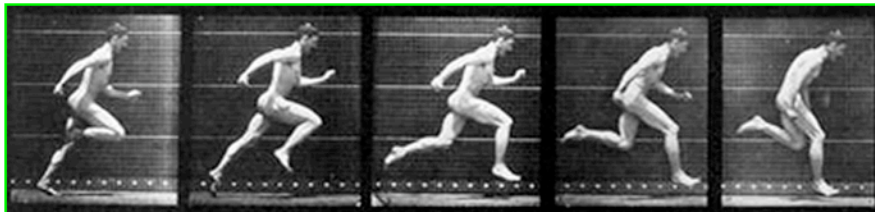
Aaron Orstott, Today's Science Tomorrow's Art



Living in a **technological culture** means that we are constantly being **challenged** to go farther and faster, to virtually outstrip the limitations of our humanness. While techno-pundits proclaim that we live in an increasingly mobile world, our drive to become posthuman has in effect made our bodies **less mobile**. As our virtual selves travel at hyperspeed through the liquid architectures of cyberspace, our **mortal meat**, forgotten and despised, remains tethered stubbornly to the earth, spending most of its time sitting at a screen interface. running (posthu)man_ is about putting the body back into our information-driven culture. It is an attempt to recuperate, by means of technology, the **interconnectedness of body and mind** that technology has caused us to forget.

Hailing from the "**fattest city in America**" (*Men's Fitness*, 2004), running (posthu)man_ involves wiring a laptop, video camera, and projector to a **treadmill** so that a runner's speed and heart rate power a multimedia presentation. For the audience of Digifest 2004, I will introduce the device by running through a 5-7 kilometer **mediascape** (video, animation, images) that critiques the immobility of our culture while exploring the relationship between space, **memory**, and new media. The device can then be set up as an installation so that attendees of Digifest can walk or run through a selection of mediascapes designed by myself and by students of Electronic Critique (**e-crit**) at the University of Detroit Mercy.

Edward Muybridge, chronophotography of a running man



This is an **interdisciplinary** design project that gathers students from E-Crit, Architecture, and Engineering. Currently, we are in the engineering phase, which involves diverting odometer and heart rate output from the treadmill's data cables into a serial **output** that will interface with an iBook. The next step is to write code in Flash ActionScript that will translate the treadmill output into software commands. Finally, I will work with student groups to design mediascapes using Flash and FinalCut Pro. By May, the first phase of the project will be complete, and ready for display at **Digifest**. "On the Move," the theme of this year's Digifest, **c o u l d n o t b e m o r e a p p r o p r i a t e .**

My dream is a version of the posthuman that embraces the possibilities of information technologies without being reduced by fantasies of unlimited power and disembodied immortality. That recognizes and celebrates fitness as a condition of material being, and that understands human life as embedded in a material world of great complexity, one on which we depend for our continuation. -Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*

The inherent irony of this project is that, while the device accomplishes a **re-embodiment** of information processing, it does so without any real, **spatial** mobility on the part of the user. This irony points to the underlying message of running (posthu)man_: **our bodies aren't going anywhere.**



