SOME THOUGHTS ON THE DATA BODY (1994)

by Lynn Heshman Leeson

Today's technological heat has birthed self-replicating data bodies. Cloned presences designed to morph and feed on cannibalize information.

Much of the art that depicts the body as sacrificed and objectified desire has experienced a well needed correction. The object has been reincarnated as subject, and, I might add, just in the nick of time, because the corporeal body is becoming obsolete. It is living through a history of erasure, but this time, through enhancements. To survive, the remains of the body, has morphed into The Data Body. But I'll get to that later.

Data bases and code are the spine of an evolving cyborgian posture in which identity is provisional, and capture, surveillance, voyeurism and scopophilia are simultaneously the technique, the subject and the social medium. Artificial Intelligence software that is now in development will lead to more enhanced understanding of the mechanisms and irrationalities of what might reflect presence but continues to exists as a simulation. These creatures exist beyond a screen and when they are live, have the ability to empower viewers by causing them to defy conventional linear structures and create new possibilities for autonomous action and gendered agency.

In the early 70's, two mystery writers, Richard Stark and Joe Gore conspired to have two characters, each in two separate mystery books written by the two separate authors, meet in each other's books at the same point of fictional time. They stand on two sides of a doorway and talk for a moment, and thereby create overlapping fictive spaces. Stories are always about something besides the surface plot, or what Hitchcock coined the McGuffan. It is the premise but not the value of the experience. Multiply Stark and Gore's wily experiment by the millions of opportunities of narrative interaction that have emerged with the internet.

When form, content, and delivery methods commingle, the result can be as wildly subversive as the art itself.