Deconstruct The Narrative = Protocolian Positioning.

'Some thoughts regarding Cory Archangel's
Data Diaries & established culturalization'.

In the western world, technologies are now so much a part of the everyday, the use of it has become habitual. You turn the computer on, it loads up, you click a couple of tabs and then you are away, reading, sending emails or creating an artwork via given applications.

Cory seems to be moving towards transcending such presumed habits, very much like those electronic geeks 'Kraftwerk', diverting the program. Rebuilding and reworking perceived notions of what programs and hardware is used for. Coming up with alternate shifts that do not necessarily infuse collective or world issues but it is very much part of a digital genre that deconstructs the medium itself.

Cory's (what might seem flippant) use of data, as virtual substance, filler; reevaluating the computer with a conduit sensibility. Whilst actively diverting programs and the hardware 'uses', and re-inventing via method and conceptual poetics. You get the impression of a kind of innocence at play, this is of course a self-conscious decision, and all part of the small scheme of things. When I say small scheme, I mean that work itself does not wish to enter a dialogue with the user or viewer. What you see is what you get. Therefore the communication is functional, not emotional.

To expect emotion from this work is like expecting figurative painting or emotional content or narrative from a 'sixty's' 'frank Stella' painting. You just ain't gonna get any, and that's fair enough.

'Data Diaries' is primarily a formal piece, sitting (surprisingly) well with modernist principles of abstraction, is Cory Archangel a contemporary American 'Computer Abstractionist'? This work is Art as Art, not reflecting global or emotional issues, politics about our lives in any way, in fact it declares quite clearly an anti narrative. The work relies heavily on 'exformation', 'exformation is everything we do not actually say but have in our heads when or before we say anything at all. Information is the measurable, demonstrable utterance we actually come out with'. [Tor Norretranders, The User Illusion (1998)]

So what arrives is function rather than narrative, thus you witness the raw object as it is, no obvious space for intuitive interpretation in respect of relational or lateral dialogue. This means that the work is for hanging on your wall, it is a picture, not a message. It can only be a message in the context of what is attached to it, via labeling, as Art given context. And this is how its meaning is determined. So therefore we end up dealing with constructed references around it, to support its essence. If it did not have the support of an art institutional background to relate to it, where would it go, who would look at it?

To answer this question one has to look at examples that others have willingly referred; giving it art-clout. This means that much of the discourse that surrounds it is via a culturalized art and language mind-set, which may not necessarily contribute to its (supposed) punk essence. The work itself may not warrant such interest, when compared to artists such as Picasso, or even Heath Bunting. Ah but that has also been taken care of, due to what we all now know as the 'Heroic Period'. So here comes along the issue of who gets known by whom and why? And it could be construed that Cory is at the tail end of the political and 'divisionist' term 'Heroic Period'. Not by his own making but by others who wish to place him in an art context that the artworld can understand. A product, a brand and an aesthetic nuance that can be appreciated by an educated audience, but not to
a generation of people who wish for such barriers to be broken down.

What we have learnt here is, that Internet art has to be more institutionally friendly, more referenced based to be acknowledged by the establishment. So you get artists who are still experimenting trying to break the rule of code which will be a 'no no', unless supported by certain structures. Everything gets pulled back into the black hole of controlled representation. What could begin

to happen (may be it already has), is that certain people will be ignored because they have chosen to believe that they could break the rules in a relational way, not an aesthetic way. So those who thought that the walls had suddenly crashed down for them; and thought that they were part of something special; are finding the walls rising back up again. In fact, they were not ever in the story in the first place.

So if we bypass whether narrative is important or not and cut to the chase of how things work. Radical becomes product, not as a physical object you can hold but as a currency, a sale's pitch. You'll get the 'Heroic Period' gang, being shunted to exhibition to exhibition by the funding elite, over and over again. Then you'll get the next generation who advocate them as influential to their own work. Therefore falling into the same culturalized trappings, running the art arena gauntlet, thus using the same tactics as many others have done before, and millions are now. 'Pissing' up the wall as others watch them mark out there 'canonized territory. This activity, usually male in motion (now a unisex activity), is a very traditional stance.

So net/web artists will be sculpted to adhere to certain agendas, just like what was perceived as traditional before the Internet age. Making work that does not question institutional remits because it would be foolhardy to do so. Work that is radical in its 'soul' can now only be considered as myth and delusory. It will be left out, ignored by those who can gain more mileage out of the invented terminology's and written histories that have now been tagged, like a stamp of official acceptance that these one's are ok. 'You can touch these dudes they have been affiliated'.

Perhaps it is wrong for me to use Cory as a virtual hammer to pick holes in the obvious failings of contemporary net/web art, and isolationist snobbism. But, there are many questions still not answered, that have to be challenged and reevaluated genuinely and not by protocol. Cory's art is not 'Punk', it advocates the style of it, but it certainly does not fill the void that punk fills for me. if you have to pin an art reference to justify its being, it certainly ain't Punk.

I personally enjoy Cory's work but I do not like what comes with it, the background noise is far too loud for me and it gets in the way of the work itself.