CURRENTS

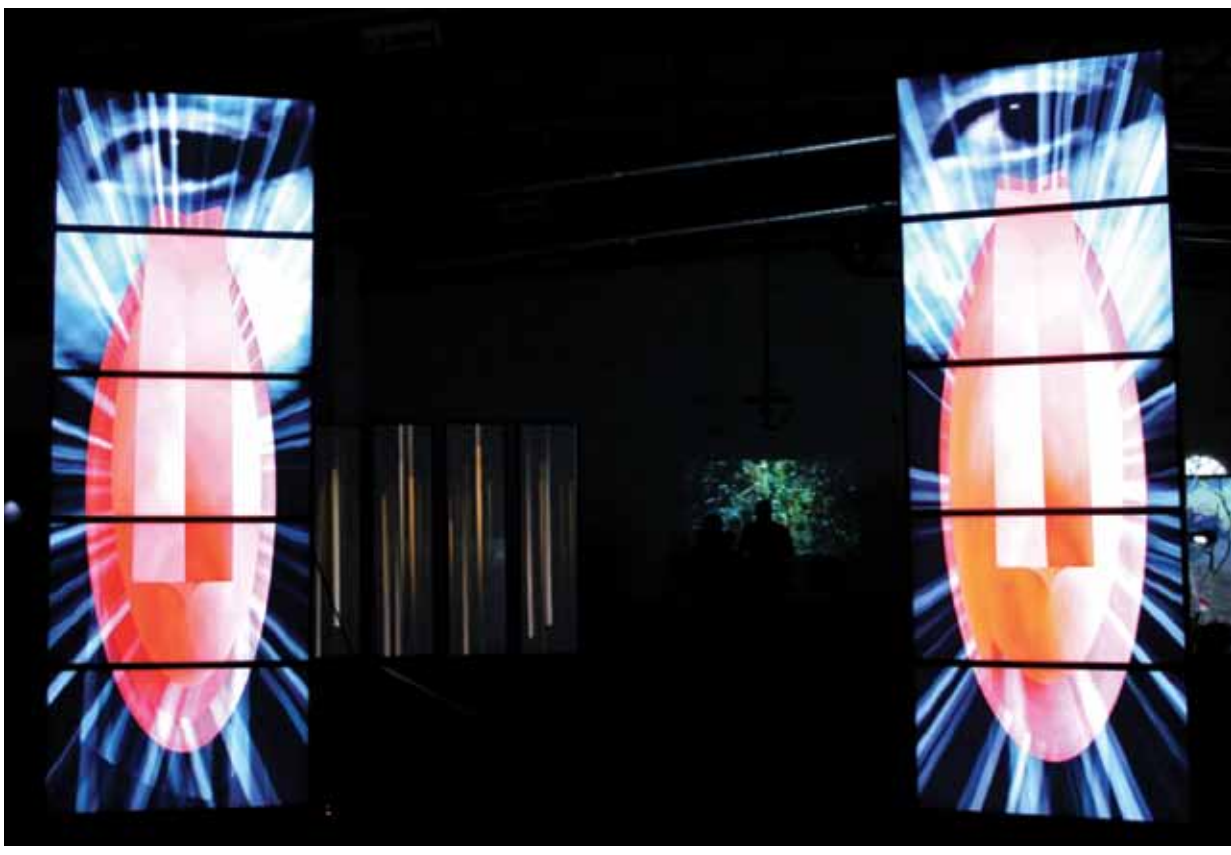
Locations vary based on artist and performance

On display for ten days and spread out across many citywide exhibition spaces, *CURRENTS* gathered sixty artists from around the world working in a diverse and relatively young field: new-media art. Blazing an innovative trail even by the most cutting-edge contemporary art standards, this broad medium makes use of a variety of technological, experimental elements with many unique qualities and one consistent theme—that of being informed by technology. In its second year, *CURRENTS* includes single-channel video, experimental noise, interactive video exhibitions, multimedia performances, and video-game art. This is an ambitious show that strikes an acutely intellectual chord.

New-media art installations employ various digital techniques to create immersive environments. NoiseFold, an interactive media ensemble comprised of Cory Metcalf and David Stout, uses digital media to create radically dynamic visual landscapes. Metcalf and Stout, who have worked together for nearly a decade, describe their latest project, *El Umbral*, as an exploration of threshold and shadow, and of the dueling aspects of "veiling and revealing." What results is an atmospheric exhibition that shines with a haunting and intoxicating beauty. Two ten-foot-high pillars constructed of neatly stacked flat-screen televisions create a gateway through which one can enter into the *CURRENTS* exhibition area. The installation's visual vocabulary includes both photographic figurative elements and a variety of synthetic digital-imaging techniques. Upon passing through this television gateway, a motion sensor is triggered, which causes the network of monitors to morph into a new set of visual constructs, wherein disembodied eyes might linger on endlessly multiplying shards of light. This immersive and interactive exhibit is symbolic of surveillance, whereby we, the surveyed, are both passive and active participants. The highly nuanced environment of sci-fi intrigue is one in which *we* are watched by large televisions, thus reversing our role as television *watcher* to television *watch*-ee. The creation of this constantly evolving visual landscape is carefully orchestrated by Metcalf and Stout, who call it a "psychological anti-monument to the deepening surveillance state ... that clouds the way forward." NoiseFold has created an utterly visceral—and downright magical—audience experience.

Like many new-media artists, San Francisco–based Surabhi Saraf uses technology to explore overlooked aspects of our modern lives. Her remarkable audio/visual installation, *Fold*, is a single-channel presentation made up of ninety-six small videos which individually depict the artist folding laundry. Combining elements of choreography and moving imagery, Saraf created *Fold* to "celebrate the mundane by taking a private, solitary activity and presenting it multiplied." Using repetitive imagery to explore the monotonous nature of everyday activities is insightful, and transforms a simple chore into something uniquely complex, yet utterly relatable. The obvious suggestion is that we should take a closer look at the tasks we consider mundane; folding clothing is certainly an inevitable part of life, but it doesn't need to be mindless. Multiplied across the screen, this solitary task morphs into a group activity suggestive of community and shared experience. In this way, the straightforward movements of folding laundry become infused with a hypnotic beauty, injecting additional layers of activity and meaning into this extraordinary installation.

—Iris McLister

Top: Surabhi Saraf, still from *Fold*, installation, single-channel video projection, 2010

Bottom: NoiseFold (Cory Metcalf and David Stout), still from *El Umbral*, interactive video installation, 2011