

'Automatic Update'

*The Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53rd Street
Through September 10*

The 55 Billion

What happens when New Media starts getting old?

BY MORGAN FALCONER

'Can one brighten the toilet?" asks Raphael Lozano-Hemmer's ingenious query machine *33 Questions per Minute*. "Why should we refurbish the whip?" The answers aren't important—the point is that technology can bend thought into novel forms. Lozano-Hemmer has arrayed LCD screens across a wall and wired them

to a database that processes the words to form the questions. The piece will generate 55 billion before it's done—by which time, like the proverbial chimp with a typewriter, it will probably have produced some masterpieces.

The first generation of digital creatives hoped that new media might finally explode the art gallery. But Barbara London, a curator in MOMA's Department of Media, believes that the mood has changed and that artists are settling for more traditional forms. Hence the need for this updating exhibition.

Her selection is a small but judicious one, and acutely sensitive to the anonymous masses that consume modern media. In Paul Pfeiffer's *John 3:16*, a small monitor shows an airborne basketball: It looks like a single ball, but is in fact hundreds of balls cut from footage of hundreds of games. We have left aside the biblical Messiah, and now we worship these new suns like pagans. Jennifer and Kevin McCoy are more preoccupied by how

crowds might be fooled. In their tabletop installation, *Our Second Date*, the car-crash scene in Jean-Luc Godard's *Weekend* is restaged via a revolving tableau of tiny plastic models. Meanwhile, a series of cameras convincingly enlarges this world onto a big screen, reminding us how easily we might be hoodwinked.

The sense of novelty may have left new media, the exhibition suggests, but it's been replaced by a more mature sense of the possibilities of changing technologies. Corey Arcangel's *Two Keystoned Projectors (one upside down)* employs projected light to create a multicolored oblong, suggesting that this aging technology might be re-invented to render geometric abstraction. Arcangel isn't quite serious, though—he's more interested in highlighting how our hopes for modern art and technology have faded. Time will inevitably date these artworks too, but many seem robust enough to endure as benchmarks.