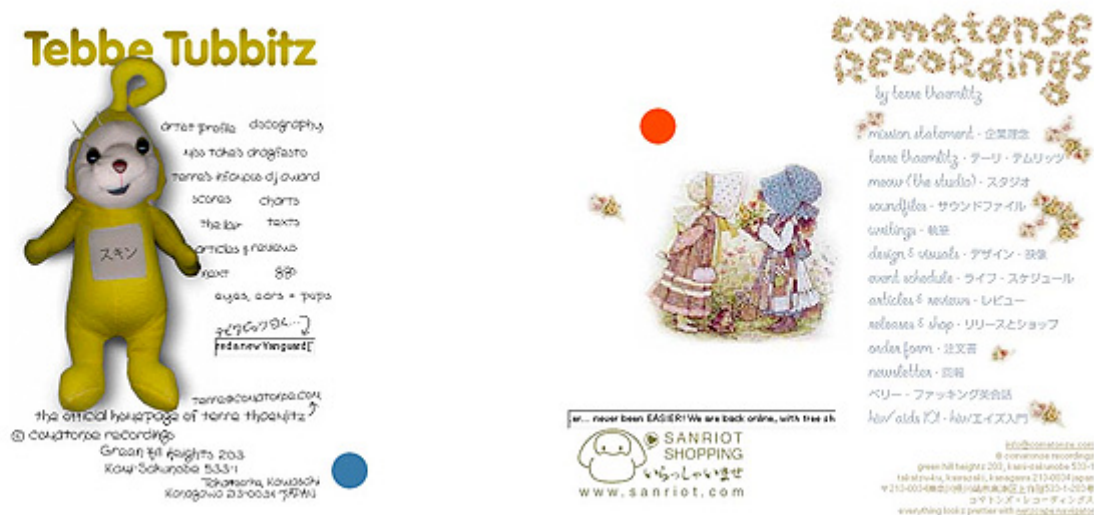


In defense of Tebbe Tubbitz

About the design of this website

- Terre Thaemlitz

Originally posted on comatonse.com March 4, 2011. The Tebbe Tubbitz interface was retired in September of 2011. An unsupported and out-of-date version of the old Comatonse Recordings website is archived at http://www.comatonse.com/passtimeparadise/index_1.html



Tebbe Tubbitz main directory (left), and Comatonse Recordings main directory (right) c.2000-2011.

The Tebbe Tubbitz homepage was designed back in 2000 as a reaction against the more conventionally "serious," "professional," and "cyber-slick" designs one saw - and continues to see - on homepages for producers of electroacoustic and computer music, as well as people in academics and the arts. In particular, I wanted to create a design that was not "macho," but ambiguous and, quite frankly, confusing. Like so many of my other web designs, it also had to be an utter failure according to accepted standards in commercial web design. The result was the Comatonse Recordings [links to old version] website, of which the Tebbe Tubbitz homepage is one part.

Unfortunately, this graphic strategy has at times been taken at face value and interpreted as a sign of insincerity in my commitment to the issues around which my works revolve, stopping people from making further investigations of my works, and even leading to the cancellation of employment. It is interesting (...sad? ...surprisingly unsurprising?) to note that many of these dismissive reactions have come from Proud[TM] members of transgendered and Queer communities within what I like to call the "circle of optimism" (the US, Canada, UK and Australia). For example, I recently lost a rare opportunity to work with students at a US university because of Tebbe Tubbitz and the image at right. It seems a number of staff and students were enthusiastic about inviting me, but at the last minute a transgendered-identified person (who was apparently not part of the event's organization, but carried a lot of weight as spokesperson for transgendered issues on campus) caught wind of my visit, saw my website and immediately concluded I was not serious in my convictions on issues of gender and sexuality. Furthermore, she was generally offended by the image of a MTF masturbating while a businessman licks her nipple. (She doesn't jerk off so quickly when viewed on the slower computers of yesteryear used to make the image.) As a result, yet another invitation for me to work within the circle of optimism was rescinded.



You know how it goes... if one transgendered person stands before many non-transgendered people and says it's offensive, no matter how superficial and uninformed her assessment may be, then by golly she must know what she's talking about. Ah, the rush of flexing one's identity-muscle and speaking for an entire community. It feels good sometimes, I know. Particularly within the larger framework of a life of brutalizing ostracization and powerlessness, which I also have a little shared experience with, my sister. And I also know how

difficult it is for those of you interested in respect, pride and power-sharing to conceptualize - let alone recognize and allow space for - the strategies of those of us interested in *divestments of power*. But please, don't worry, I have no interest in speaking for you. Conversely, don't speak for me. Give me a chance to speak for myself. And if you don't care to listen, don't come. I have no wish to offend you - although I might, inadvertently... along with many other people in the audience, transgendered or otherwise.

It reminds me of the time during my college years in the late '80s when Laibach gave a presentation at the Cooper Union School of Art. When the floor was opened to audience questions Laibach was verbally attacked by Jewish-American students offended by the sight of swastikas, their face-value interpretation of that symbol blinding them from seeing the group's critical use of Nazi imagery as an attack against the facism of the Yugoslavian government which had sent the group into exile... That was the student reaction after just sitting through Laibach's ninety minute presentation discussing those very issues. (Cooper was strange. In addition to having my studio works physically vandalized, or ridiculed through photocopies mocking my works placed anonymously into the mailboxes of all students, during one memorable critique I was called a Nazi by none other than Hans Haacke!)

Obviously, Tebbe Tubbitz and this photo do not reflect the most profound aspects of my work, and I do not mean to justify them as such. However, if one were to click deeper, one may have discovered the naughty little image is part of a larger photo series included in my 1997 album "Couture Cosmetique," in which blurred/plasticized images of nature landscapes were placed in squence with blurred/plasticized images of mainstream tranny-porn, the contrast of which was intended as a critical commentary on the social construction of concepts of nature, extending to the plasticity of reception around transgendered bodies. Even without clicking deeper, one might have also gotten the jokes behind the image appearing when mousing over the category "Next":

1. An admittedly cheap visual pun on a category many websites title "Coming soon..." ("*Cumming* soon," get it? In this case, a record executive is attempting to suckle from my dry teet, waiting for me to serve up my next release)

and a bit more seriously...

2. Using stereotypical transgendered imagery found online to invoke associations between all forms of transgendered production and sex work, which is undeniably a part of MTF histories around the world and influences our reception in most all contexts.

It may also be of interest to some that the two sexual images within the larger photo series are in fact "fake" and not tranny porn at all, but photos of women to which I graphically added penises, embedding yet another layer of artificiality within these plastic representations of transgendered bodies.

While I admit the Tebbe Tubbitz homepage, and comatonse.com [links to old version] in general, is at times incredibly stupid, the extent of peoples' dismissive reactions is a terrible disappointment - particularly since the overwhelming majority of my works have been patently "serious," denying people of their expectations around transgendered audio and stage performances as inherently glamorous celebrations, emphasizing non-performative and anti-camp aesthetics. Although many of the texts developed for those projects are included on this website, their presentation within the framework of comatonse.com [links to old version] should not be mistaken as representative of how the materials appear within the official project releases (vinyl, CD, video, etc.). Everything on comatonse.com [links to old version] should be considered a recontextualized version adapted for the bullshit world of online information, in which everything requires further investigation, and nothing should be taken at face value as "fact." It saddens me to have to remind Transgendered and Queer people not to judge a book by its cover. Frankly, it's embarrassing - think of it as an example of shame being born of that very Pride[™] so many find empowering, if that helps you get the point.

The exact story behind the Tebbe Tubbitz character itself is a personal one involving a friend's experience, and can be found on the Tebbe Tubbitz main directory page [links to old version]. Click on Tebbe's "Magic Skin" (the English word "skin" being used in Japan to mean "condom"), which is the grey square on its chest where a Teletubbie would have a TV screen. This will open a pop-up window with Tebbe's tale written in Japanese. For English, scroll to the end of the text on that page and click the "English" link.)

Regarding global navigation, the Tebbe Tubbitz section was designed as a 'personal homepage' for myself, so the upper navigation options are not as complete as in other sections of comatonse.com [links to old version]. However, as a general rule clicking the small Tebbe Tubbitz character at the top of every page will bring you back to the main Tebbe Tubbitz directory, whereas clicking the flashing dot at the top of each page will take you to the main Comatonse Recordings [links to old version] directory (which is the same function that dot serves on every page in this site)

