

## **Charlie Gere**

### *Abstract*

In my paper I look at the idea of net art as a 'guest', offered hospitality in the gallery in institutional websites or occasional temporary exhibitions, but never allowed to become a permanent resident. In that is always marginalised within the gallery, and regarded as largely irrelevant to the gallery's principle aims to collect and curate important contemporary art practice, net art, as a guest, is a kind of parasite, in the perjorative sense; 'one who eats at the table or at the expense of another' or in the biological sense 'an animal or plant which lives in or upon another organism (technically called its host) and draws its nutriment directly from it', in that it does not appear to contribute to the host's well being.

Yet, unacknowledged by galleries, we are seeing a process of what in biology is called 'coevolution' or 'cospeciation', in which the host and the parasite evolve and even change in response to the other's presence. Naturally the more net art feeds off the gallery the more it changes to suit that environment, much as has also happened to practices such as video art. But, far less obviously, the gallery is also changing, in response to net art, or to the shifting ecological conditions of which it is part. To some extent, as galleries such as Tate become more distributed and virtual, we are seeing a process in which the parasite and the host are changing places.