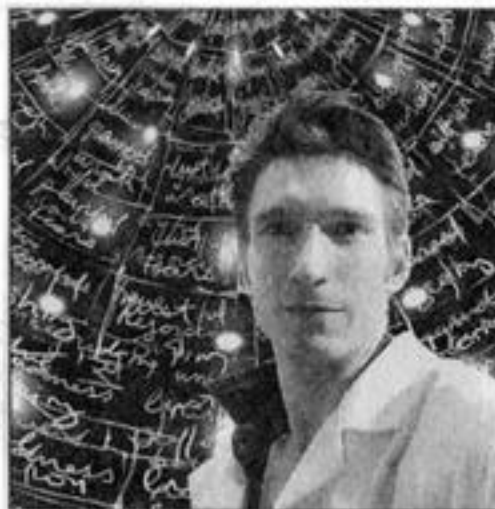


## LUKE MURPHY: ART AS DOWNSHIFTING

Having breakfast with Luke Murphy is like having coffee in a wind tunnel. Ideas tumble from the affable 36-year-old artist at scanning speed. He forks up his scrambled eggs with one hand, all the while making electronic notes to himself on the Palm V he holds in the other. As art director and lead developer for *Station.sony.com*, Sony's Internet gaming site, it behooves Murphy to move fast.

But Murphy hasn't always careered through space/time this swiftly. "My father, who was a surgeon, owned a farm down on the south shore of Nova Scotia," Murphy tells me, "about 11 miles from Lunenburg. That's where I learned how to shear sheep."

After a pre-med bachelor of science degree at the University of Toronto, a year's sheep-shearing sojourn in Australia and New Zealand, a return to NSCAD in Halifax for a BFA, and an MFA from the State University of New York at Purchase, Murphy set off for New York to gain fame and riches as an artist. And while nobody wanted what he did, he managed to stay close to the art world by working as an art-



*Murphy: binary oppositions.*

handler — packing, unpacking, and installing paintings at the Guggenheim and the Museum of Modern Art.

"I remember we got to the MoMA early one morning and a big Matisse — *The Dance* — had fallen off the wall!" says Murphy. "It was hanging by one corner! The problem was, there'd been a cold snap and there was a lot of moisture forming between the walls, so we took all the Matisse

away for safe keeping. There I was, with a trolley piled up with four or five of the greatest Matisse's of all time — like the *Goldfish* and *The Red Studio* — navigating the dark corridors, trying not to trip, trying not to bump."

Meanwhile, he was also working freelance in electronic design, which led to a Web designer job for *Car & Driver* magazine. Then came Sony. And, at the same time, rapid progress with his own art (now handled by his German dealer and Toronto's Wynick-Tuck Gallery). In addition to Webworks like his *Mile Long Page*, he is busy with an epic suite of *Binary Drawings* ("everything I do involves binary oppositions") — small, exquisite, digitally-generated pictures on duraflex, where image and text come together to form invigorating new mythologies (like his recent *49 Androgynous Avatars of Painting*).

"It's strange making your own art, after a day at Sony, says Murphy. "Working with the Web is like driving the autobahn. And making any other kind of art is like downshifting to what is essentially a walk in the park."