

Google Destroy's A Decade of Artist's Work

Fri, 15 Jul 2016 18:18:46, newstips66, []

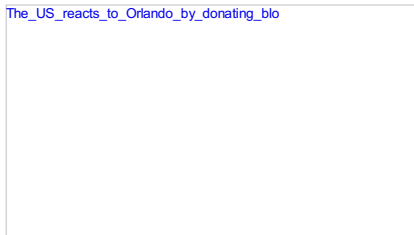
Google deletes artist's blog and a decade of his work along with it



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By [Ethan Chiel](#)

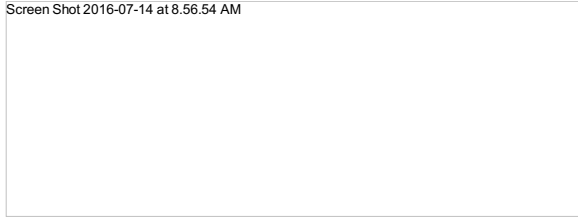
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Artist Dennis Cooper has a big problem on his hands: Most of his artwork from the past 14 years just disappeared.

It's gone because it was kept entirely on [his blog](#), which the experimental author and artist has maintained on the Google-owned platform Blogger since 2002 (Google [bought the service](#) in 2003). At the end of June, Cooper says he discovered he could no longer access his Blogger account and that his blog had [been taken offline](#).

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A post Cooper made to his Facebook page after his horrifying discovery

Along with his blog, Google disabled Cooper's email address, through which most of his correspondence was conducted, he told me via Facebook message. He got no communication from Google about why it decided to kill his email address and blog.

Cooper used the blog to post his fiction, research, and visual art, and as [Artforum explains](#), it was also "a platform through which he engaged almost daily with a community of followers and fellow artists." His latest GIF novel (as the term suggests, a novel constructed with animated GIFs) was also mostly saved to the blog.

"Of all the things about this that concern and worry me, losing that novel is my greatest fear," he told *Artforum*.

If you visit the page now, Blogger displays its brief, standard removal message: "Sorry, the blog at denniscooper-theweaklings.blogspot.com has been removed. This address is not available for new blogs."

To make matters worse, Cooper says that the work on the blog was *only* on the blog.

"Nothing on the blog is backed-up or archived anywhere else, as far as I know," he explained in a Facebook message.

Admittedly, not *everything* has vanished. The Internet Archive's Wayback Machine has saved bits and pieces of Cooper's blog dating back to [January 3, 2012](#), but they are just snapshots of the blog's front page for a given date, not capturing the blog in its entirety. The blog has also disappeared from Google's Cache.

Why the blog was taken down remains unclear. One commenter on Cooper's Facebook page speculated that someone may have reported the blog due to its containing some sexually charged material. But as *Artforum* skeptically notes, the page was behind an 18+ content warning and "Cooper had posted risqué work on his blog for years." It also wouldn't explain the deletion of his email address.

Google told me via email that it's "aware of this matter" but that it couldn't comment on specific accounts. I've asked about whether the work on Cooper's blog has been deleted permanently or is simply on a server somewhere, and I'll update this post if I hear back.

Cooper, who lives in France, told *Artforum* he's consulted a French lawyer specializing in intellectual property. He told me he's considering suing Google.

"[If Google doesn't] respond and rectify the situation, I won't have any choice but to sue them," Cooper wrote. "I don't want to do that for obvious reasons, but I will if I have to."

Cooper should've backed his work up, or known to be more cautious with drafts. But this doesn't just reflect the archival woes of an experimental writer. It's another reminder of Google's role as arguably the world's most powerful organization when it comes to preserving and storing information.

Google [says](#) that its "mission is to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful." But whether or not it's interested in maintaining a record of the past, or helping others do so, remains unclear. Early last year Andy Baio wrote about how most of the archival projects Google touted in the early 2000s, such as Google News Archive and Google Groups, were [quietly abandoned](#) several years ago. Librarian Jessamyn West also [chronicled how](#) members of her profession had watched Google slowly back away from the tools it had built to help librarians with their jobs.

More generally, relying on the internet as an archive is dangerous. As Jill Lepore put it in the *New Yorker*, "The Web dwells in a never-ending present. It is—elementally—ethereal, ephemeral, unstable, and unreliable."

So the removal of Cooper's blog doesn't necessarily feel like a surprise so much as it does part of a quiet trend. As Baio puts it, "We can't expect for-profit corporations to care about the past." It's a trend that suggests a conclusion that's at once obvious and sad: If the internet is your archive, your archive isn't safe.