Participatory Platforms and the Emergence of Art

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What she wished for more intensely than anything … was the coming of our world; and … the kind of imagination one needs for a real understanding of it.

She didn't like things to be fixed. … Everything … is so difficult to get moving again, so one should try in advance to keep it alive while it's still in the process of coming to be … It must keep on originating, that's what matters.

Christa Wolf, *The Quest for Christa T.* (1995)

The emergence of art is heavily mediated. This mediation can be approached in countless ways: through the well-known apparatuses of the artworld, which are as much organizational and conceptual (curators, museums, and critics) as they are financial and historical (markets, galleries, art institutions); through the technical apparatuses of the systems used in constructing a project, for example the photographic, industrial, and "socio-economic complexes" unfolding in the use of a camera (Flusser 2000); multi-scalar networks and omnivorous media ecologies (Fuller 2005); or through mediating political systems and relational structures of the moment, and in many other ways.

In other words, multiple forces participate in art's emergence: relationality, collaboration, technicity can be seen as forms of mediation, or, indeed, as vibrant and at times violent aspects of live processes themselves. An interest in this cross-mediation is grounded in a certain understanding of a subject, a body of knowledge, an artwork, or a series of cultural events as not a "given," but processes of emergence. It is a focus on how art "becomes," and how such modes of becoming evolved over the last two decades that is explored in this chapter. This focus on emergence allows for seeing an art event or project as an open process whose coming into being is contingent, so that questions of authorship, audience, materiality, power, communication, meaning, economy, and aesthetics in general are cut open, repracticed and rethought. It is this

rethinking that is evident in the multiple instances of large-scale grass-roots creativity (Lovink and Rossiter 2007), relational art (Bourriaud 2002), and collaborative production (Wikipedia), and in projects ranging from the classic piece of net art *Refresh* (1996)[1] to large institutional shows such as *We Are All Photographers Now!* by the Musée de l'Elysée in Lausanne in 2007.

Arguably, it is these very processes of emergence that are most affected in current times, when biological, ecological, and financial, as well as political, cultural, and social landscapes are measured, quantified, and managed on the basis of calculated risks; networked, digitally performed, sorted, listed, all in all put on a computational footing and opened up to be operated upon algorithmically. The "computational turn" not only allows for algorithmic actors to come on stage more openly; it also sustains the process of emergence in ways that are more open to working, acting, copying, archiving, and performing together (as well as to trolling, and being operated upon en masse).

There are drastically varying lenses through which such processes can be viewed, especially in relation to digital art: some people focus on aesthetics, art, and its particular ecology; others on human subjects, collectives, and communities, social and political dimensions; while what is still a minority is able to account for all of those factors in relation to technical and computational mediation.

In contemporary art and in aesthetic theory, collaboration, participation, and relationality—both in the process of making art happen and in discussing it—are a new norm. Claire Bishop, Maria Lind, and Gregory Sholette, amongst others, account for the various ways in which the fostering of relations, communal spaces, and production of frameworks for doing things together are employed to counteract individualizing neoliberal forces, the passivity of the audience in front of which Debord's (1984) spectacle continuously unfolds, as well as the disempowerment of non-authors (Billing, Lind, and Nilsson 2007; Stimson and Sholette 2007; Bishop 2012). Art is made in ways that are open to participation, and performs itself in relation to being communally experienced and co-constructed.

The lineage of such thinking extends to Benjamin's "user as producer" (Benjamin 2005) and Michel de Certeau's micro-tactics of resistance (de Certeau 2002), but also to the traditions of socialist and anarchist thinking of writers such as Kropotkin. The processes of becoming a subject through creative and collective work, as well as mutual support, have traditionally been seen as liberatory by rational liberals emphasizing the empowerment of the individual, revolutionaries working collectively, and theorists of micro-politics seeking plateaus of difference within the stratified order of things. Feeding on, cherishing, and working up creativity was ultimately linked to freedom, and collective creativity in turn led to mutual support, radical equality, and satisfaction.

None of the theorists mentioned above—Bishop, Lind, or Sholette—sees the current emphasis on participation and the possibility of collective creative work as unproblematic. Creative individuals and excited communities taking care of both themselves and problematic situations are also well aligned with the neo-Kantian and anti-state ontologies of the neoliberal order, in which the individual and community are ultimately held responsible for their own well-being, and functions of the state such as education, health care, and even policing are ideally delegated to the individuals in question and the concerned public. When the state is left unburdened by these responsibilities, it is the public's duty to be healthy, productive, caring, protected, and

entertained, all of which can be achieved through creative and collective endeavors, which handily happen to move outside of the realm of financial relations into that of aesthetic ones. Guattari (1995) suggested that it is this turn to the "aesthetic paradigm"—whereby social, political, and economic spheres of action take on aesthetic modes of operation—that most vividly characterized the societal shifts already well under way in the 1980s.

The way in which collaboration, communal production, and use of the participation of the many can be ethically problematic (as, for instance, in undermining the livelihood of these very many and others to come) is exacerbated when technical networks and computational mediation are more pronouncedly called upon. The cognitive, sensory, and emotional labor of living that includes the acts of expressing momentary thoughts, liaising with fellow humans, and idling meaninglessly creates value in and for social networks, e-mail services, search engines, and data centers and sustains large intelligence services and new global "Stasi economies" of computational surveillance. Following the leaks by Edward Snowden and the revelation of the scale of the Anglo-American surveillance machinery, it is estimated that this machinery employs hundreds of thousands of people, making it a large part of the information economy in its own right (Lanchester 2013).

As Virno (2004) and others have pointed out, what lies at the heart of so-called cognitive capitalism are instruments of financialization, of production and evaluation geared toward economic profit, that hook into the process of generating subjectivity and creativity, thus capitalizing on a never-ending energy and working on a *perpetuum mobile*. A set of discussions on the subject of immaterial labor and the "soul at work" (Berardi 2009), based on the vocabulary of producer and power user, highlight the breakdown between consumption and production, and point to the conjunction between generating value and generating self, participation, and the investment of desire. If this is indeed the current condition, it can be conceptualized by systematically looking for the ways in which such participatory and technologically mediated modes of life revolutionize art, education, knowledge, ownership, power relationships, and production through extending communicative technical systems that are socially acute and responsive to participatory creative work (and redefine work itself). The core role of subjective and collective emergence in these new forms of the organization of living and the capitalization of such living draws attention to changes in the conditions and forms of mediation, the means of propelling the emergence of self, collectives, artworks, and cultural movements. The focus on these mediations brings us back to aesthetics and the computational modes of existence.

Aesthetics in this framework refers not only to the sensual, affective, and non-rational or the field of art. Aesthetics itself can be seen as mediational and relational and, as such, as core to the emergence of subjects and objects. Here Simondon (1992) and Bakhtin (1990) can be usefully read against each other as theorists of relational becoming, central to which is a performative, mediational process of oscillating back and forth between oneself and the other, the pre-individual and the individual, the pre-individual and the collective, the internal and the external—relationships that are the becoming itself. One element is important to both Bakhtin and Simondon: the durational materiality of the process, which allows for focusing on formation, crystallization, and for partaking. For Bakhtin this process also is profoundly aesthetic, in the sense that aesthetic is emphatic and relational, but also organizational, as it implies two and more subjects posited against each other, on a plane in space and

time, providing each other with becoming through what we can now call mechanisms of interaction. Bakhtin states, "A whole integral human being is the product of the aesthetic, creative point of view and of that point of view alone" (Bakhtin 1990, 83), thus radically merging the aesthetic and the mediational.

But mediation itself becomes a problematic term since it can also be seen as referring to a process "true to itself" that is fed through various systems to acquire certain overtones; or indeed to a process that can be immediately present but, because mediation takes time, becomes deferred (Winthrop-Young 2012, 114). One of the strengths of digital artwork and theory lies in their pushing for an understanding of mediation, and of computational mediation as something varied, radically open, connected to many spheres of life, as well as constitutive to the process of becoming and being. Here mediation, or rather the computational, is not only about digitization that "comes afterwards" and allows for the building of collaborative tools for and by human subjects, work to be performed online, or data to be produced easily and moved freely. Mediation is both deeper and more profound, as well as both more potentially vivacious and deadly. It is precisely the close attention to the technical that can draw a more complex picture of this condition.

Mediation has been rigorously considered by many scholars as being of central significance to the process of emergence—of a human subject, collectives, and objects, if such distinctions are still worth being made. Perhaps one of the best known earlier accounts is Plato's dialogue *Phaedrus* (2005). Here the technology of alphabetic writing, one of the most significant mediations, externalizing speech and subjecting it to a radically different materiality, is discussed in relation to memory, subjectivity, and truth, which are all profoundly transformed with the movement from orality to writing. Both McLuhan (1994) and Kittler (1990), although differently and somewhat contrarily, focused on the early media of language and the alphabet, the introduction of signs for vowels, and the printing press. In their differing accounts, the mediational creation of the Western man and subject via the processes of externalization and discretization, enacted by early technologies of alphabetical writing and then widely intensified by the technologies of the printing press, gave way to the optical and electric media forms of the 19th century and then the digital media of the 20th, which in turn dispersed the subject. Not only did such media technologies create new social and political milieus, forms of knowing, and mechanisms of production, they also produced both new avenues and the withdrawal of possibilities for subjectivation. For Kittler, the mediation of cursive writing, the meaning-making and spell-binding machine of maternal language production, and the more technical mediation of the later forms of media contribute to or rather determine subject formation. The human subject of the era of literature gives way to the subject of optical, sonic, and computational systems and is no longer necessarily in the center of the situation or indeed in the position of an observer.

Bernard Stiegler's extensive conceptual apparatus (Stiegler 1998, 2009, 2011), building on Simondon and Leroi-Gourhan (1993), extends the notion of "technicity" to discuss technical mediation that includes the erect position assumed by humans, cortical development, tools and language—all as part of the apparatus producing the human being from the dawn of humankind. In his arguments technical intelligence arises from zoological movement. And for Kittler the soul itself is formed by the predominant media mechanism of each era. Here, media are both biological and metaphysical.

It is interesting to compare such terminology with Bakhtin's assertion that "the problem of the soul is methodologically a problem of aesthetics" (Bakhtin 1990, 89). Core to all these discussions is the search for the process of becoming—the becoming of the human subject as we used to know him; the further struggle for the place *he* occupies in relation to a *she;* then the evolutions of the posthuman (Braidotti 2013), cyborg and animal (Haraway 1997), and finally, the Turing Machine (Kittler 1990). The production and maintenance of this position occupied by the subject, as well as of the subject itself, are aesthetic and computational.

The aesthetic work through which our own emergence takes place and the range of aesthetic potentialities of subjectification are drawn out in the computational, in what was previously called digital media. Not only do memory, communication, production, creation, learning, and disruption occur and are organized through computational mechanisms, but social and political relations, and societal horizons of possibility for even the youngest people, are mapped out in the networks and are run by software.

In the case of digital art, the art itself is computationally emerging from the work of multiple authors, some of which are not necessarily human but nevertheless are active in shaping and engendering it, such as discussion boards, bots, software scripts, networks, and data packages. In such a context we find that the roles of art, artists, audiences, and what we understand to be art, creativity, and aesthetics are radically changing. These changes are equally in line with, may lead to, and are plugged into larger transformations of the human and society, with far-ranging consequences. In this sense digital art is akin to concentric waves on water, spreading further and further out until things far removed from the projects in question are drawn into their ecology and transformed.

Archives, Art Platforms, and Web Communities

The optimistic or at least outward-looking reception of the Web in the mid-1990s is well known: early accounts investigating the pioneering forms of increased cross-global connectivity, collaborative life, the posthuman subject, and new forms of art and culture include Rheingold's T*he Virtual Community* (1993), Haraway's work on cyborgs (1991), as well as writings on early net art's vision of the changing role of art, creativity, and their forms of existence (Stallabrass 2003; Bosma 2011; Monoscope 2014). Digital art's fascination with online galleries (First Real Net Art Gallery[2]), open archives (Netzspannung, Rhizome[3]), web platforms (Media Art Net/Medien Kunst Netz[4]), and mailing lists such as 7-11, Spectre, Nettime (Lovink 2002, 2003) is grounded not only in the potential of exploring new forms of experiencing and maintaining art, which draws upon the radical inclusion of technical agents and other humans and bypasses or supplements traditional institutions, but also in investigating the ways art, and more generally, "new things" emerge and live.

Net art puts an emphasis on the process of emergence as being fundamental to practice. Not only did art projects rely on the contributions of "audience artists," direct access, immediate appreciation, and the input of a large range of actors; a significant amount of work was put into reflecting upon the conditions that allow for such emergence to take place, participate in, be witnessed, bear a trace, and be archived. Early on, digital art focused on the means of continuous, relational,

and productive operation as culturally and politically significant. This focus is aligned with certain movements, such as that of Free Software (Kelty 2008), but the attention to miniscule software and network gestures and their allowances is also important. Nettime, for example, is a basic daemon-based mailing list (running Mailman software) and these rather simple technical means enabled the generation, exchange, and maintenance of ideas out of which some thrilling projects, discussions, and movements were born. The creation of thoughts, discourses, and projects emerging from their dwelling in networks and mailboxes—in relation to each other and to the techno-human structures maintaining them, which were specific to the Nettime of the mid- and late 1990s—was a radical novelty. It is hard to reconcile Nettime's significance with its technical simplicity given today's instant and ongoing circulation of communication through much more complex arrangements of social media that yield nothing comparable. But technical mediation, as introduced above, evolved in relation to enchantment, mirage, and illusion. In mediational terms a mailing list is not more or less simple than books, a mother's voice, content management systems, or an online video editing suite, the effects of which cannot be understood exclusively by systematic reverse-engineering of their technical complexity.

Nettime was plugged into the mediation of the becoming of an art and cultural movement that both amplified the list's apparatic specificity and allowed for a thrilling burst of curiosity, inventiveness, discovery, and achievement. It certainly was not only Nettime that played a role in the development of certain threads in digital art. The attempt to understand how the processes of emergence can be accounted for, and kept open and present—even once they have passed —is perhaps best exemplified in the Netart-datenbank project (net.art-database).[5] Netart-datenbank was conceived by Sakrowski and Constant Dullaart in 1999; a limited version was implemented and tested. Though the project did not achieve its full aims and objectives, it was, both conceptually and technically, a remarkable exercise. The vision of the archive was to create ways in which people, events, projects, actors, and audiences of various kinds could be added to the database and commented on, and also the various types of connections between them, so that not only the main documents or landmarks of the movement but the very processes of its becoming would be preserved. Reading Halbwach, the cultural historian Charity Scribner suggests that an archive—unlike a museum that looks back to the past—acts as a collective memory, which is always "ephemeral, contingent, specular" and alive, and "can only exist as a work-in-progress, which is kept in motion or held aloft with a plural collective" (Scribner 2005, 37–38). The makers of Netart-datenbank wanted the site to play an archival role in tracking the evolution of processes so that users could focus on the shift that net art itself was fighting to induce: a shift away from the completed to things in the making, away from star names to the processes of becoming-artist, to machinic art, to practices of art making as filtering, forwarding, hanging out, and to keeping the being and the memory of the movement always craftfully in-the-making.

I have previously suggested the concept of an "art platform" (2012, 2013) a formulation that certainly is an outcome of net art's fascination with dynamic and open archives, mailing lists as evolving knowledge generators, and the Web as everyone's art factory; the concept is devised to give voice to a certain history of digital art in the 1990s and early 2000s.

Art platforms' core concern is how art emerges to become art. Being able to account for things that are incompatible with themselves—that is, have still not

"become"—is core to its conceptual framework. Art that is only emerging and could ultimately fail to become significant can initially be seen as a creative "gray zone," and may forever be off the radar of valorized and valorizable art, as well as recognized cultural practices. This gray zone, seething with bubbling creative cultural emergence, full of try-outs, silly and meaningful acts, experiments and movements, can self-develop and assemble means for itself to produce concentrated, differentiated art phenomena. It is this very process of assembly and the ensemble, working with enough creative energy to propel it into "aesthetic brilliance," that I have called art platforms.

Art platforms are ensembles that may take the form of stand-alone web platforms or extended networks, working on and together with other cultural processes to produce art projects, cultural movements, and moments of difference outside of, or in little contact with, traditional institutions for the production of art and the knowledge about it, as well as its valorization.

Examples of art platforms of the 2000s included the Runme.org software art repository,[6] an archive and network that assisted software art in becoming an art movement, and Micromusic.net, a platform and community for 8-bit music or creative practices in Second Life. The questions explored by the concept of art platforms deal with art constructing itself in new ways. What are the new forms and processes of self-organization that are invented and enacted through the emergence of aesthetic work? What are the aesthetic problems that call for new art forms, as well as new forms of artists and audiences to arise through creative work?

A few things are important to thinking in line with the concept of art platforms. Any aesthetics run on computational grounds demands an analysis that is acute to both sides of the process, the aesthetic and computational. On the one hand, everything that circulates in the field of mediating computation now belongs to the aesthetic realm, has an aesthetic function. Nothing can be necessarily discarded as preposterous or insignificant here, as even those aesthetic objects that seemingly are just by-products, outcomes, or processes of subjectification are at the same time active agents that propel and sustain becomings. On the other hand, aesthetic modes of becoming are enacted and sustained through computational ensembles, which require an effort to be understood in order to comprehend the new kinds of becoming.

If nothing can be inherently ignored as aesthetically insignificant and nothing is bereft of capacity for aesthetic becoming, we start to wander into the gray zone of mediocre or "silly" cultural production, meaningless creative acts that are not completed and themselves are processes of the emergence of ideas, materials, humans, collectives, other movements, turmoils, and also of breakdowns and awful things. The novel kind of access to such gray zones afforded by the Internet cannot be ignored, and the new forms of witnessing and co-production provided by computational mediation invite both comprehension and action. Emergence is computationally mediated: it is procedural, has a software side, is networked, and embraces very precise kinds of computational materiality. We currently can partake in and often publicly witness the "raw" state of becoming that previously was concealed and remained private. A process of becoming of a subjectivity, an art current, an aesthetic work previously would have left a trace of documents, diaries, letters, minutes, objects, memories (to be posthumously gathered into an archive) and would have been a relatively closed private and exclusive process. Now it is laid bare and open in the making, prior to its having reached any maturity.

The breathtaking openness supported by the new kind of technicity that assists and enables becoming generates drastically varying scenarios. Collaborative knowledge or art production fascinates people, but it also goes hand in hand with the outpouring of the raw, the unpolished, and underdeveloped that becomes a filler for panicky news articles and is otherwise hardly addressed. Take, for example, a group of teenagers posting daily updates on the mundane details of the course of their life on MySpace or Facebook as they emerge as subjects. Such a process is often open for everybody to see. The aesthetic performance of their emergence as individuals, and as a collective in relation to each other, is enabled, entrained, and given temporality by the computational ensembles of their laptops or tablets, networks, social networking sites, buttons and agreements, codecs and permissions structures, alongside the many other agents that enter and leave such ensembles.

Today, the role that is presented as desired and appreciated for an individual in our society is focused on becoming and performing as a unique subject. This is reputedly achieved best through being and acting creatively. There are indeed entire industries that produce means or mechanisms for acquiring unique and "authentic" kinds of experiences of subjectification. Software-based and network-assisted platforms aimed at sharing unique travel, eating, and dressing-up practices strive to harness the emergent and affective qualities and properties of individuation. Because the most "uniquely" individuated people are the creators, the practice of artistry through software-mediated and -assisted creative production is a top priority both for individuating subjects and the industries willing to tap into such processes.

This paradoxical pairing of the thrill of art, the rapture of achievement striving toward liberatory creative invention, with the ways in which this thrill and rapture comply with the exploitative vectors of neoliberalism does not exhaust either side of the conundrum. Both sides are joined by the tensions between a push for individual subjectification and, at the same time, collaborative, collective becoming and increased social performance—in turn complexified and endangered by the quest for human subjecthood at times of ecological risks—and the ascendancy of systems that reduce humans to the status of mere tables of elements, objects in their manifest or implicit operations. Such tensions remain complex and strained while specific tendencies within them outthrust and recede and humans, as well as the art that is made, enter and leave the novel ensembles in which they are composed.

Total Creativity and Social Media

Some recent exhibitions and events that have dealt with this new condition comprised of tensions and paradoxes could be considered spectacular failures. *YouTube Play: A Biennial of Creative Video* is one such relatively large-scale example. In this case the Guggenheim Museum established a collaboration with YouTube for a competition striving to single out "exceptional talent" in online video making. Within five months over 23,000 videos were submitted.[7] Working eight-hour days, one would need approximately six years to watch all the submitted videos; yet twenty-five winners were chosen and showcased in a much shorter time frame. In this case the total of creativity does not easily translate itself into a museum exhibition format, but becomes a question of the operations of big data and technical meaning-making machines,

based on models and quantitative methods. And this is the best-case scenario; the worst-case one would be the old institutional art machinery at play.

What this competition demonstrated is a confusion of the individual aesthetic act, the collective technical ecologies that bear and feed such a creative act, and the communal aesthetic and curatorial environment in which it makes sense. The networks push for new art and meaning-making machines, and what the Guggenheim did—or, more precisely, the constitution of the museum form as it has accreted over time and been realized in this particular instance—was to exploit the networks and then to essentially ignore them in singling out a few individual pieces. Situated within the tensions between individual and collective subjectification and the computational, networked one, as well as the mediation of both, the exhibition harnessed the paradox in order to eventually solve it by ditching some of its constitutive elements.

Making sense of "total creativity" is by no means easy. Inviting the audience to collectively map the world with self-designed patterns,[8] the result being a generic mess, or employing an algorithm to randomly select among thousands of submitted photographs[9] (as Musée de l'Elysée in Lausanne did), can be considered neither a successful assessment nor exploration of this strained complexity. Still, there are projects addressing such tensions in more careful and interesting ways.

Some of these projects thrive on net art's idea that the role of the artist in the network age is to act as a filter or a bot: to crawl, find, filter out, redirect and re-present data flows—to take on an aesthetico-technical role. Here, aesthetic judgment merges with a technical specification, a computational model, becoming one. Surf clubs[10] (Ramocki 2008; Olson 2009), for example, are an intense continuation of digital art's aesthetic techniques of "browsing," downloading, uploading, and linking. Pro-surfers browse for online material they find aesthetically interesting and re-post it en masse on their blogs, itself a common practice, which curatorially makes sense as it is aligned with the functional specificity of social media. Here, the tension between the individual and the collective, the aesthetic and technical, is conserved and worked up.

Sakrowski's *CuratingYouTube*[11] is another project fascinated with mass creativity and the computational mediation of different kinds of being and becoming. *Curating YouTube* is a set of curated exhibitions and tool for curation that allows selecting and presenting chosen videos in a grid, where they can be played together, one after another, or separately. Orchestrating individual videos in a collective fashion technically lends itself not only to presenting outstanding single videos in relation to each other, but to the exploration of the generic element in aesthetic work. If nine videos on the same theme are juxtaposed on a grid, forced to work together collectively, the yet to be understood force of gray creative production, the aesthetico-subjective emergence, is brought to the fore.

Is producing better projects, reflections, subjects and more consistent cultural movements a question of technical-curatorial structures? Does it make sense at all to differentiate in that manner between more and less productive structures? The image-based bulletin board 4chan produced memes as a genre and the Anonymous hacker group as a formation (Goriunova 2013), whereas no art ever really enters into a state of becoming on Facebook. Which technics, technologies, mediations matter? In the cultural discourse on participation it is the technical that is absent, and in the discourse on the technical, it is the absence of the symbolic and of the subject that is elided.

The main question posed by the previously mentioned explorations is what remains of the subject in terms of its role and modes of becoming. If the Guggenheim's

YouTube show tried to traditionally reinforce the position of the subject by plucking out preformed auteurs and individuals, what is the place of the subject in *Curating Youtube*?

As Friedrich Kittler has succinctly put it, it traditionally was Man who was the "Subject of Aesthetics" (Kittler 1997, 131). Kittler raises the question what becomes of aesthetics, which is, in his account, an optical machine without need for a user or a witness, such as the human. It can arguably be maintained that it is the production of subjectivity, whether individual, collective, or technical, that informs art. What does art become now, at least partially outside of the human subject?

For Kittler, the emergence of the human subject as a conceptual figure, historical actor, and a metaphysical entity is fed, or rather, engineered by subjection to the specific language formation that is sang, read, and generally performed by the body of the mother. Thus subjectification, from the very beginning, is purely technical. Today's subjectification for him is modeled on the Turing machine.

Whether to extend such a proposition, or take it elsewhere, I would like to suggest that the emergence of the subject, or at least subjectivities, today is based on techno-aesthetic actions, a techno-cultural performance that is not necessarily communal but carried out by and in relation to others, including humans, post-humans, bots, data storage caves, and algorithms. This emergence is aesthetic because it is relational, sensual, material, and symbolic, and technical because it is fused with computational mediation. As such, a project like *CuratingYoutube* is an ecology in which the emergence of subjectivities is not discourse-based or institutional, but founded on performances and further techno-aesthetic actions performed on those performances. The subjectivities produced are not entirely computational, but sustained by technical media in their aesthetic thrust. Such subjectivities have something in common with aesthetic word images, literary devices, and conceptual personae, as they act as ecologies, composite figures that one can enter and leave, trying the subject on to then take it off and go elsewhere.

The techno-aesthetic enactments of participatory platforms' functions, or projects employing those functions, thus become zones in which art and aesthetics merge with the general cultural production,"total" creativity, and curatorial effort. Artwork born from the intersections of such processes takes us out of the canonical understanding of art, the artist, the audience, art production and appreciation apparatuses, and into territories where creative work engages millions in their making of and being contemporary versions of a human. Art and cultural movements emerging from such processes are novel forms of culture, and the participation in and understanding of such emergences remains a challenge for institutions, individuals, and practices called to make sense and take care of art.

Notes

1   The project no longer works; see broken links from Easylife.org, http://easylife.org/ (accessed October 21, 2013). Here is a description by Andreas Broekmann: "more than twenty WWW pages located on […] different servers all across Europe and the US were linked together in a loop through which the visitor would be 'zapped' automatically, one page following the next after ten seconds. The project made use of the 'Refresh' meta-tag, a command within HTML, the language that is used to design

WWW pages. The command tells the WWW browser software on the personal computer of the user to automatically go to a particular page after a certain time. By making sure that all these links created a loop, Refresh would take you through all the pages over and over again. The project was exciting for those immediately involved as they could experience how the loop grew page by page, while they were simultaneously communicating and negotiating via an IRC chat channel how to solve certain problems. More generally, the Refresh loop was designed to employ the inter-connectivity of the computers and the software infrastructure to create one project that was simultaneously happening at more than twenty different locations, a genuinely distributed artwork whose experiential effect both depended on and transgressed the physical distance between the participants" (Broeckmann 1997).

2 "Pages in the Middle of Nowhere (Former First and The Only Real Net Art Gallery)."
3 http://netzspannung.org/; http://rhizome.org (accessed October 21, 2013).
4 http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/ (accessed October 21, 2013).
5 http://www.netart-datenbank.org/; http://net.artdatabase.org/ (accessed October 21, 2013).
6 Runme.org Software Art Repository: http://runme.org (accessed October 21, 2013).
7 "HootSuite Analytics to Drive Campaign Success." http://de.slideshare.net/hoot suite/hootsuite-analytics-to-drive-campaign-success-guggenheim-case-study (accessed October 21, 2013).
8 *World Beach Project*, Victoria & Albert Museum. http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/ articles/w/world-beach-project/ (accessed 21 October 2013).
9 "We Are All Photographers Now," *Cool Hunting*. http://www.coolhunting.com/ culture/we-are-all-phot.php (accessed October 21, 2013).
10 *Supercentral*: http://www.supercentral.org/wordpress; *Double Happiness*: http:// doublehappiness.ilikenicethings.com/; *Loshadka*: http://www.loshadka.org/wp; *Netmares & Netdreams v. 2.2*: http://www.netmaresnetdreams.net; *Nasty Nets*: http://nastynets.com/ (accessed October 21, 2013).
11 http://www.curatingyoutube.net/ (accessed October 21, 2013).

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