Piet Zwart Institute /

Master Media Design &
Communication/Networked Media

graduation show 2010

disrupting systems

essay

States of Exception Handling
Florian Cramer

"Either you have stumbled [...] onto a secret richness and concealed density of dream; onto a network by which X number of Americans are truly communicating whilst reserving their lies, recitations of routine, arid betrayals of spiritual poverty, for the official government delivery system [...]. Or you are hallucinating it." [1]

This is, in a nutshell, the quest and the dilemma of Oedipa Maas, the heroine of Thomas Pynchon's 1966 novel "The Crying of Lot 49". An analog, underground peer-to-peer communication system called W.A.S.T.E. connects, and ultimately constitutes, diverse eccentric fringes and countercultures. They include engineers, musicians, activists, but also real estate agents and tech corporations, linked nevertheless by one shared sense of community. The novel clearly draws on 1960s American countercultures, tentatively imagining a system that translates their diversity into a medium. Among the graduation projects presented in this catalogue, Emanuele Bonetti's was born out of a similar consideration: When he and his fellow graduate Loredana Bontempi created the shared identity "Anna Adamolo" for the 2008 Italian student protests, he was not satisfied with traditional one-to-many communication methods and developed new methods for not only distributing, but also visually designing work in peer-to-peer fashion (page 9).

Pynchon, a former Boeing engineer, imagines a communication structure and culture quite like the one that emerged with the ARPAnet a few years later, and ultimately transformed into the Internet. In 2003, this history came full circle when the programmer Justin Frankel wrote the software for an Internet-based anonymous peer-to-peer network called WASTE, paying homage to Pynchon. The hidden pun of the novel, that any garbage can in the street might be a secret letterbox of the underground system, thus making it impossible to tell communication apart from junk, signal from noise, creating from recycling, recurs – in a more concrete and practical form – in Loredana Bontempi's graduation project "Ddump", a system for digital media design from thrown-away files based on its own W.A.S.T.E. system of desktop recycling bins shared over a computer network (page 17). It is perhaps fair to say for all four graduation projects of this year that they envision networks and systems by which, to quote "The Crying of Lot 49", people "are truly communicating"; systems that are not simply technical utilities, but culture, technology, politics, economies and artistic imagination. This has become all the more difficult in a time where the once-utopian notions of communication, social networking, sharing and participation have been perfectly commodified

1.

and turned into data mining schemes by companies like Facebook. While Pynchon's later dystopian novel "Vineland", published in 1990, still focused on TV as the medium of commodification and forced sell-out of a former counter-culture, one keeps wondering whether projects like the "Web 2.0 Suicide Machine", created by our alumni Gordan Savicic, Danja Vassiliev and Walter Langelaar, manifest the last option left for critical intervention into contemporary Internet culture.

That said, utopias are no-places. "The Crying of Lot 49" is careful to map its imagined communication network accordingly. The existence of W.A.S.T.E. remains dubious throughout the book, and much of the narrative in the conditional form. Doubt ceases only in one episode when Oedipa encounters a group of deaf-mute people silently dancing in the hotel lobby: "Each couple on the floor danced whatever was in the fellow's head: tango, two-step, bossa nova, slop. But how long, Oedipa thought, could it go on before collisions became a serious hindrance? There would have to be collisions. The only alternative was some unthinkable order of music, many rhythms, all keys at once, a choreography in which each couple meshed easy, predestined. [...] She followed her partner's lead, limp in the young mute's clasp, waiting for the collisions to begin. But none came. [...] Jesús Arrabal would have called it an anarchist miracle."

The episode evokes a classical figure of thought, the discordia concors, defined by Heraclitus as "combinations, wholes and not-wholes, conjunction and separation, concord and discord – out of all things comes One, and out of One all things".[2] Pynchon's immediate reference, however, is one of Friedrich Schiller's letters On the Aesthetic Education of Man from 1793: "I know of no better image for the ideal of a beautiful association than a well-executed English dance, composed of many intricate turns. A spectator on the balcony observes an infinite variety of criss-crossing motions which keep vividly but arbitrarily changing directions yet without ever colliding with each other. [...] Everything fits so skilfully, but spontaneously, that everyone seems to be following their own lead, but without ever getting in anyone's way. Such a dance is the perfect symbol of one's own asserted freedom as well as of one's respect for the freedom of the other."[3]

In the 19th century, this was declared the political model, and ideology, of Europe. The cultural historian Jacob Burckhardt defined the continent as the "home of an infinitely varied life" and, echoing Schiller's spectator on the balcony, writes: "If we occupy a sufficiently high and distant vantage point, as the historian should, we find that all the bells in all the towers are ringing in harmony, even though close we hear dissonances: Discordia concors".[4] Another two centuries later, these "dissonances" are no longer intra-, but intercultural, having literally moved from different church towers to, among others, church towers versus the minarets that Burckhardt's home country just outlawed by popular vote.
But even if the liberal vision was still intact, wouldn't it be still a totalizing one because it ultimately neutralizes all discords into one harmonic whole? What happens if there are conflicting visions of harmony that do not 'integrate' into this model? And how arbitrary and virtual, yet still powerful, has territory become as the unifying locus in a time of global migration and mobility? All these issues are central to Farrah Shakeel's graduation project [page 33].
Isn't 'diversity' implicitly presuming its negative, the common ground, whether a continent, a dancefloor, a communication system, even an international and multidisciplinary study environment like the Piet Zwart Institute? In other words: Isn't the rhetoric of the diverse making up a whole as problematic when, to take the example of a contemporary Dutch politician, tolerance will be only granted recursively, namely to those who are tolerant according to unwritten cultural norms of tolerance; but isn't it also inevitable as the necessary consensus upon which any social system needs to be built?

In his 1984 essay "Aesthetic Formalization", the literary theoretician Paul de Man attacks Schiller's model of the English dance as politically totalitarian: "The aesthetic, as is clear from Schiller's formulation, is primarily a social and political model [...] The 'state' that is here being advocated is not just a state of mind or of soul, but a principle of political value and authority that has its own claims on the shape and the limits of our freedom".[5] The English dance is, in de Man's reading, "a principle of formalization rigorous enough to produce its own codes and systems of inscription, tautology functions as a restrictive coercion that allows only for the reproduction of its own system, at the exclusion of all others".[6] It therefore doesn't matter whether people goose-step or whether they dance pogo, or to an in deterministic choreography of Merce Cunningham. The whole idea of organizing society according to an aesthetics, or artistic formal principles, is dubious. Here, de Man is close to Karl Popper's fundamental critique of philosophical idealism as a political philosophy from Plato to Hegel and Marx in "The Open Society and Its Enemies".

This critique clearly applies to modern and contemporary political aesthetics and diverse approaches to the arts as real life laboratories for social experimentation, from the Arts and Crafts movement to the Otto Muehl commune and even the micro-politics of Net art and relational aesthetics. Beyond being merely a critique of aesthetics in relation to politics, it has a larger, systemic, or (in seemingly antiquated terms) cybernetic implication. Choreography is, like other systems of notational "aesthetic formalization", an instruction code and as such only one example of systemic modeling. Games, simulations, prediction and planning formulas are other, closely related ones. De Man and Popper voiced their anxieties politics in the aftermath of the Second World War and the experience of fascism and Stalinism. The end of the cold war arguably marginalized aesthetic and idealist politics, and gave new rise to the paradigm of cybernetics that was its own early product. Social statistics, financial game theory models, political and

economical management based on computational data mining became the dominant methods of formalizing politics and society, with due implications for aesthetics (rendering Rosalind Krauss' insistence on "post-media" rather quixotic).

Heraclitus – drawing on Pythagorean thought – viewed the universal harmony created by discordant concord as a universal principle pervading, and connecting, macro- and microcosm; social-empirical modelling and simulations create microcosms to anticipate the behavior of macrocosms. The latter seemingly reverses the former, but is still based on the same idea of corresponding spheres. Selena Savic's graduation work, which passes itself off as a game simulation of the food industry, taps right into this field and culture of our time. It mobilizes all the codes and rhetoric of neo-cybernetic modeling, but in a quite similar way to how artists subverted totalitarian aesthetics through over-affirmation (page 25).

If it is fair to call Schiller's English dance a social cybernetics avant la lettre, what about the deaf-mute society in "The Crying of Lot 49"? Or, in other words, if the particular form of the dance ultimately does not matter because any dance and any aesthetic will be questionable as a social model, does it matter that Schiller was a supporter of the French revolution while Pynchon's novel suggests an "anarchist miracle"? It hardly a coincidence that the novel attributes this phrase to the character Jesús Arrabal, a Mexican revolutionary, and shifts the rhetoric from republican to catholic.

The anarchist miracle, it seems, is a miracle that emerges out of an uncontrolled, collective situation instead of being performed by a saint, and sanctioned by the Church. It reminds of the Surrealist "merveilleux quotidien", later secularized by the Situationist International as urban "construction of situations"[7]. More famous is the analogy established by Carl Schmitt: the miracle as the medieval catholic precursor to the modern state of exception, as the true token of power that shifted from the church to the political leader. In "The Crying of Lot 49", the anarchist miracle is indeed the state of exception of a system otherwise built – scientifically, socially and grammatically – on the uncertainty principle. But even the state of exception will always make up an integral part of a system (whether the political ones described by Schmitt and later Giorgio Agamben, or more technically in programming languages and their exception handling mechanisms "designed to handle [...] special conditions that change the normal flow of program execution" [8]).

It is the trouble of all thinking and all practice that foregrounds media and systems that it can never break free of cybernetic paradigms, and can't avoid affirming the notion of system even where it is denouncing it. Having been the course director of the Media Masters programme at the Piet Zwart Institute for four years, I still think of it as a small miracle where 'truly communicating' was possible. It is no miracle, but the result of great joint effort by our community of teachers and students, thorough discussions and the many ways of not making our lives easy in the course and our perspectives on technology, communication, art and design, that all graduation projects shown in this catalogue manifest complex understandings and interesting, different visions of media as social systems. As someone on the way of becoming a more neutral observer on the balcony, I can honestly say – others are saying it, too – that we're gladly handling an exception in the world of art school media programmes. Thank you, Emanuele, Loredana, Farrah and Selena, for having been great fellow workers.

[1] note _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
Thomas Pynchon,
The Crying of Lot 49,
London: Vintage 2000 (1966),
p. 117-8
_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

[2] note _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
Jonathan Barnes, ed.,
Early Greek Philosophy,
Harmondsworth: Penguin,
Harmondsworth, 2002
_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

[3] note _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
Friedrich Schiller, On the
Aesthetic Education of Man,
in a Series of Letters,
Oxford: Clarendon Press,
1967, p. 300, English trans-
lation partly changed by the
author of this text.
_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

[4] note _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
Jacob Burckhardt,
Historische Fragmente,
p. 142, English translation
quoted from: Lionel Gossman,
Basel in the Age of Burck-
hardt, Chicago and London:
The University of Chicago
Press, 2000, p. 522-523
_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

[5] note _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
Paul de Man, The Rhetoric
of Romanticism, New York:
Columbia University Press,
1984, p. 264
_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

[6] note _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
ibid., p. 265
_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

[7] note _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
Thomas Pynchon,
The Crying of Lot 49, Lon-
don: Vintage 2000 (1966),
p. 117-8
_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

[8] note _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
Wikipedia, article
"Exception handling",
http://en.wikipedia.org/w/
index.php?title=Exception_
handling&oldid=364474019
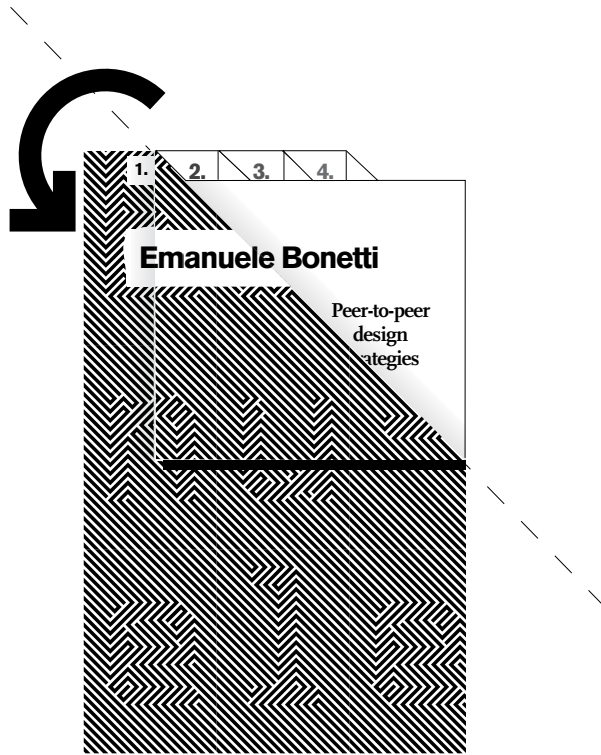_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

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index

1.

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instructions

Paper folds!

Fold where indicated to complete the title pages,
and an easy project navigation will appear.

1.	2.	3.	4.

Emanuele Bonetti

Peer-to-peer
design
ategies

ᵉ Bonetti

**Peer-to-peer
design
strategies**
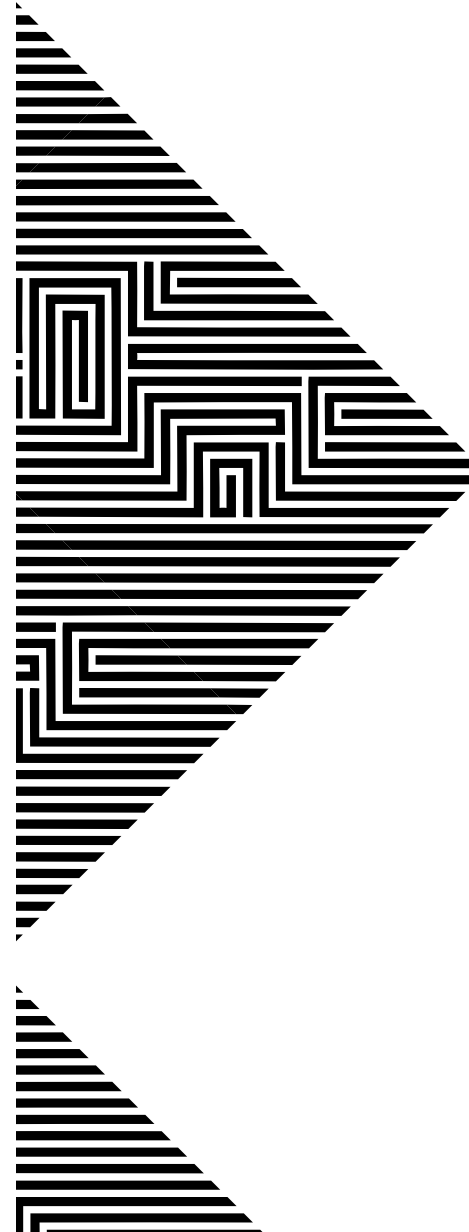
1.1 project introduction

*Emanuele Bonetti (*IT*)*
Peer-to-peer design strategies

"A camel is a horse designed by a committee".

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email:
emanuele@parcodiyellow
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gies.parcodiyellowstone.
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http://pickpic.parcodi
yellowstone.it

- - - - - - - - - - - -

When this sentence was first published in 1958 in Vogue magazine, it was meant to emphasize the inconsistency and lack of a unified vision in products created without one strong leader.

More then fifty years later, this still seems to be a common assumption in creative fields such as graphic design. Most professionals are still convinced that the only way of producing an effective result is to have a visionary leader who dictates design guidelines to his followers from his ivory tower. The great majority of graphic design studios are still based on this top-down approach.

The project "Peer-to-peer design strategies" investigates new practical approaches to graphic design based on peer-to peer collaboration. It began with a series of workshops in which professional graphic designers were asked to complete a design commission using new peer-to-peer collaboration methods. These are inspired by successful Open Source software development methods, such as pair programming, and are being continuously re-adapted on the basis of participant feedback. For the workshops, the project also consists of a set of self-written Internet applications that allow participants to easily share images and other materials.

The aim is to complete graphic design products that all participants find satisfying in order to find out whether peer-to-peer design methodologies can fully serve as an alternative to traditional, hierarchical design project work flows.
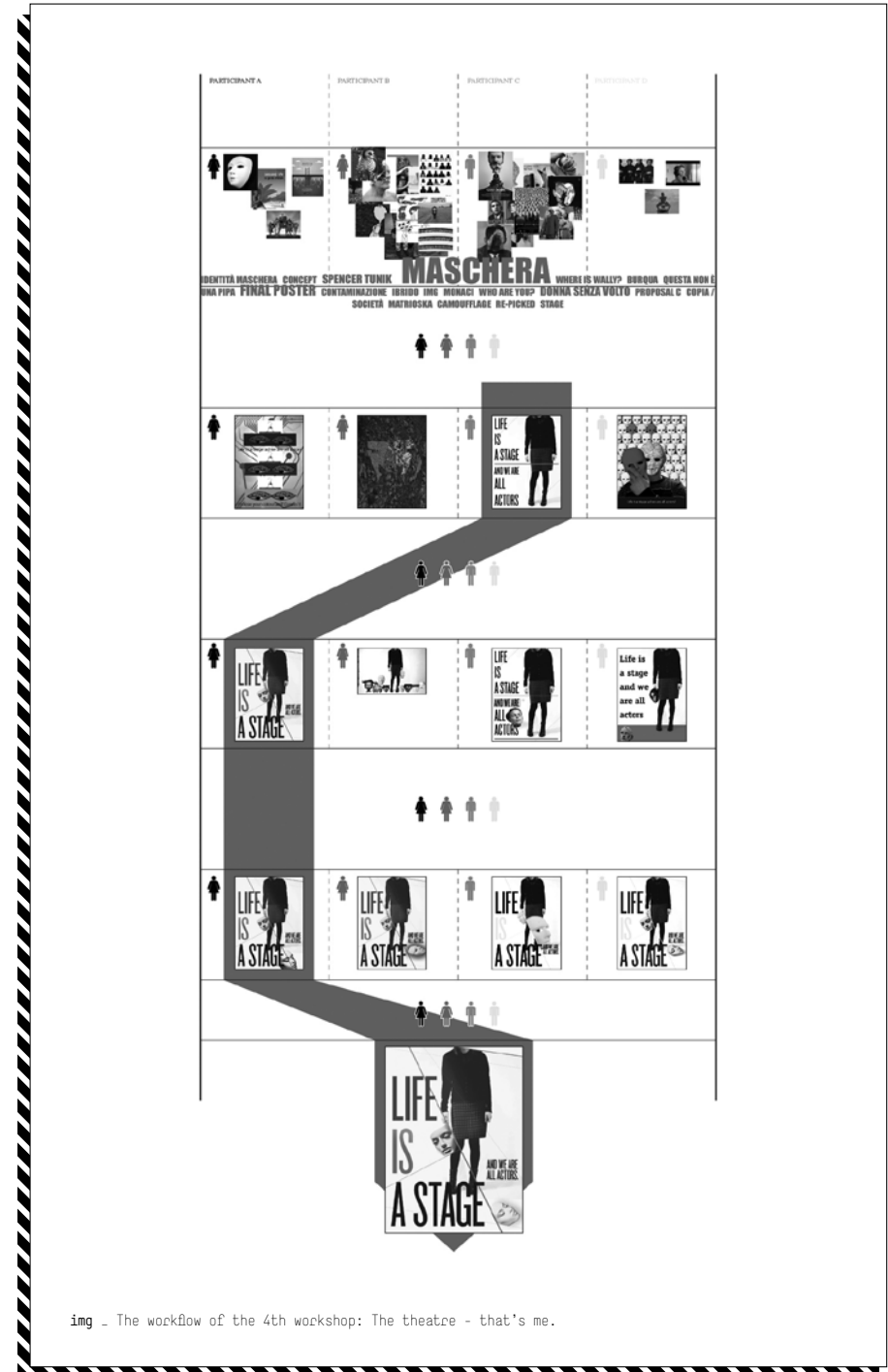
img _ The workflow of the 4th workshop: The theatre - that's me.

*Emanuele Bonetti (*IT*)*
Peer-to-peer design strategies

Graphic design is not about a personal interpretation of an issue, but about finding the most effective solution to communicate an idea.

Looking at the great majority of graphic design studios, one quickly notices that most of them tend to get stuck in a certain style. This is natural since individuals have their own personal tastes and background that their work will inevitably reflect. However, if their personal taste and background are the only input, the designers will always end up producing the same kind of results, and communicating themselves instead of the idea they meant to communicate. In other words, trying to communicate different ideas with always the same language will result in communicating the same idea again.

This issue can be avoided with a different model where all individuals involved obtain the same rights on every single phase of the process and find a solution that satisfies all of them. People working together will contribute with their own different backgrounds, skills, knowledge and tastes for a richer "group knowledge", providing a much wider range of alternatives to every project.

But is it really possible to achieve a solution that satisfies everyone? Most designers think that allowing everyone in a group to express their own opinion will only result in a mediocre compromise. For sure, this is the most likely risk in group work. People need to be able to build a new solution out of initial proposals instead of attempting for diverse input to coexist. Even in the successful examples of open source development that I took as points of departure - extreme programming and the Delphi Method - we often encounter stages in the process where a center of control emerges in order to circumvent downsides of group dynamics. A major part of my research addressed this aspect, with the ultimate goal of enabling graphic designers to work in a structure that takes full advantage of all the individualities involved, and of collectivity at once. In a nutshell, the model I have tested in the workshops proposes alternating individual and collective work phases in order to enable graphic designers to both build a common ground and develop their own single visions.

Pickpic, the software toolkit I have developed for this purpose, is based on this philosophy. It is not a replacement for standard graphic design software such as the Adobe suite or its open source equivalents, but a new layer applicable on top of these tools allowing graphic designers to share ideas, works and other resources with all members of their team. All materials collected on Pickpic remain anonymous. This way, none of the materials are traceable to their authors, but only belong to the group. Using Pickpic, people lose their own individual identity in order to become one of the many facets of a new multiple identity.

Peer-to-peer design strategies does not provide the ultimate alternative to a hierarchical system. It is a small yet significant step towards a more collaborative design work flow, a demonstration that a peer-to-peer design environment can work as an alternative, and that different models for design do exist. The most important role is still played by the professionals. The decision in favor of working with a different model than the hierarchical one should be up to them.

img _ Pair Design during the 1st workshop

img _ 3rd workshop: Don't Panic - TV

img (left) _ Drafts during the 5th workshop

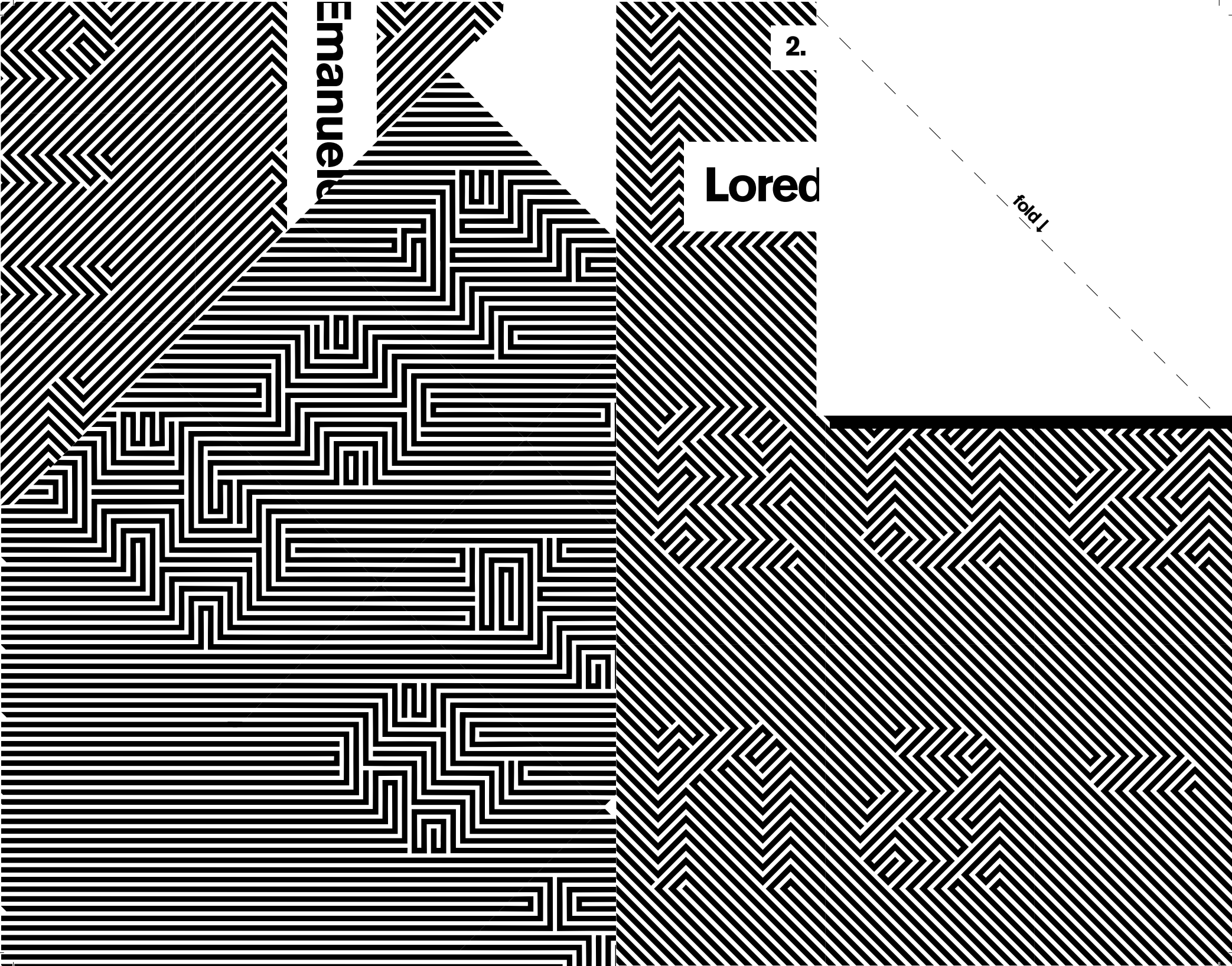img (left page clockwise)
_ The Pickpic Firefox extension allows you to post any image from the web onto your image-board hosted on Pickpic
- The three main views on Pickpic: the project-board, the image-board and the work-board.
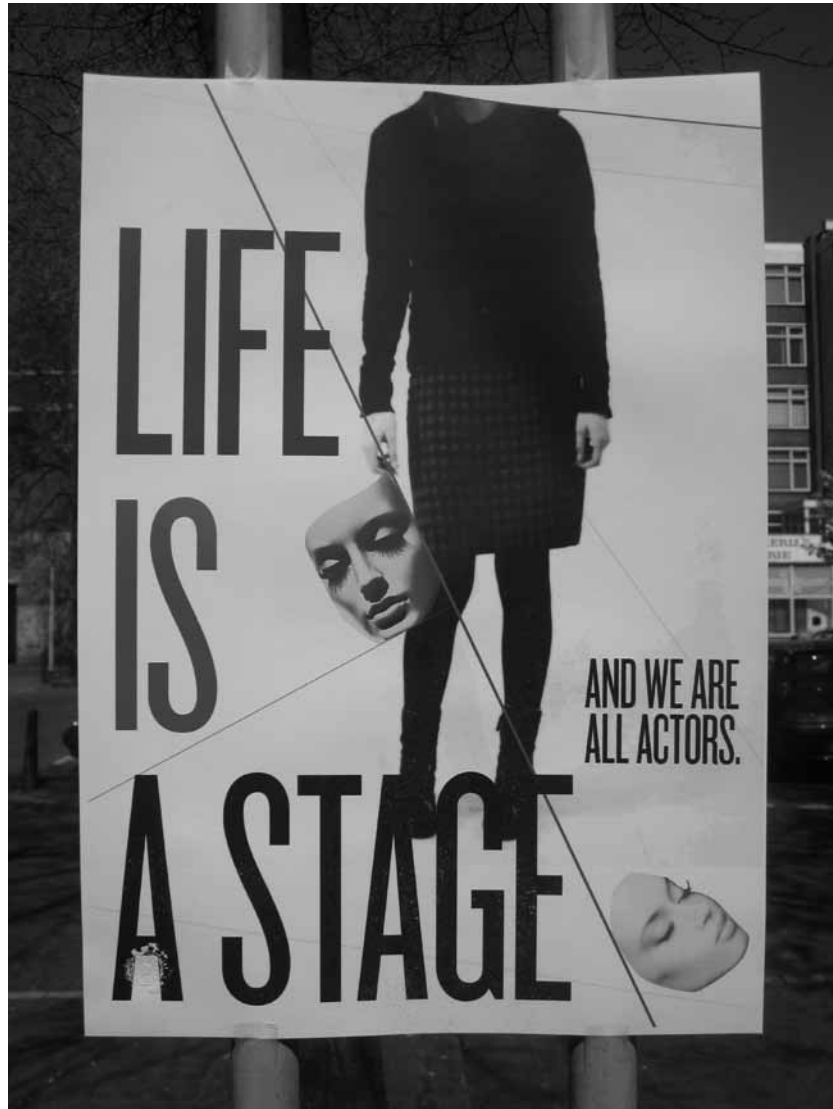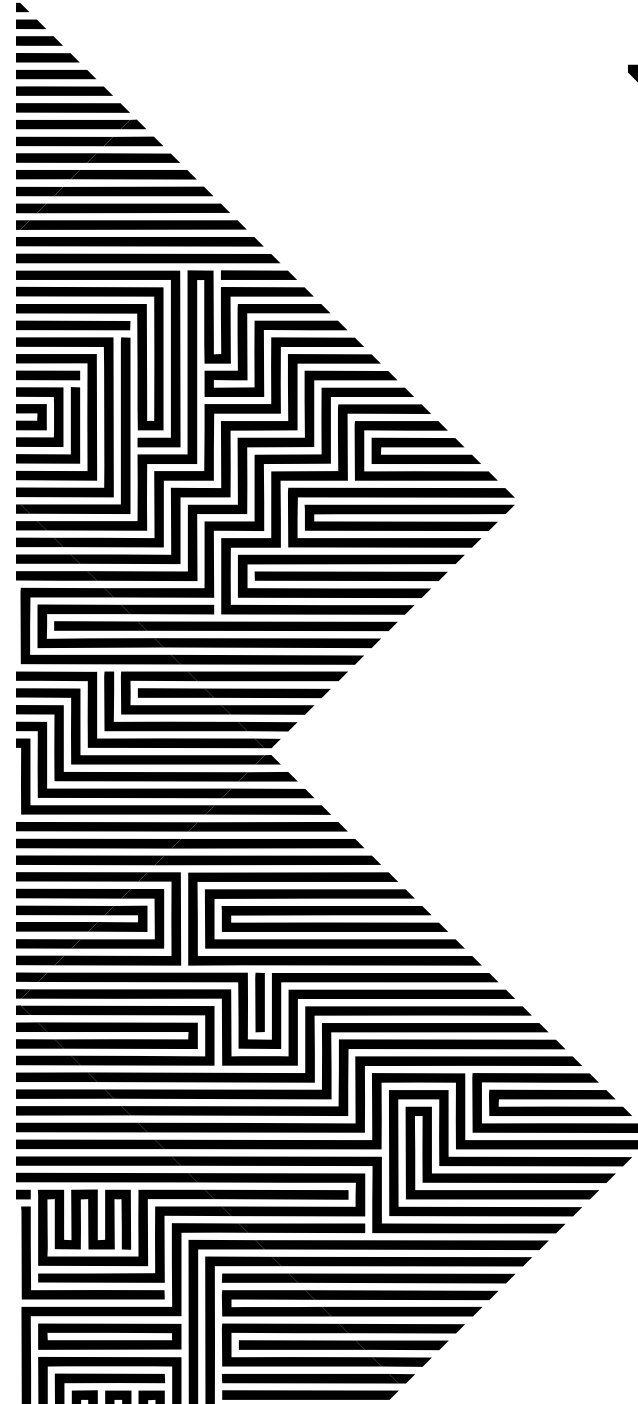

img _ Feedback collected during the workshops from all the participants.

Emanuel

2.

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img _ Poster realized during the 4th workshop: The theatre - That's me

ntempi

Ddump: recycling in the digital context

project introduction

*Loredana Bontempi (*IT*)*
Ddump: recycling in the digital context

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it
_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

"It is no longer necessary to deface paintings or to put a mustache on postcards of Mona Lisa, now art can be downloaded, modified and uploaded again, with absolute delight" — *Luther Blissett, Art Hacktivism*

Ddump is a digital recycling project based on sharing dumped files and providing different visual perspectives on them. It is based on a piece of software that allows users to easily share the contents of their personal computer trash cans, and encourages them to habitually share dumped files. The Internet repository that collects them is designed with different interfaces in order to encourage diverse utilizations of the files.

Nowadays, design has to increasingly deal with overconsumption and waste in society. Redesign is a branch of design that uses dumped objects to create new ones. Environmental considerations are, of course, important in this process, but even more crucial are communication and creativity. Ddump pushes this to the extreme by applying redesign practices to a context where the environmental issue is largely nonsensical: digital files.
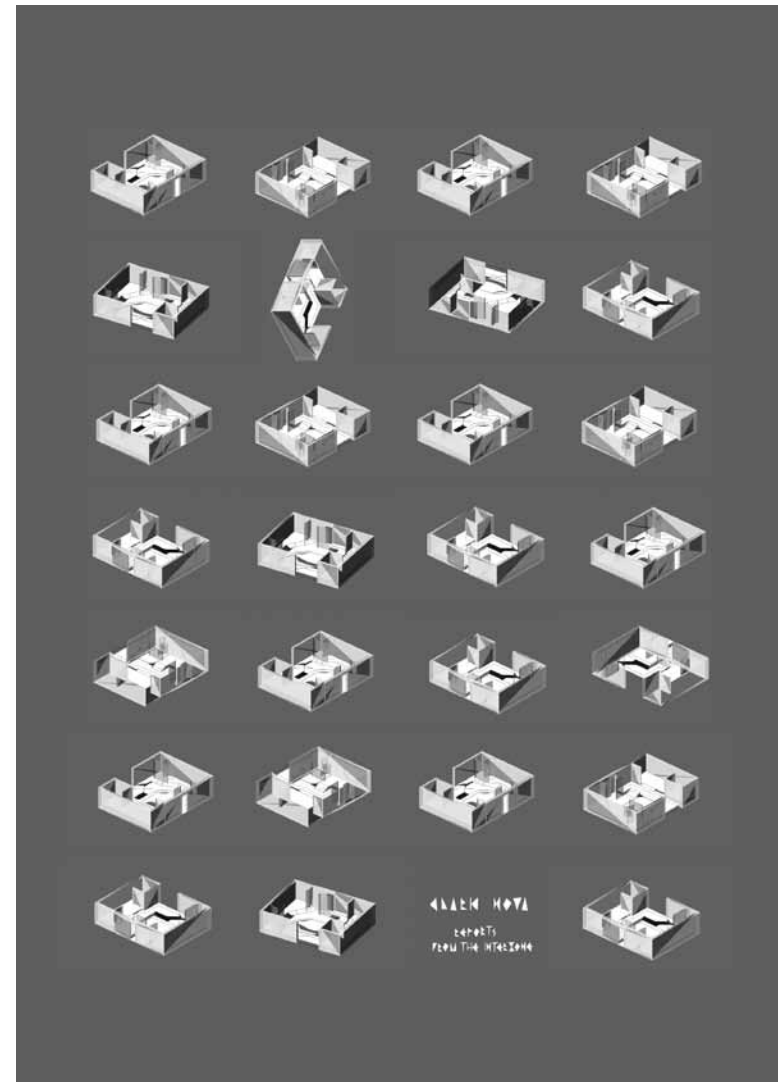
img _ Clark Nova album's poster, realized with recycled files.

..ect concept/research

*Loredana Bontempi (*IT)
Ddump: recycling in the digital context

Discards as communication

Hundreds of pictures every day; only Facebook keeps me updated on the amount of pictures that are daily taken by my friends and acquaintances. Among them, many are not just pictures but real artworks that everyone can produce using the countless tools the web and graphic software offer. We find posters, animations, typefaces, sounds that people create for different purposes, from official memories to pure jokes. They are so common now that they do not surprise anyone anymore. Still, it is worth giving thought to their relation to fundamental changes technology brought to society. If we take the example of photography, we can notice how, before the Nineties, producing photographs radically differed from our contemporary methods. Digital cameras do not use films as their analog predecessors did, but capture and save images on digital memory cards or internal storage. This lowers operating costs considerably, and since one does not need to print a picture in order to be able to see it, printing costs can easily reach zero. Taking a picture does take no longer than one click. It is easy to take pictures while one is walking, running, driving or being completely drunk. Since everyone can do it, nobody needs photographers anymore except for magazines or weddings. And of course a digital camera can be comfortably carried anywhere. When it is built into a mobile phone, no more odd equipment is necessary.

While social networks help sharing and structuring the results, the images we do not want to be part of our public identity - the ones we don't like, the blurred ones we took while riding a bicycle, or the ones we shot with our finger on the lens - will fill our trash cans.

In digital trashcans, one can find all the errors connected to new technologies and the very human mistakes spreading into society like viruses; mistakes that recur among many different users, amounting to interesting complexes of imperfection. These intriguing bugs are normally discarded by users who only care for the good final output, and never enter any of the channels that would make them and their images part of the spectacle society. If one considers graphic experiments and rejected ideas, then errors can be seen as part of a different system outside the trends and pre-modeled paths in the recognized networks. Probably, they are defined by the rules of graphic design and communication trends. It is easy to imagine how a rejected idea could have been excluded simply because it is not in line with the common practice, never reaching an audience and never influencing any trend. Thw digital trash is composed by items considered useless by users and their society, or by elements that once were used and are not considered useful anymore. While this selection is subjective, the choices obviously depend on social influence.

What would happen if we would reuse these discards for different purposes? The rejected material can be generally seen as something non-standardized according to the visual trends dictated by society, but can still have aesthetic value. From a graphic design perspective, work on discards could certainly lead to new solutions. If one collect the specific visual characteristics of dumped objects, one could gather aesthetic and social value out from their patterns.

Since discarded items make up part of what is minor and rejected, they might be considered representations of a hidden side of reality. Everything we visually experience in our daily life is part of a social structure, an a system of only accepting appearances according to what the rest of the world expects and permits it to accept. Almost all commercial communication is photoshopped in order to maintain the image that society gave itself. This has reached the point where even common people follow this myth.
Appearance nowadays is conveyed not only by the physical features of individuals, but also by means that replace the tangible ones. Social networks allow people to appear through the means they most use, statements, pictures, portraits of their own choice, carefully building the social representation and desired mirror image of themselves. Appearance becomes even more visual, and even more digital. What about the files we have been discarded because it does not properly fit the desired portrait? They will feed the hidden parts of the spectacle, with a different perspective on society that can better express its reality: a wide range of human errors and imperfections completing the common appearance portrait towards a more humane portrait of reality; something that could reveal an intriguing side of society mocking itself, with the possibility to reconsider its discarded items from a new point of view giving a new value to glitches and defects, the point of departure for a new kind of communication and design communicating all various shades of society.
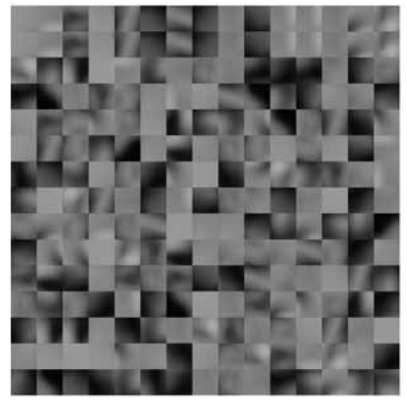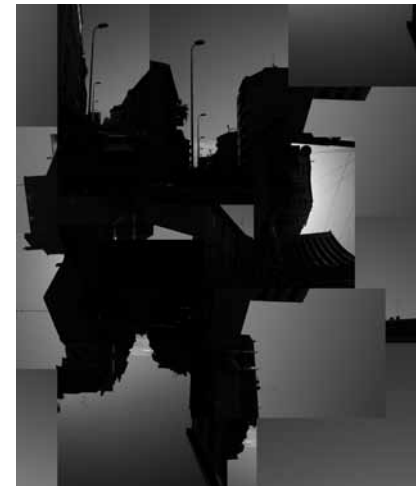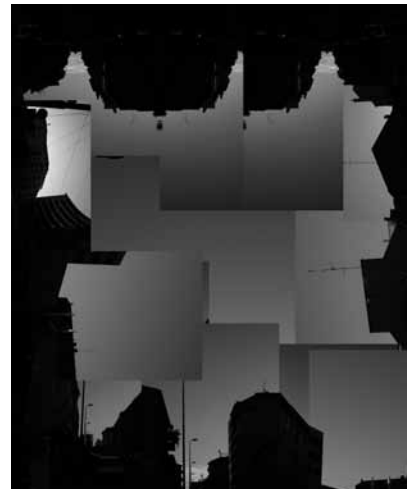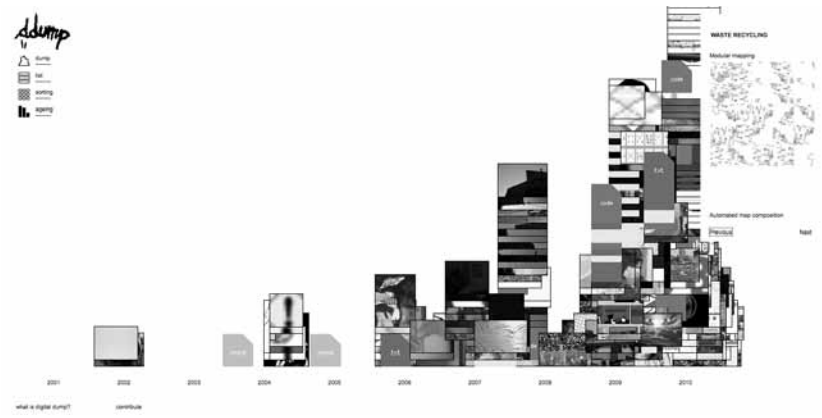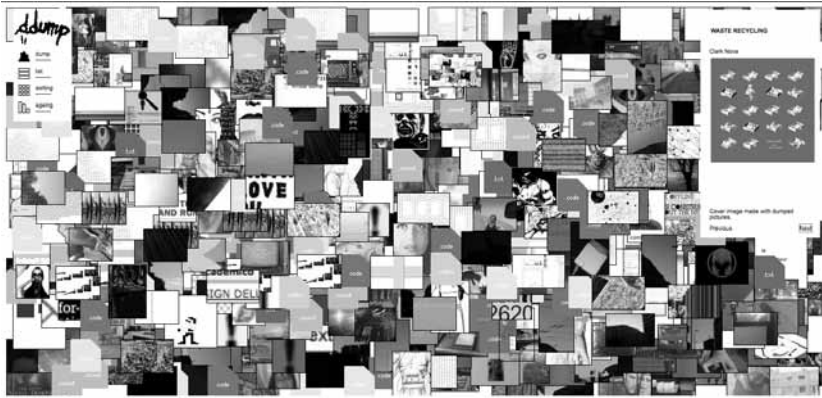
img [left page] _ Screenshots from the ddump website: home, tagging view, ageing view.

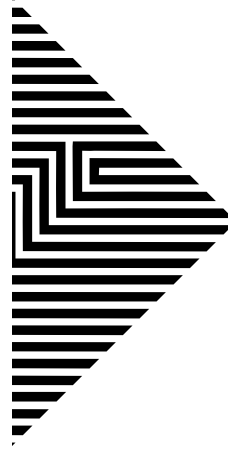img [this page] _ Images realized with recycled pictures

dana Boh

3.
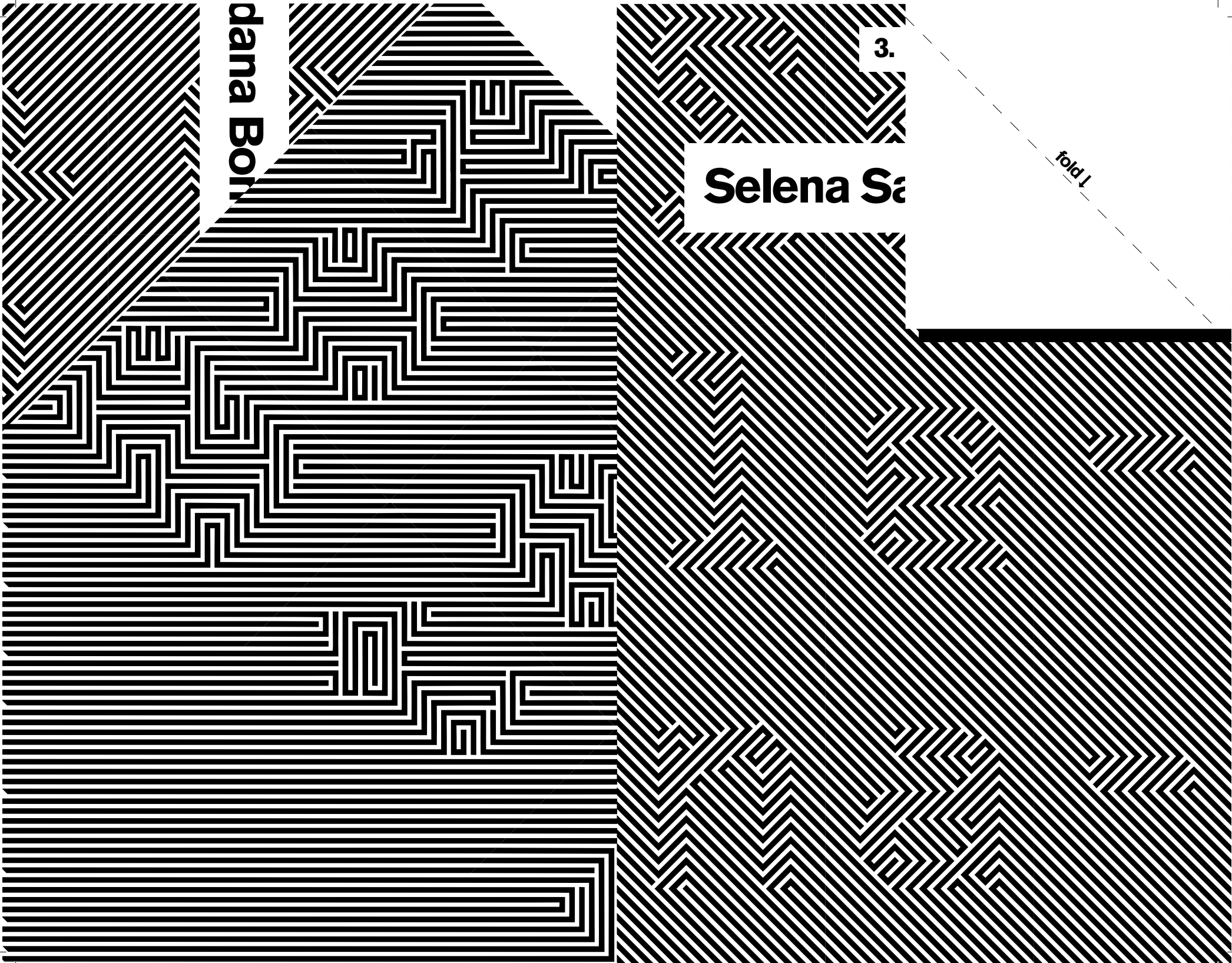
Selena Sa

DO YOU REALLY
NEED ALL THAT
ENERGY?

Save some
when you
don't need it.

Energy-saving campaign

img _ Energy-saving poster, created with dumped blurred pictures.

Selena Savić

EAT IT!
City Simulator:
SUPREMACY

3.1 project introduction

Selena Savić (RS)
EAT IT! City Simulator: SUPREMACY

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http://how-do-you-like-
them-apples.info
- - - - - - - - - - -

note _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Board; designed and
built by Ronan Lane and
Selena Savić

Simulation; graphics
designed by Özlap Eröz
- - - - - - - - - - -

The EAT IT! City Simulator game is an attempt to structure and analyse current problems in urban planning, and more generally problems of power distribution. The city simulator is based on the food industry and distribution model, and consists of three parts:

- an **online survey** of people's opinions about their shopping habits

- the **board game**, with the initial state of the city determined by people's opinions and players assuming the roles of two competing supermarket chains

- the **simulation**, showing the effect of people's opinions on the space run through the rules of the game

(EAT IT! City Simulator) SUPREMACY is a city-building game. It is a game about business models and their impact on space. Providing elementary urban planning tools, it helps to create awareness of the power structures involved. It exposes the conflict and confrontations of public and private interests through the impact of supermarkets on different city zones.

Selena Savić (RS)
EAT IT! City Simulator: SUPREMACY

On urban planning

Urban planning is a projection of spatial distribution of activities and designated densities within a physical structure. Historically, it has been conducted by experts who zoned down cities in their two-dimensional representation. The number of people involved and the complexity of zones has increased significantly, but planning is still being done from the position of the "all-seeing eye".

Up until now, the all-encompassing idea of including citizens in the planning processes and decision-making has been limited to certain areas and predetermined participatory forms. These form are being designed by the ones who may still be called "experts", and the change has been quantitative rather than qualitative, with more minds included in the system, resulting in less responsibility per mind, but not necessarily more space for different ideas. One way of including more actors in the process of design and decision-making is through a simulation game. The potential of gaming lays in its ability to try out a range of solutions and explore the consequences of future decisions. Communication through gaming proves useful for clarifying and resolving conflicts of interest and value systems between the different (teams of) players involved.

On simulation, games

In order to understand the complexity of the world (of nature), we try to envisage phenomena in their basic structure. Anything from a diagram to a detailed physical model or a synthetic environment can be used to simulate it.

When building a simulation, basic assumptions need to be very clearly defined in order for the simulation model to be useful. Every parameter has to be given a value. This means that, in case of very complex processes where these parameters need to be estimated, the results might rely on unrealistic assumptions.

The other problem of simulation is predictability of the outcome. Since the simulation is a human-made system, all inputs will be determined by the creators and therefore all possible outcomes limited by their imagination. It is very unlikely to find something we didn't make space for to appear.

Just as statistics can be tweaked to prove certain facts, simulations can be to tuned in favor of certain scenarios.

When discussing the use of simulation games as an expert tool, we can draw a line from theories of the ludic society (Huizinga, Nieuwenhuis) to the development of games by the entertainment industry which we can "get good at", and which are paralleled by the development of critical games that try to "explain the world" through their subversion of simulations and construction of unexpected meanings.

On food

The food industry can be used as a model for the hierarchical system of power and control usually found in political and public media structures. Driven by interests of multinational corporations, it is an alternative power structure to political and governmental systems. Its effect on society is similar to the effect of any other profit-oriented business - fabrication of needs to meet production surplus, reduced interaction with customers to foster passive consumption...

With an analytic approach to the question of who can produce and consume in today's corporate economy, and by deconstructing an industry's chain of capitalization, I would like to offer an overview over the current condition of power structures.
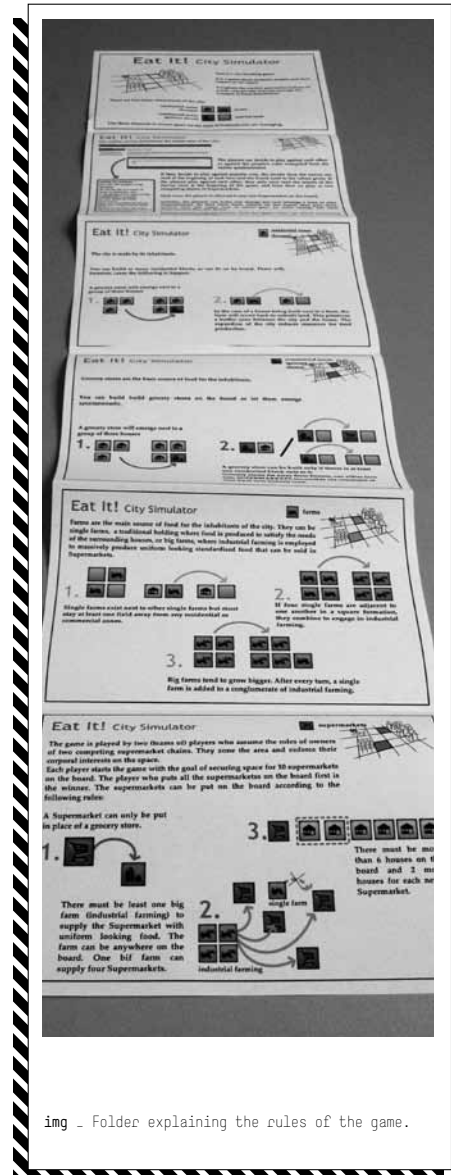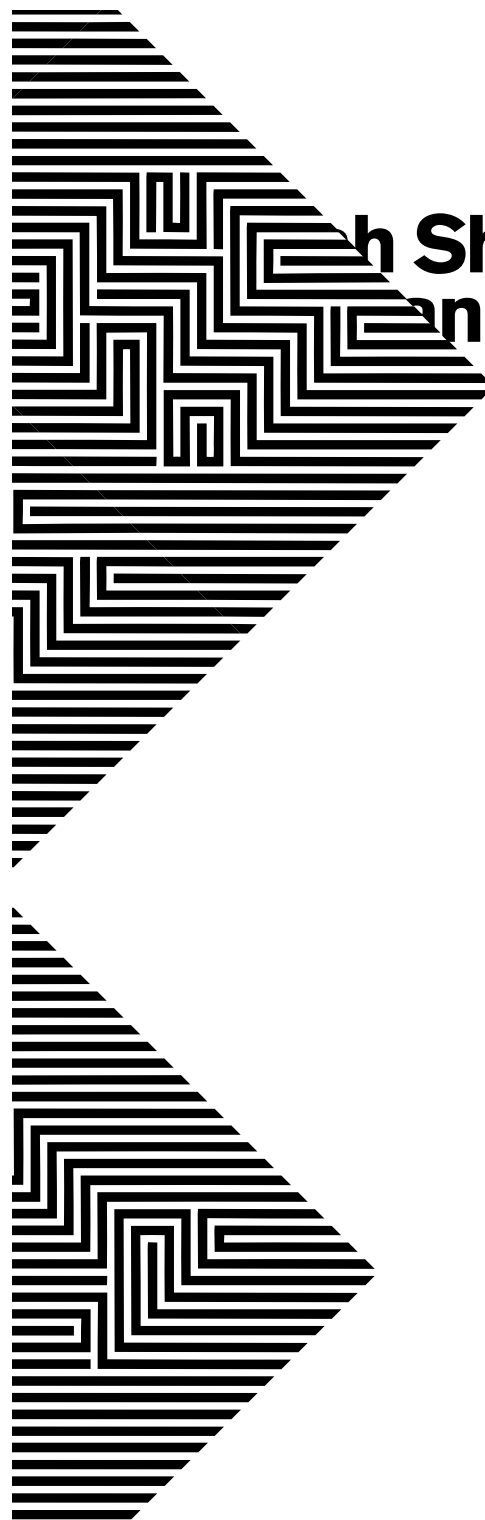

img _ Folder explaining the rules of the game.

avić

4.

Farrah Shakeel
& Emaan Wahid

h Shakeel
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forbidden love

project introduction

Farrah Shakeel [PK] *& Emaan Wahaj* [UK]
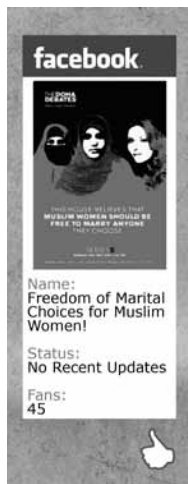**Error 4♥3 : forbidden love**

URL's - - - - - - - - -

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This project is based upon the investigation of the online and offline Pakistani migrant community; their inter-relations and behavioral patterns especially in regards to the issues of migration, integration, love and marriage, concerning the Muslim female. Moreover, it is a biographical account of a female online identity; Emaan is undergoing difficulties of a similar nature and has found her solace in sharing her viewpoint with strangers online. She rummages through the folds of humanity to find the comfort and support, the severe lack of which led her into cutting herself loose from the suffocation of her family and community.

"Social work will always be a need of every time and age, but it is not capable of bringing about a large-scale political difference. Even personal issues like love and marriage are not personal; the political system owns every decision of ours. Pakistani people build castles in the air and talk big of a revolution-to-be. We fancy a French revolution to solve all our problems, but we forget how bloody revolutions can be – nothing to look forward to. The time to change from words to actions came and went. What needs to be reclaimed, must be reclaimed. And it must be done now!" — *Emaan Wahaj*

...ject concept/research

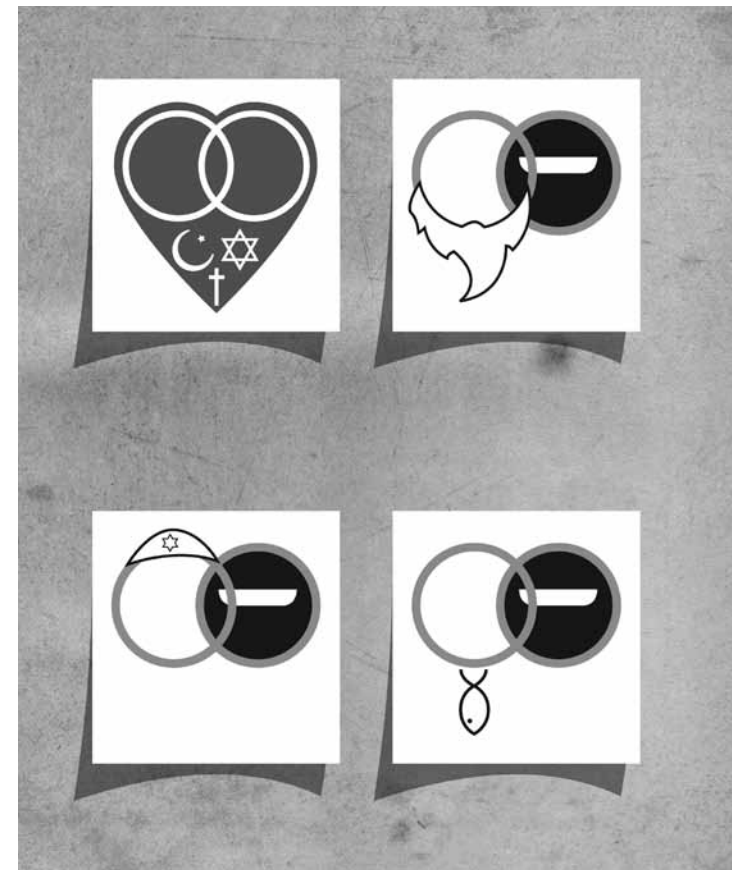*Farrah Shakeel* [PK] *& Emaan Wahaj* [UK]
Error 4♥3 : forbidden love

Migration is a very challenging phenomenon, whether voluntary or involuntary. It is not physical or psychological, rather physical and psychological. It isn't the sole displacement of the physical body, but also of mind. It is about pushing one's limits to get accustomed to what is outside of what you call comfortable. Religiously or spiritually speaking, a psychological migration without the burden of the physical body is also very much possible, the experience of which is attainable through meditation, or giving up the *I* from one's identity to adjoin it with something higher, or bigger than oneself - the Divine. Examples of such a migration can be found with Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), the Buddha, and also Sufi Islam. More scientific or modern interpretations of such a migration can be found in hypnosis, yoga and perhaps even in the art of illusion.

But when a person is born to migrants, she inherits merely the struggle of psychological migration; not that of what her ancestors experienced, but one of traveling back home - to point A. This struggle is done largely in aid from the entire migrant clan, including the successful ones who mirrored her dilemma before her. This aid can be in the form of fear, pressure, acknowledgment, empathy and stories. It is an inheritance that has become mandatory for all the next generations to come, until the day she finds herself back physically in point A.

Muslim migrants around the globe are part of this exact cycle; helping their children with the cultural and religious understanding and adherence of point A, while being in point B. This is a problem. This massive struggle of millions of people is sparking issues with the units of this clan - the individuals. They are falling in love - a very point B phenomenon. They have lost their psychological migration, at least partially.

Islam, or the Muslims, believe that a marriage between two individuals, where the women is a Muslim, and the man is not, is invalid - a fornication. When point B is full of non-Muslim men, are higher in number than Muslim men, I see a very high chance for such an invalid marriage or partnership to occur. Of course, there may be incidences where the temptation is strong, but the psychological

ject concept/research

Farrah Shakeel [PK] *& Emaan Wahaj* [UK]
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migration has gone far enough for her to consciously self-destruct any such temptations.

Whether or not such a marriage is invalid is debatable. A strong majority (of male scholars) believes it is. A new thinking class is emerging with a strong voice against such a male-dominated ideology. They challenge that such an impermissibility is non-existent in the Holy Book, the Qur'an. I question, regardless of whether permitted or not, the crude fashion in which the society handles the choices of marriage available to Muslim women. The disastrous end to which may turn up an honor crime. Can a Muslim woman choose a spouse for herself, including a non-Muslim one? Is a Muslim man really allowed marriages to non-Muslim women, to practice polygamy, and undertake Misyar and Mutah marriages?

This project is a result of all these questions, and then specifically aimed at the Pakistani-Dutch immigrant community. Can we progress from cultural beliefs of a religion and take on a sincere ijtehaad that is emancipating for the women of Islam? The internet, a space of hidden identities, is swarmed with blogs and forums where Muslim girls are committing silent apostasy; where they scream against such hypocrisies and try to find loopholes in the system; where parents seek advice from internet-*mullahs* about how to handle a daughter who has married or ran away with a non-Muslim man; where relatives seek advice of should they kill this girl. But at the same time, you also witness the hypocrisy of the attitude of this small, over-informed, over-involved, online community.

IDENTITY, LOVE, MARRIAGE & THE FEMALE MUSLIM MIGRANT.

Venue: Piet Zwart Institute
         Mauritsstaart 36
         3012 CJ Rotterdam
         The Netherlands

Date: Saturday, 5 June 2010
Time: 1500 – 1700 hrs

p.s. Please confirm your attendance by e-mail.

Farrah Shakeel

tornishcuf@yahoo.com

Identity, Love, Marriage & the Female Muslim Migrant.

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