

#mm net art

*Internet Art in the Virtual
and Physical Space of Its Presentation
Marie Meixnerová ed.*



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*#mm Net Art—Internet Art in the
Virtual and Physical Space of Its
Presentation*

Internet art (Net art) is perceived as an important area of contemporary art that has become the subject of scholarly interest. In the course of its more than twenty-five-year history, it has changed considerably, and the various approaches of theoreticians, critics and authors towards Internet art have also developed. This ensures that a definite answer to the question „What is Net art?“ is impossible.

Does Net art represent immaterial art that can only be displayed in the online environment? Does its name refer to the medium it uses, such as Video art or Land art (definition by medium)? Is it the art of „Netizens“, the inhabitants of the Internet (sociocultural definition)? Does it concern the collective process artworks and social sculptures made even before the advent of the World Wide Web? Can we include a tweet or a steel pipe gallery installation inspired by the Internet under its heading? Is Net art synonymous with Net.art and networked art? Is it an art movement or an art form? Does Net art represent a historical period of contemporary art? This book aims to provide a starting point in the search for answers to these and similar questions concerning the existence of Internet art.

The choice of essays in the anthology *#mm Net Art—Internet Art in the Virtual and Physical Space of Its Presentation* was based on my professional experience. As a curator, artist and author of theoretical articles and essays, I have been dealing with this phenomenon since 2011. The essays, manifests and theoretical and historical articles in this book are placed in context, and follow Net art from its technological and conceptual origins to the present-day, with the merging of virtual and physical worlds and the arrival of so-called Post-Internet art in gallery spaces.

The book contains essays by Czech and foreign authors. It is, to a certain extent, a record of the technological and social transformations that have taken place in the areas of production and presentation of Internet art. Thematic chapters feature academic essays alternated with manifests and documents whose content is, in some cases, purely informative and illustrative. For the sake of this anthology, I've approached the Internet art as a developing art form. This is reflected in the order of the essays which map the “chronological” stages of its “development”.

The anthology is divided into five thematic sections that are based on important milestones in the history of Internet art: *Web 1.0* (Katarína Rusnáková, Dieter Daniels, Marie Meixnerová); *Net.art* (net-dot-art) (Domenico Quaranta, Natalie Bookchin, Alexei Shulgin); *Web 2.0* (Domenico Quaranta, Piotr Czerski, Brad Troemel, Artie Vierkant, Ben Vickers, Marie Meixnerová) and *Post-Internet* (Jennifer Chan, Gene McHugh). The fifth chapter, simply entitled *Archiving*, is devoted to archiving and the preservation of Internet art (Dieter Daniels, Gunther Reisinger, Matěj Strnad). The afterword was written by the Czech theoretician and curator Lumír Nykl.

The book can serve as an introduction to the specific area of the twentieth- and twenty-first-century art world. The essays were also selected with regard to the expert reader, to whom the book offers new and as yet unpublished information, and hopefully also a new perspective on the phenomenon of Net art.

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1. *Web 1.0*

On the Internet, Nobody Knows You Are a Dog.¹

#context #prehistory

¹ Caption for the famous Peter Steiner's New Yorker cartoon from 1993, the most reproduced New Yorker cartoon in the history of the magazine. Steiner, Peter. "On the Internet, Nobody Knows You're a Dog." *New Yorker* July 5 1993: n. pag. Print.

In popular terminology, the Internet and the World Wide Web are often interchangeable terms, but in fact they are not synonymous. WWW is a service provided within an already existing network—the Internet—and web browsers, web servers and web pages rely on Internet protocols TCP/IP and HTTP. The beginnings of the World Wide Web are associated with the turn of the 1990s and the name of the British programmer Tim Berners-Lee who created the first proposal for a distributed hypertext system, and programmed the first web browser while working for CERN (European Organisation for Nuclear Research). Subsequently, in 1991 the service became available to the public and has been free since 1993.¹ Moreover, at that time the graphical browser Mosaic was released.² In the middle of the 1990s, the first modern browsers followed: Opera (1994), Mozilla (former Netscape, 1994) and Internet Explorer (1995). The Internet was now easily manageable, accessible (user-friendly), had spread rapidly and was becoming a mass medium. In 1995, the object-oriented programming language Java enabled the first animations on the Internet. The technological development outlined so far concerns the so-called Web 1.0, a period in the development of the web, which was replaced by Web 2.0 in the middle of the first decade of this century. Unlike Web 1.0, Web 2.0 allows its users to participate actively in creating the content while also being consumers.

The first thematic chapter in this anthology entitled *Web 1.0* aims at presenting the advent of Internet art in the context of its predecessors and the history of art, particular art movements and technological development. Its first essay “Internet Art and Its Formats” (2005), written by Slovak theoretician and curator Katarína Rusnáková (b. 1959) characterizes Internet art as an unstable, time-dependent, ephemeral, digital medium operating on the basis of a network.³ In her second text entitled “Internet Art: New Image Modes” (2005), Rusnáková focuses on the development of technological prerequisites that conditioned the birth of Internet art, alias Net art. The German researcher Dieter Daniels’s essay “The Art of Communication: From Mail Art to E-mail,” deals with early Internet art projects and reveals the role of historical context in a reflection on Net art. His article was written at a time when scholarly discussion of the topic did not yet exist. The author thus understands Internet art in relation to Mail art. The latter area of art is, together with art movements (Dada, Fluxus, Conceptual art, computer art), most often identified as a precursor of Internet art. This thematic chapter of the anthology devoted to the pioneers of Net art concludes with my study “Net Art before WWW: A Planetary Fellowship” (2012), which presents Internet artists as a distinctive art subculture with its own artistic means of expression, priorities and attitudes towards the predominant art discourse.

#mm

¹ Thanks to this, the World Wide Web triumphed over the rival system Gopher, which was developed at the University of Minnesota and was a paid service. See “Ten Years Public.”

² This browser was developed at the National Centre for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA) at the University of Illinois by a team lead by American software engineer Marc Andreessen. See “Mosaic—The First Global Web Browser.”

³ A system of several independent computers that are connected and able to communicate and exchange data.

References:

- “Ten Years Public Domain for the Original Web Software.” *CERN*. Cern, Apr. 30 2003. Web. Dec. 24 2014.
- “Mosaic—The First Global Web Browser.” *Living Internet*. N.p., n.d. Web. Dec. 24 2014.

Internet art is one of the youngest forms of media art. Its fundamental components include computers and information consisting of bits and bytes intended for transmission—telecommunication within which dematerialisation of an artistic object finds its absolute application.

The expansion of Internet art is closely connected to the rapid spread of the Internet which started on a global level in the mid-1990s. From the historical viewpoint it may be said that its breeding ground was established by the Fluxus international movement and by performance and conceptual artists making use of the development of information and telecommunication technologies (telephone, telecast, radio communication, telex, fax and the Internet) in their works of art.

The exemplary activities which augured Internet art involved telephone concerts, fax performances and satellite conferences in the 1970s and 1980s. However, their weakness was the insufficient, unpreserved and, to a certain extent, absent documentation that was necessary for further research. *Les Immatériaux* (the non-materials) exhibition from the authorial concept by Jean-François Lyotard inspired many artists. It was held in the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris in 1985 and the experiments in computer-aided interactive writing and collective computer-mediated discussion originated there.

In 1962 Ray Johnson was a pioneer of Mail art. His work is considered to be the immediate predecessor to Internet art. It is based on a form of correspondence among artists who exchange their works by mail. A mailing envelope figuratively became the smallest museum of art for Mail art. As with Internet art, Mail art is a democratic form of artistic expression, the aim of which is more a process of communication and mutual exchange of thoughts among its participants, than the production of works. Since these artistic forms are clearly intended neither for commercial use, nor for the art market, and they are even defined as opposing the mainstream and the institutional cultural establishment, Mail art works are usually not saleable objects to be viewed in private galleries and certain problems do occur when exhibited in museums of art. This is naturally related to the fact that their authors are, in comparison with established and popularized artists, known only to a small community of like-minded artists and their followers who are interested in these specific forms of expression.

During its short history Internet art has evolved from its initial enthusiasm for using the new, free and uncensored environment of bi-directional communication, which came under relentless attack from the mass media. Internet art has moved through scepticism and ended with disillusionment as well as a realistic evaluation of how to proceed with critical detachment (Baumgärtel 152–153). It is represented by data trash—useless information by means of which the network is being overloaded, and which causes a lowered orientation in informational chaos and inability to perceive extreme

information flow. According to Pierre Lévy, the World Wide Web is neither semantically nor structurally closed, and it is not frozen in time. On the contrary, it is growing, moving and changing. It reminds one of a river. Its numerous springs, its whirls and uncontrollable growth all create an impressive image of the current information flood. Roy Ascott uses the image of the second flood—the information flood (Lévy 144).

Many artistic works, including Mark Napier's *The Digital Landfill* (1998), refer to these problems. On the other hand the explosion of projects within the network is a result of the enormous challenge represented by the Internet, which has provoked many artists into producing numerous and diverse works. The global network thus became an effective medium for real communication with the audience; it helps to acquire an audience's response through feedback. Lévy considers the network to be an open space for interactive and collective communication as well as a global instrument of collective intelligence (183). It is true that everything is on the same level, however differentiated, even if an absolute hierarchy does not exist on the network. At the same time the network is not a shapeless mass, it merges many various approaches within itself.¹

The characteristics of digital Internet works are that they function only within the network and that they creatively use the technology that enables their very existence.

In 1993 the Mosaic web browser enabled people to integrate text, image, sound and short animated sequences onto a desktop controlled by clicking a mouse (Baumgärtel 159). To create their works on the Internet, artists used low-cost tools such as HTML, digital graphics and Photoshop. These were followed by other programming languages—Java, Flash and Dynamic HTML. The artists also used the experience gained from various forms of art in digital media and from being part of interactive installation which used video, satellites, computers and sound. From 1993 to 1996 specific aesthetics of art were developed on the network, together with its main formats, such as e-mail, websites, graphics, audio, video and animation (Greene 33–34). One of the fundamental characteristics of works on the network is that they are only implemented on WWW and they are presented as individual websites. Several communities, such as *Internationale Stadt* from Berlin (1994–1998) and *Digitale Stadt* from Amsterdam (1994) were active within the environment of the Internet; mailing lists that gained recognition within the international Net art scene include *nettime*, *Syndicate*, *faces*, *Rhizome* and *7-11*. The Internet serves as a medium for various artistic works and it is important that it provides a platform for related media, such as Internet films, animation sequences, 3D simulations, games, photography and sound, all of which may be transferred.

Communication among a large number of people and the formation of situations which provoke social interaction in the virtual space of the Internet have much in common with Joseph Beuys' similarly conceived projects of social sculpture (Baumgärtel 155). One of the aims of these works—which

¹ Lévy states the following: "Our current knowledge is expressed through a metaphor containing a voyage and surfing, which suggest the ability to face waves, streams and headwinds on a flat, unsteady and unprotected surface. The existing notion of a pyramid (to ascend to the top of knowledge), a ladder and a teaching programme given in advance conversely reminds us of former rigid hierarchies," see Lévy 145.

may be called digitally specific events—is an exchange of views among artists, activists and participants in the communication. All of which forms a potential for future art from the cooperation. The other aim is represented by the mutual intensification of experience.

It is quite interesting that one of the first artists who made their name (created a distinctive image for themselves) were Russian Internet artists, who were in opposition to the local commercial artistic scene and against those artists who tried to attract the attention of the general public. Knowledge of Russian avant-garde films and the ability to work with narrative and visuals focused on a screen were very important for Russian Internet artists—Olia Lialina and Alexei Shulgin are among the most famous—and they quickly adapted to working with a computer screen for the purpose of interactivity. They tried to find a balance between text and image, and inspired by Sergei Eisenstein's theory they used the possibilities of parallel montage. While Olia Lialina's *My Boyfriend Came Back From the War* (1996) is intimate and presents a dramatic story on personal level, Alexei Shulgin's *Hot Pictures* (1994) is reminiscent of an electronic photo gallery accessible either from home or work. The author demonstrates his aversion to the conservative culture of galleries and museums and he suggests a social and economic background to their practices. After experiencing politicized official art he prefers free artists' communication and the independent presentation of works within the network. In 1996 Shulgin formulated his radical manifest² in which he spoke about "pure and genuine communication" as the new artist's aim, and within which he refuses artefacts, seen as fetishes, and he disapproves of the manipulation of people by means of sophisticated, often kitschy works by medial artists and by having their thoughts contaminated by theorists' similarly vague interpretations (Greene 36–39).

The logic of discursive language used when creating websites is ruined by Jodi who employs practices of post-linguistic and post-visual research. It profanes websites and creatively abuses HTML protocol—a code for its creation.

Branches of Soros' centres have contributed to the activation of Internet artists in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Moscow, Ljubljana, Sarajevo, Sofia, Budapest etc.). The Slovenian activist and artist-dissident Vuk Ćosić fiercely supports Net art in this region.

His projects are critically focused on contemporary online practices in such a way that they relativize the intentions of authors and designers working in the cyberspace. For example Ćosić appropriated the CNN website and deconstructed it by means of shifting it semantically into a trivial mass media environment with a pop banalisation of the news—*Net.art per se* (CNN Interactive), 1996. Platforms intended for group discussions and the development of electronic artistic criticism such as *The Thing* (1991), *äda web* (1994), *Rhizome* (1996) and *nettime* were established in Western Europe and the USA. Because of the Internet, new forms of discourse and production, which enable the development of notice boards, chat rooms and websites, are being generated. The dimension of an immediate reaction,

² #mm: "Art, Power, and Communication," a statement made by Alexei Shulgin via e-mail from October 7, 1996 is available online, see Shulgin.

which is in most cases lacking in printed documents, allows involvement in the discussion and criticism of digital culture (Lunenfeld 137). The Australian collective VNS Matrix, which deals with the relationship between technoculture and the theme of gender, race and class, was formed within variously oriented discursive networks. Cyberfeminism covers three areas: 1) it defines women's position in technological disciplines, 2) it discusses women's experience with technoculture, including its effect on work, home, social life and leisure activities, 3) it comments on gender comprehension of various technologies in the sense of their possible feminisation and erotization (Greene 62). In 1991 VNS Matrix formulated the *Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century* in which strategies of variable identities (new kinds of fluid identities and representation by means of avatars) including the whole spectrum of sexual power and combinations of sexual and technical languages are supported. Having a sense of humour when using technology is emphasized and at the same time it follows Donna Haraway's pilot text *A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century* (1985). Free space is thus opened to elaborate on the various questions and problems on the rich cyberfeminist agenda (Greene 62–64).

From the viewpoint of an innovative approach to web browsers—Netscape Navigator and Internet Explorer were most frequently used—I/O/D 4's suggestion is very interesting. This British three-member team invented the *Web Stalker* (1997) website browser, which resembles the structure of a network, not a book. It is composed of small circles representing individual pages, whose mutually connected links form a map of connections among web pages. The work with a modified visual structure and user's practices considerably influenced how it was received by the discourse participants. It is the best example of software art and data mapping.

When *documenta X* exhibited Net art in 1997 in Kassel, it was the first institution to display Net art,³ which thus became one of the forms of the contemporary artistic scene and the network was established as a serious platform for artistic activities. The curator of the official website and net artists' presentation at this exhibition was the media artist Simon Lamunière. However, Vuk Ćosić entered its context and copied, cloned, the official website and appropriated it with the title of *Documenta Done* (1997). Ćosić's aim was to point out the technical possibilities of reproduction and to pose

3 #mm: The installation solution at *documenta X* is frequently mentioned and not without controversies. "The [N]et art pieces are shown in an office-like space hidden behind a cafeteria that has only one entrance. The decoration of the work is not by a designer [...] but by the artists Franz West (an uncomfortable bed and chairs) and Heimo Zobernig (who painted the walls blue as a subtle hint to IBM as one of the major sponsors of the show [...]). The computers that show [N]et art are not connected to the Internet, with three exceptions: the projects of Muntadas, Pocock etc. and Blank/Jerone. Yet even with these works there are no direct links to other sites, and you can't surf to other URL's. Apparently the organizers didn't want the Net art rooms to turn into a cybercafé, where people read their e-mail. While this is legitimate, currently the data could come straight from the hard disk," explained the exhibition Tilman Baumgaertel in the *nettime* mailing list. According to Jodi the installation solution of the exhibition was insensitive and a number of artists disagreed with the installation in "the office-like space"—something which was perhaps intended as a funny metaphor in fact created a rather awkward stereotype that might have been repeated in the future. Particularly problematic was the pruning of the Net.art works back to their context and "environment" by taking them "out of the Internet" and presenting them offline. See Baumgärtel, "Interview with Jodi." The art group Jodi, whose works were also exhibited in Kassel, said of the exhibition while it was still on: "[the office is] an unnecessarily confusing symbolical construct, built without consultation of the artists. Net.projects don't need such metaphors when presented in real-space exhibits, as tv-monitors don't need a home-decor around them for viewing video. The office cliché also sucks because it gives a false group-label to artists whose only common interest is their use of the net." See Jodi; qtd. in Quaranta 26.

questions concerning authorship. He referred to Duchamp's readymades and his appropriation strategy as used by artists such as Sherrie Levine. According to Ćosić, Internet artists are "ideal Duchamp's children" (Greene 97).

The Italian collective 0100101110101101.ORG, which is also known as 01s, approaches data recycling as an aesthetic strategy in an even more radical way. The group poached from Olia Lialina's and Jodi's web art through their appropriation, remixing and re-usage. The hybrid works emerged from this practice proceeded from the software concept of "cutting and pasting"—two fundamental approaches within computer operation.

More authors were experimenting while writing electronic texts and narrative works using combinatorics of hypertext: Mark Amerika, feminist hypertext writer Shelley Jackson, Olia Lialina, who dealt with interactive processual storytelling about love with an intertextual structure, and Yael Kanarek, who combines various forms of visual and textual narration with photos, created images and post-human cyborgs.

Web films originated in 1997—they may be generally characterized as video films shorter than three minutes and which can be located on the web. They were profiled on the basis of topics which occur in contemporary art, such as mass media and TV series criticism, narrative and documentary films, gender issues, the overlap of private and public space, social reality, questions intended for redefinition of visual art, etc. (Barry).

Flash and After Effects applications provided artists with extraordinary opportunities to develop film experiments into dynamic projects. Online distribution of music and radio formats and channels on the Internet, including experimental music (the MP3 format especially guaranteed high quality sound), originated at that time. For example, Alexei Shulgin launched the *386 DX* processual cyberpop project in 1998 and it is still up and running today. Like Vuk Ćosić, Shulgin posed questions concerning authorship in the digital environment and at the same time he signalled his withdrawal from the classical Net art scene (Greene 111).

Software art projects based on online communication rely on the audience's input into artistic statements interpreted by the author of the software. Software art is mostly made up of a community of similarly-minded artists and the recipients of their art. An open source code for anonymous users is exceedingly important for the development of software art related to specific software, which in this framework is considered as a cultural form. The free Linux operating system enabled innovative approaches, experiments, pluralistic artistic practices and creative cooperation, thus becoming a stimulating factor for the collective activities of many software engineers, artists and software culture supporters. In 1999 Linux was awarded the Golden Nica at Ars Electronica in Linz.

Software art, which is accessible in the public domain so that users can freely use its data, blurs the boundaries between art implemented by the author and by the audience, who become active perceivers, users and co-authors during the online communication. The visual structures and audio elements of these specific works are readily available so users can individually work with them and modify them according to their own visions (Greene 152–153). As an

analogy it can be said that in the same way as there are site-specific works for particular architectural premises, there are also net-specific works whose unavoidable premises is the network.

The *Nine(9)* project, which originated in 2003, is an exemplary demonstration of one of the most complex works of collective software. Its author is Graham Harwood, a member of the Mongrel formation. *Nine(9)* represents the collaboration between an artist and a group of users from various social contexts, providing the participants with the ability to create a mutually connected “knowledge maps”. The principle consists in the fact that links between nine maps are followed by automatically generated e-mails, which aim to form a connection among users, and at the same time Perl⁴ scripts search for other common features throughout the maps. Its leitmotif is a reaction to the social imbalance of users of graphically and medially produced software, such as Director and Photoshop which are most often designed exclusively for experts. *Nine(9)* aims to reinforce the democratic nature of the Internet, so that it can provide service to a wide general public. Thanks to the project *Nine(9)* groups or individuals can participate in the creation of texts, images and sound as well as being able to explore the social make-up of their communities by means of so-called knowledge maps.⁵ Multimedia maps involve a mixture of photos and other media published by the users.

Communiculture (2001), implemented by Josh On is a similar kind of work to that of Amy Franceschini and Brian Won from Futurefarmers. In contrast to the previous project, the audience can participate by contributing their own visual creations and thus forming an image; a graphic collage in a form of visual structure composed of varied image elements (Greene 165–166).

At the beginning of the twenty-first century net-based art tended more towards such cultural areas as tactical media (based on the do-it-yourself principle), free software and film using animation and video. The Internet as a common platform offered not only the ability to communicate and to express one’s thoughts on the basis of interaction, but it also enabled people to participate in the creation of a common work with an open processual structure.

In his *Untitled* (2001) installation in Postmasters Gallery, New York (Greene 173), Wolfgang Staehle pointed out the contemporary phenomena of the information society and the era of the satellite. The installation was based on the projection of images through the Internet from three web cameras in different locations during September 2001. The locations were the Comburg Monastery in Bavaria, the Berlin TV Tower and Lower Manhattan with a view of the World Trade Center Towers. Online projection on the gallery walls highlighted several aspects of contemporary life saturated by the media, such as the voyeurism and supervision of information technologies, the practices of mass media journalism as well as the form of artistic reality documentation, sketches of which were represented by individual projections.

4 #mm: Perl is a programming language, for more information see <http://www.perl.org/>.

5 *Nine(9)* is able to place 729 knowledge maps in total as soon as the content of the archive is displayed and the connection among users is accomplished, and each of nine groups involves nine archives with nine maps per archive. See Greene 167–168.

Peace and silence was symbolised by the Comburg Monastery and contrasted with the media symbol of the Berlin TV Tower and the pulsing economic-administrative heart of Lower Manhattan, which was struck by terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. When this shocking and tragic event was caught on the web camera which had been continuously recording this part of Manhattan until the end of the exhibition in October 2001, the paradox of coincidence added a new dimension to this work. What had been the classic image of modern day New York, a symbol of global capitalism and the city's characteristic dominant feature, had become history; it was the past. It had happened over several hours that were documented by Staehle's large-scale video. Several artists dealing with the significance of the Internet in the context of today's perception of a world colonised by the media are engaged in an exploration of the boundaries between the space of the Internet and the possibilities of mapping and the online visualization of people's motion in a real geographical environment and its actual online visualization.

Such works include the Slovenian artist Marko Peljhan's *Makrolab*, which was presented at *documenta X* in Kassel, and the *alpha 3.3* project (2001), created for *Documenta 11* by the Singaporean artists Charles Lim Yi Yong and Woon Ten Wei, known as *tsunami.net*. They used GPS (Global Positioning System) which mapped the artists' positions on their way from Kiel to Kassel through mobile phone and radio waves and it was recorded on the web. Thus the project became a location indicator of people's movements around various regions in real time.

In contrast to the generally valid principle that the Internet is an open space with a democratic approach for a broad community of users, Heath Bunting undermined this statement in his *Border_Xing* (2002) project when he made the network accessible only to participants from public spaces such as universities and Internet cafes and to people from marginalised nations such as Afghanistan and Iraq. This work focused on consumption and consumers' interests, and thematised the problem of geographical and national boundaries and the issue of free movement across them (Greene 176–178).

While on the one hand the increase in wireless networks in private and public space meant a shift towards the use of laptops, on the other hand it brought further reinforcement of community initiatives dealing with the creation of contextual knowledge maps and forms of networks. They explore questions relating to European bureaucracy, networks and governments, they analyse symptoms of contemporary capitalism and, within its framework, they document the relationships between various sources of financial power and the world's religions. At the same time they are engaged in research into sophisticated data processing.

From the viewpoint of a multifunctional Internet space platform, it is obvious that functions such as commercialisation and commodification are also among its components. Several works of various artists, who wittily highlight the form of electronic trade in works which refer ironically to personal mythologies, and who even insinuate the commodification of people's own personalities, often with racial overtones, may be mentioned in this context: Michael Mandiberg's *Shop Mandiberg* (2000–2001), John D. Freyer's *All My Life for Sale* (2001) and Keith Obadike's *Blackness for Sale* (2001) (Greene 181–185).

It may be said that information technologies are being demystified and domesticated, not just because of the Internet artists and their community of users. For their creations on the web the artists use various applications such as Flash, After Effects, Quick Time Player, Photoshop. Net art aesthetics brings instant news and visuals as well as audio-visual messages. New potential for the distribution of art and activism is thus being created. The New York artist Jonah Peretti coined the term “contagious media,” according to e-mail correspondence with the company focused on Nike sportswear production, which is connected to his critical views of this commercial sector, where the exploitation of workers is obvious as well as the views of the corporate information economy. In a way his works are a tribute to amateur and hobby web design, or more precisely they serve as an example of anti-design. In tandem with his sister and other colleagues he prepared the Internet project *Black People Love Us* (2002) within which he revealed, with a sense of social satire, the delicate forms of racism coming from white politically progressive and emancipated people towards black people (Greene 205).

Three-dimensional design is offered by computer games with dramatic and entertaining narrative variations, during which the storyline is influenced and completed by a player according to their ideas. Those formats are represented by various kinds of manifestations. They often meet the requirements for critical discourse and they comment on art and visual culture and deal with socio-political questions, eroticism or violence (Himmelsbach).⁶ The visually-thematic practices used in computer games are obvious, as in Matthew Barney’s *Cremaster 3* from 2002. In the role of open-minded trainee, Barney strives for his own salvation with only a limited time, and on his way up he climbs the spiral rotunda of Guggenheim’s Museum in New York. He has to overcome five steps which represent obstacles: to move around a group of tap-dancing girls—bunnies, to win a duel with some hardcore bands, to triumph over a seductive model who transforms herself into a beast of prey, to assemble a musical instrument similar to bagpipes and to clash with the master, played by the sculptor Richard Serra. Characteristic elements of computer games, such as running, climbing, jumping, throwing, descending and making the effort to reach the goal are dominant along with typical features of Barney’s video films, which include iconography, powerful visuality and a spectacular impression of the video.

Net art represents an important component of contemporary visual art; besides revitalising its forms through digital technologies and generating various experiments, it develops critical discourse about socio-cultural aspects of current life. It is an alternative to the production implemented through various expressions of visual culture that take part in reflecting and commenting on the changes of everyday reality. On the other hand it is necessary to bear in mind that the Internet and network with their multifunctional use have become a platform for information, communication and transmission. Besides functioning as an archive and encyclopaedia they also serve as a forum for mass cultural and commercial activities.

⁶ #mm: Available online at <http://www.yorku.ca/caitlin/futurecinemas/resources/coursepack/readings/interactive.pdf>. Date of access Aug. 18 2014.

Several Slovak and Czech Net art activities that are not yet seen frequently and are still searching for their position in media art will be mentioned.⁷ One is implemented by the Czech formation Silver which participated in the interactive project *Rose* (1997).⁸ Its subject matter is based on the fact that a code in form of algorithm, which was sent to the network, was processually modelled by communication participants who jointly created a collective work resembling abstract forms of a blossom.

The artist Markéta Baňková is the author of the Internet novel *City* (1998–1999) in which a labyrinth becomes a metaphor for a crowded city, within which each person represents a potential story. The hypertext of the novel branches out into multiple lines with no respect for either time or narrative linearity. The broken structures of the Internet novel are also being embroidered by playing with transformations of one's own identity and involving texts, images, animation and sounds interlaced with the participants' communications.

The Slovak artist Marek Kvetán demonstrated a subversive attitude towards the Internet as an endless source of information and uncontrollable data flow, when he deleted texts from chosen websites such as *Google*, *CNN*, *Microsoft* and *NASA* and he made completely new works out of them—computer prints without any texts and images in the spirit of minimalistic aesthetics. In a similar way he transformed websites with pornographic images of women in lascivious positions, and thereby he deconstructed them and made them into innocent, geometrically-abstract computer prints (*IDOC EROTIC 18 H*, 2004).

LENGOW & HE^{ye}RME^{ar}S Meet the Radio Artists made in 2000 by Lengow & HE^{ye}RME^{ar}S tandem (performer/publicist Michal Murin and aesthetician/philosopher Jozef Cseres) was the first Slovak radio performance implemented on the Internet in an international context. Yugoslavian, Hungarian, Austrian and Slovak artists were broadcasting live on the Internet from radio studios in Belgrade, Budapest and Vienna.

Similarly Pavlína Fichta Čierna implemented her contribution *Communicator* (2000) at the exhibition entitled *Manipulujúce umenie* in the Art Gallery of Považie, Žilina, as an online communication with visitors to the gallery. Visitors had a computer at their disposal to send the artists e-mails on her mobile phone through which she was answering them back. This form of permanent contact with the audience via mobile communication was extremely demanding for the artist who had to be continually on alert for several weeks, and thus had her privacy intruded upon.

⁷ #mm: The situation on the Slovak digital art and Net art scene is described more thoroughly in Rusnáková's latest texts, the publication *Rozšírené spôsoby diváckej recepcie digitálneho umenia* (Expanded Forms of Audience Reception of Digital Art; the chapter "Internet Art") and the study "Digitálne umenie na Slovensku v prvej dekáde 21. storočia: perspektívy a frustrácie I.–II." (Digital art in Slovakia in the first decade of the twenty-first century: perspectives and frustrations I–II). The Czech 1990s and 2000s authors and their current attitude towards Internet art in the era of Web 2.0 are dealt with in further detail in the following text "A Note on the Older Generation of Czech Net Artists" by Marie Meixnerová.

⁸ #mm: The spelling "Rose" is also preferred in *Dějiny českého výtvarného umění* (The History of Czech Fine Arts), the official portfolio states the spelling in capitals. The project is also referred to as *ROSE* by the founding member of the group Petr Svárovský. See Švácha and Platovská 922–926, Svárovský and Silver.

Henceforth the Internet platform remains an interesting global space, which provides Slovak artists with diverse creative opportunities to present innovative projects. There is no doubt that the significance of the Internet and Net art will continue to increase.

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386 DX (Alexei Shulgin, 1998) | <http://www.easylife.org/386dx/>

A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century (Donna Haraway, 1985)
<http://www.egs.edu/faculty/donna-haraway/articles/donna-haraway-a-cyborg-manifesto/>

- äda web* (Benjamin Weil, 1994) | <http://www.adaweb.com/>
- All My Life for Sale* (John D. Freyer, 2001) | <http://www.allmylifeforsale.com/>
- alpha 3.3* (Charles Lim Yi Yong, Woon Tien Wei /tsunamii.net/; 2001) | x
- Black People Love Us* (Jonah Peretti, 2002) | <http://blackpeopleloveus.com/>
- Blackness for Sale* (Keith Obadike, 2001) | <http://obadike.tripod.com/ebay.html>
- City.je* (Markéta Baňková, 1998–1999) | <http://www.bankova.cz/mesto/indexcz.html>
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- Documenta Done* (Vuk Āosić, 1997) | http://www.ljudmila.org/~vuk/dx/english/firm_home.htm
- Hot Pictures* (Alexei Shuulgin 1994) | x
- IDOC EROTIC 18 H* (Marek Kvetán, 2004) | <http://www.kvetan.net/?id=12>
- LENGOW & HE^{re}RME^{er}S Meet the Radio Artists* (Michal Murin, Jozef Cseres Lengow & HE^{re}RME^{er}S; 2000) | x
- My Boyfriend Came Back From the War* (Olia Lialina, 1996) | <http://www.teleportacia.org/war/war.html>
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- nettime* (1995) | <http://nettime.org/>
- Nine(9) Social Software Research Programme* (Graham Harwood /Mongrel/, 2000–2002) | x
- Rhizome* (1996) | <http://rhizome.org/>
- Rose* (Silver, 1997) | x
- Shop Mandiberg* (Michael Mandiberg, 2000–2001) | <http://mandiberg.com/shop/>
- The Digital Landfill* (Mark Napier, 1998) | <http://www.potatoland.org/landfill/>
- The Thing* (1991) | <http://the.thing.net/about/about.html>
- Web Stalker* (I/O/D 4, 1997) | <http://bak.spc.org/ioid/>

Marie Meixnerová | 2014

Czech artists mentioned in Rusnáková's texts may be seen as representatives of the older generation of Czech net artists (Meixnerová, "PAF Rewind"). Those authors were active in the Czech Republic during the 1990s and the beginning of the twenty-first century, i.e. before Web 2.0 (Meixnerová, "Maybe There Is Dark").¹ Afterwards many of them either went abroad or became active in different spheres of art, often as a result of a logical extension of their existing Internet production into other areas.

Besides the virtual unit Silver and Markéta Baňková, Michael Bielický and possibly a group of several artists from Brno could be included.

Silver

The group Silver was established in 1994 as a "virtual artist".² It was an unsettled entity, a virtual fictitious identity on the boundaries of art, science and technology. An implementation team responsible for creation of the work was formed for each project; the core of the group was Petr Svárovský (b. 1962) who figured in most projects (the term Silver is sometimes mistaken for Svárovský's creative character). Other artists participating in some of Silver's projects included Pavel Rejholec, Jan Stehlík, Milan Guštar, Petr Hejda, Monika Karasová, Alena Kupčíková, Martin Havnør, Hanne Rivrud, True Solvang Vevatne and Henrik G. Sundt.

Initially the group dealt with interactive sound installations, later with virtual reality, the Internet and code art, and finally with the technological possibilities and use of mobile phones and collaborative strategies as ways of shifting the borders of the art. Besides the already mentioned *Rose*, let us remember an earlier net art project *E-Flowers* (1996), a work on the boundaries of computer animations and Net art. According to Petr Svárovský, both works are from the branch of digital art which is interested in new aesthetic qualities brought by new technology, however *Rose* additionally involved a concealed political overtone—the look of the 3D structure was defined by the user's geolocation. A lot of people were surprised that the object may actually observe an observer and that its appearance may be modified according to an observer's nationality (Svárovský). Thus the project anticipated the forthcoming era of Internet surveillance.³

1 See the thematic chapter on Web 2.0 3. *Web 2.0—Brought Up on the Web We Think Differently* in this publication. Since several authors are still active and incorporate Web 2.0 tools in their work (such as for example Bielický), it would be confusing to call them "Czech Web 1.0" generation even if we meant artists who started their production during the period of Web 1.0 (i.e. ca before 2005) and therefore did not grow up with the Internet, but examined it gradually.

This locally defined appellation was created with no linkage to five generations of Internet artists talked about by the critic Josephine Bosma. See Bosma.

2 However, this term was never enforced in the Czech Republic, there were even some problems with the term "group." Silver was later registered as a trade mark. See Svárovský.

3 The term Internet surveillance stands for activities and data monitoring when using the Internet. Either legally or illegally, the overwhelming majority of users' activities and contents (both transferred and saved) can be and are monitored. See "Computer surveillance."

Since 2003 Svárovský has been living and working in Oslo, Norway. After response aesthetics, which he focused on in the 1990s, he became interested in connection aesthetics. Works such as *Trolley Singers*, the series *Some Evil Is Good* (*Visitor*, *Visitor Beta*, *Intrigue*, *Intrigue E*) and *Flirtman* are perceived by him as the continuation of Net art,

[..] but they are not covered under it [Net art], at least not in the way in which it is perceived in Europe. *Trolley Singers* is devoted to Bluetooth Ad Hoc Networks aesthetics; *Visitor* and *Flirtman* proceed from Ken Goldberg's works researching telepresentation. Apart from Net art it is neither about a fascination with new web browser aesthetics, nor about a political message, but it is about connection aesthetics. My later works still use the Internet, but they are focused on new areas (geolocation aesthetics) and they define new categories (Challenge, App Driven Event, App Driven Experience). I cannot say that my work still ranks among .net Art in this decade when "The Web Is Dead" (Svárovský).⁴

Markéta Baňková

Currently Markéta Baňková (b. 1969) is not active in the sphere of Internet art. She deals, according to her own words, "with science, be it its literary overlaps, popularisation or other forms" (Baňková, "Re: dotaz_antologie textů o net artu"). For her debut, the book of physical fables entitled *Straka v říši entropie* (The Magpie in the Realm of Entropy), she was awarded the Magnesia Litera Book Prize for the literary discovery of the year 2011.

The mentioned multimedia novel *City,je* (Rosie Šetková's fictitious diary), composed of forty-two web pages of texts, images, animations and sounds, was followed by her most famous and extensive web-based work *New York City Map* (1999–2002), which followed her art residency in the USA, and also by the digital video *Senses of Life* (2002) and by *Scribble* (2005). The last net art work presents a CNN hacked website which is overlapped by drawings—scribbles—that automatically respond to the main article's content and its most significant references and thus create an unpredictable, yet eloquent commentary.

Both the Prague branch of the Goethe Institute, which was established in 1990, and the Soros Center for Contemporary Arts in Prague have played a very important role in the sphere of new media art in the Czech Republic.⁵ It was the cooperation of the Prague Soros Center and the New York International Studio Program which enabled Markéta Baňková to attend a financially supported residency in New York City where her most famous

⁴ Svárovský's authorial deconstructive use of the term Net art was intentionally maintained in the quotation (.net art, .net Art as not un-functional alternative to the customary spelling Net.art, net art, Net Art, NET ART). See Anderson.

⁵ Lustigová states that the Goethe Institute in Prague participated in several symposia and exhibitions concerning new media; among other events, in cooperation with AVU, they annually organised the international symposium referring to Vilém Flusser, the philosopher, critic, media theorist and Czech native who significantly influenced the local artistic scene. After leaving Brazil, Flusser returned to the Czech Republic only once—to give a lecture in the Prague Goethe Institute in 1991. Soros Center for Contemporary Arts in Prague was established in 1992 with substantial support from George Soros, an American citizen of Hungarian origin, who financially supported the Center for a further ten years. See Lustigová 27–28.

work, the fictitious city map in HTML, originated. Her *New York City Map* is composed of texts, hyperlinks, authentic audio recordings, animations, documentary photographs, etc.; it contains 235 websites in total. According to Baňková, she strived to approach the New York atmosphere of chaos, alienation and a background of modern technologies, in combination with the filth of a big city and the misery of its homeless people (Baňková, "Home page;" Lustigová 81). As with Wolfgang Staehle, this project was affected by the World Trade Centre attacks, on the September 11, 2001 (Lustigová 81).

Michael Bielický

The work of Internet artists active in the 1990s was inevitably influenced by the fall of the Iron Curtain. The year 1989 and the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia caused extensive changes of a political, social and technological character, and new technologies including the personal computer entered the market. All of them came exactly in time for the extending technology of the Internet to become "a cardinal sign of an emerging post-industrial society" (Zemánek 903) and a symbol of the upcoming globalisation.

A significant phenomenon for new media in the Czech Republic at that time was also the return of emigrants who often started to work as pedagogues at newly established institutions—the reformed Academy of Fine Arts in Prague (AVU) (Michael Bielický) and the Faculty of Fine Arts, Brno University of Technology (Woody Vasulka, Petr Vrána, Stanislav Miller). (See Lustigová 22–29; Zemánek)

Michael Bielický (b. 1954) emigrated to Düsseldorf in 1968 and at the turn of the 1980s stayed mostly in the USA. After the Revolution, he returned to Prague where he spent several years. In 1991 he accepted an offer to develop the Studio of New Media at AVU, and was its head until 2006. Among his students was for example also Markéta Baňková. Bielický also cooperated with the Goethe Institute in Prague and acted as an advisor of the Soros Center.

As the former student and later the assistant of Nam June Paik, Michael Bielický is the author of many video installations, video sculptures and new media projects. In his work he connects traditional media with the exploration of virtual reality. He is the author of virtual teleperformances using GPS technologies—*Intelligent Mailman* (1992) and *Exodus* (1995) in which he instigated artistic research into virtual communication within the network (Zemánek 910). In the projects *Delvaux's Dream* (1996–1999) and *Room With a View* (1999–2000) he focused on virtual reality, in the interactive installation *This Year in Jerusalem* (2006) for Robert Guttmann's Gallery, Bielický connected Prague and Jerusalem in real time, using the technology for motion detection and the web camera. By means of motion detection devices, 3D models of gallery visitors were created. They were projected onto a screen where they were intermingled with the shots from a web camera installed by the Western Wall of Jerusalem. This composite picture was also transferred to the gallery website (Dolanová, "Tento rok v Jeruzalémě").

Since 2006 Bielický has worked as a professor of media art at Staatliche Hochschule für Gestaltung, Karlsruhe, Germany. He continues to create

projects with the character of monumental Net art installations connecting physical and virtual space. The projects *Falling Times* (2007, in collaboration with Kamila B. Richter and D. Reinbold) and *Columbus 2.0* (2008, in collaboration with Kamila B. Richter, A. Jungnickel, D. Reinbold and A. Siefert) thematise the world's news coverage, or more precisely, information acquisition and processing in an interactive way.⁶ The installation *Garden of Error and Decay* (2011, in collaboration with Kamila B. Richter) and the draft of the site-specific project for Ulm Minster (*Passage*, 2013) are receptive to the Twitter social network. The first responds to tweets concerning catastrophes; however, it also is influenced by the stock market and the immediate interference of installation visitors, who may modify its form by means of "shooting". The other installation posits a question concerning spirituality in the twenty-first century. Through poetic impulses, it mediates the spirituality which is inherent in contemporary Internet culture. The last project to date, the silent film *Why Don't We* (2013, in collaboration with Kamila B. Richter) used intertitles with tweets related to its visual part. The creative duo uses the term "Data Driven Narratives" to denote this kind of narration. After all, "nowadays the term Net art sounds kind of weird" (Bielický, "Re: dotaz").

Zdenek Mezihorák, Filip Cenek, InterVision Lab

Petra Lustigová also refers to Zdenek Mezihorák (b. 1969), Filip Cenek (b. 1976) and InterVision Lab, the group of artists from the Faculty of Fine Arts, Brno. According to Lustigová, Cenek and Mezihorák's multimedia Internet broadcasting (taking place since 1997) in cooperation with Tomáš Ruller and Luděk Skočovský, was perhaps the first Internet project in the Czech Republic (Lustigová 83). Their activities were followed by the Brno group InterVision Lab (Robert Mořkovský, Marek Szabó, Zuzana Růžicková, Ladislav Železný, under the supervision of Miloš Vojtěchovský and Keiko Sei) and their "net art streaming", live multimedia Internet broadcasts between 1999–2004 (Lustigová 101).⁷

In the history of Czech visual art from the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s, many "border cases" on the boundaries of Net art and computer art could certainly also be found that are not being paid attention in this anthology. They have already been dealt with in detail in various publications including here cited Švácha and Platovská's book on the history of Czech visual art and Petra Lustigová's elaborate Master's thesis.

⁶ Over a long period, Bielický dealt with the work of philosopher Vilém Flusser. In 1994 he made the experimental documentary *Vilém Flusser Flux* and also organised a number of symposia devoted to Flusser's legacy.

⁷ More web-based projects, mostly of a conceptual character including Internet gallery MAGDA (Pavel Pražák), originated in the 1990s at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Brno, in the Video-Performance-Media Studio under the supervision of Tomáš Ruller. For more information see Ruller, "The Story" and "Web-projects."

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Projects mentioned:

City,je (Markéta Baňková, 1998–1999) | <http://www.bankova.cz/mesto/index.html>

Columbus 2.0 (Michael Bielický, Andrea B. Richter, Andrej Jungnickel, Dirk Reinbold, Andreas Siefert; 2008) | x

E-Flowers (Silver, 1996) | x

Exodus (Michael Bielický, 1995) | <http://exodus.avu.cz/>

Falling Times (Michael Bielický, Kamila B. Richter, Dirk Reinbold; 2007)
<http://www.fallingtimes.info/>

Filum Terminal (Filip Cenek, Luděk Skočovský; 1997) | x

Garden of Error and Decay (Michael Bielický, Kamila B. Richter; 2013)
<http://www.gardenoferroranddecay.net/>

nettime (1995) | <http://nettime.org/>

New York City Map (Markéta Baňková, 1999–2002) | <http://www.nycmap.com/>

Rose (Silver, 1997) | x

Scribble (Markéta Baňková, 2005) | <http://www.initialnews.com/scribble/>

Why Don't We (Michael Bielický, Kamila B. Richter; 2013) | x

Internet Art: New Image Modes (Technology—Origins)¹

Katarína Rusnáková | 2005

[...]

Despite the short history of digital and Internet art, it is necessary to mention some of the fundamental events that were indicative of the mutually creative relationships between artists, scientists and technicians whose common efforts were to experiment in art, science and technologies. It is a known fact that progressive technologies were initially developed in military research and industry, as well as in research centres and the academic environment.

Cybernetics has been in development since the 1940s. Its founder, the American mathematician Norbert Wiener, focused on the comparison of divergent controlling and communication systems, such as the computer and the human brain, and within this framework he explored the symbiosis between humans and machines. In 1945 the military scientist Vannevar Bush published an expert article in the *Atlantic Monthly* journal, dealing with the functioning of analogue computer² called Memex. At the same time he circumspectly pointed out the possibilities of a globally used database as a prototype for the Internet. However, Bush's project was not implemented, and the first digital computer named ENIAC, which was big enough to fill a whole room, originated at the University of Pennsylvania in 1946. UNIVAC, the first digital computer, was intended for commercial purposes and was begun in 1951. A decade later, in 1961, Theodor Nelson invented the terms hypertext and hypermedia. The predecessor of the Internet—a communication network denying authority and negating a hierarchical system—was ARPANET, supported by the Pentagon and initiated in 1969 (Paul 8–10). However, two decades passed before the Internet was used on a mass scale. The World Wide Web—a global network of websites—began to develop in the 1990s. Hypertext is based on a database type within which various objects—texts, images, music, programs etc.—can be mutually combined in a creative way, and at the same time they are not dependent upon linearity and they enable their users to choose their own means of selecting information. Hypermedia express extension which, besides basic text segments, supports a combination of graphics, sound and video files. The web is partially a system of hypermedia, because it supports graphical hyperlinks and links incidental

1 #mm: This article is a short excerpt from the chapter “Digitálne a internetové umenie: nový režim obrazu” published in *V toku pohyblivých obrazov*. See Rusnáková 45–64. Modifications consulted with the author.

2 #mm: By the mid-1930s the great British mathematician and one of the founders of modern information science, Alan Turing, described a theoretical model of a digital computer, the so-called universal Turing machine (UTM). The concept of the computer was later put into practice by Turing and he also participated in its considerable improvement. He is the author of reflections on artificial intelligence, see Turing. The first Turing-complete electronic computer arose no sooner than ENIAC (Electronic Numerical Integrator And Computer). It was only in the 1940s and 1950s that the term *computer* underwent a semantic shift to mean a computing machine—before that the term denoted a human computer—a worker performing computations.

The fundamental importance to information science development had also Shannon's “A Mathematical Theory of Communication” which was published in the end of the 1940s, see Shannon. Warren Weaver later supplemented it with an interpretative essay, see Weaver and Shannon.

to sound and video files. Other important terms that entered the area of computer technology and culture were the terms space and interface, also abbreviated as HCI (Human-Computer Interface), which may mean either an interface or mutual relationship between a human and a computer. In 1968 Douglas Engelbart from the Stanford Research Institute introduced the idea of bit mapping, windows and direct manipulation by means of a mouse which served as an extension of a user's hand into data space (Paul 10).

In 1963 Ivan E. Sutherland suggested the first system of computer graphics—Sketchpad—which enabled users to directly manipulate images on a computer screen. In 1968 he crucially contributed to virtual reality when he developed HMD (Head Mounted Display). It was a new kind of interface which enabled interaction between a participant and a computer—the image on the screen reacted to participants in real time and made them enter the virtual world (Himmelsbach 530–531). In the 1970s the computer's main components—central processing unit, memory and control—were combined in one silicon chip.

In 1981 IBM introduced the personal computer which became a commonly accessible device in households of the Western world during the 1980s and 1990s.

Concerning the relationship between digital art and artistic avant-gardes as well as with neo-avant-gardes experimenting with technology, the crucial artistic movements and schools included Dada, Fluxus and Conceptual art. Within their frame of reference, frequent strategies involved dematerialisation, a shift from object to concept, appropriation, manipulation and recycling of the found image as a readymade; blurring the difference between the original and a copy and the principle of controlled coincidence. In this context it is necessary to mention a pioneering art theorist of Hungarian origin, György Kepes, the founder of the Center for Advanced Visual Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and whose activities were related to research into photography, experimental film and visual art, in relation to progressive technologies and computer use.³ From the 1960s more artists began to use it for their creative intentions. Michael A. Noll, Béla Julesz, Georg Nees and Frieder Nake were among the first to create computer-generated pictures similar to abstract drawings and suggestive of aesthetic forms of traditional media. They were presented at the *Computer-Generated Pictures* exhibition in the Howard Wise Gallery, New York, in 1965. At the same time, transformations of computer-generated visual forms by means of mathematical functions were being explored by the pioneer of computer graphics John Whitney who also dealt with experimental films created on this basis (films such as *Permutations*, 1967, and *Arabesque*, 1975) (Paul 15–16). Charles Csurí, who made his first digital images in 1964, contributed to the modern history of this area

³ Under the influence of László Moholy-Nagy, Kepes reoriented himself from photography towards abstract film. In 1937 he accepted L. Moholy-Nagy's invitation to join "The New Bauhaus" (Institute of Design, Chicago) and in 1946 became a professor of visual design at the School of Architecture and Planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). In 1951 he prepared a ground-breaking exhibition *The New Landscape* where he studied the connection between scientific visualization of models, free creation within computer graphics and a series of photos. See Vojtěchovský 258. Kepes was one of the first artists to work with the artistic application of lasers and holograms. See Néray 263–264.

of art also with his computer-generated animation *Hummingbird* (1967). Stan VanDerBeek also made a fundamentally important contribution to the development of computer art because he used digitally generated abstract pictures and strong dynamic movements of visual elements in his experimental films (*Poem Fields*, 1964).

[...]

Cooperation between the engineer Billy Klüver and Robert Rauschenberg, Andy Warhol, John Cage, Jasper Johns and Jean Tinguely, who established the E.A.T. group (Experiments in Art and Technology) in 1966, serves as another example of the mutual impulses between visual art and technology in a world context. E.A.T. was the first open platform for comprehensive cooperation among artists, engineers, programmers, researchers and scientists; such cooperation among people of various professions may be to a certain extent considered as a typical characteristic of digital art.

[...]

In the second half of the 1960s contemporary digital installations were preceded by light and audio environments which enforced expressive forms of the new machine aesthetic, and which not only fulfilled the attributes of dynamics, processuality and transformation, but also tended towards interaction and open systems of so called post-objects. In this context, the American historian and art critic Jack Burnham, author of the innovative articles “Systems Esthetics” and “Real Time Systems” published in the *Artforum International Magazine* (1968, 1969) was a key person who explored a system approach to art based on the creation of continuous mutual relationships between organic and inorganic systems (Paul 18; cf. Simon). Today this approach to art-as-a-system is enforced in a modified form within the framework of critical discourse on digital art. As a curator, Burnham prepared a progressive exhibition named *Software* in The Jewish Museum, New York in 1970.

In the 1970s artists were using new technology—video and satellites—for live performances and broadcasting. They foreshadowed the future functions of the Internet as a medium operating in real time and they bridged distances and geographical borders (e.g. Douglas Davis’ satellite telecast for more than twenty-five countries at *documenta VI*, Kassel in 1977, which included, apart from his own performance, contributions from Nam June Paik, Charlotte Moorman and Joseph Beuys). Robert Adrian’s event *The World in 24 Hours*, which took place in 1982, is another classic example of the category of projects dealing with communication technologies involving fax, television and radio. The nature of this project was that artists from sixteen cities on three continents were connected by means of fax, computers and video-phones for twenty-four hours and thus they were able to create and exchange their multimedia works during this time (Paul 21). These activities with the specific feature of creating mutual long-distance connections and transmission of information without the need for the participants to change locations are actually exemplary features of digital and Internet art, based on online communication.

In the 1970s and 1980s many authors, especially performance artists and video artists, explored techniques and new forms of depiction provided

by the computer—they were most interested in interactivity, feedback, the improvement of the technological base and of practices leading to virtual reality. Let's point out again that the character of digital art is hybrid—the boundaries among more disciplines; art, science, technology and design, are being blurred. In 1984 the term cyberspace, analogous to virtual reality, was taken from William Gibson's sci-fi novel *Neuromancer*.

Internet art which is also known as Net art (Baumgärtel) was, besides the online communication events and interactive projects that had their roots in the international movement Fluxus and in Conceptual art, preceded by Mail art.

[...]

Digital and Internet art can exist not only within the network's cyber space as a global socio-cultural space accessible to every user without geographical or any other restrictions, but it has also found its place in many media centres and art museums, such as the ZKM Karlsruhe (Zentrum für Kunst und Medien) and NTT's Intercommunication Center (ICC) in Tokyo. At the same time it has been presented at many festivals and exhibitions, such as Ars Electronica in Linz, the European Media Arts Festival in Osnabrück (EMAF), Transmediale in Berlin, the Dutch Electronic Arts Festival, Next 5 Minutes in Amsterdam, etc. (Paul 23).

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Projects mentioned:

- Arabesque* (John Whitney, 1975)
- Hummingbird* (Charles Csuri, 1967)
- Permutations* (John Whitney, 1967)
- Poem Fields* (Stan VanDerBeek, 1964)
- The World in 24 Hours* (Robert Adrian, 1982)

The Art of Communication: From Mail Art to E-mail

Dieter Daniels | 1994

When artists turn to a new medium, it often tests the limits of the definition of art. Given this premise, a comparison can be made between a few phenomena which seem quite disparate in contemporary practice and yet, under more detailed inspection, reveal closely related artistic strategies: the numerous forms of Mail art since the 1960s and the new approaches to art which use electronic networks and telecommunications methods. Currently several cultural indicators point to a bridging of the gap between the 1960s and the 1990s: the neo-psychedelic trend in the techno scene, fashion featuring bell-bottomed pants and platform soles, and the relationship between art and technology. It is difficult to formulate cultural oscillations such as these in precise terms, and yet a few principal themes clearly resurface in this transformation. Let us enumerate just three of these themes:

- The idea of a collective creativity, turning away from the cult of the individual genius which was cultivated just as much in the international abstraction of the 1950s as in the postmodernism of the 1980s.
- The attempts to find a non-commercial form of art which avoids established brokerage and marketing channels.
- The search for a form of worldwide, trans-cultural communication that could lead to such possibilities as “domination-free discourse.”

In the 1960s, some of these ideological approaches furnished decisive motifs to the artists experimenting with new media. It would be wrong, however, to say these approaches were limited to the electronic media, for at the time the goal was not so much media art as intermedia art, in which a multiplicity of new forms of expression were sought and created. Thus intermedia art dissociated itself from monopolized electronic mass communication and from established museum-centred art concepts. Today, we know that none of these approaches really brought about a decisive change in the existing conditions. Instead, the attempts to test the limits of the definition of art proved the enormous power of the existing structures to adapt to new conditions. For instance, the art market was certainly able to swallow the new art forms directed against it: the happening, Conceptual art and media art. Yet, as a result of the new approaches, one of the basic principles of the market could clearly be seen: that nearly all media, concepts and relics can be sold. All that matters is the marketable, prominent name which appears with the work in question.

Even if the failed utopias of the 1960s cannot simply be recycled for the 1990s, there are some positions which originated in this period whose trailblazing significance can only be seen in retrospect. The names associated with these

positions are not prominent father figures from the 1960s and evidence of their work has, for the most part, been spared the museum's process of reification. Ray Johnson and Mieko Shiomi are two artists, representative of many others, who have developed models for art as communication that do without electronic technology and yet serve in part to highlight the state of consciousness which the new media entail.

[...]

Even though [...] Mail art has to some degree become a hobby for obsessive archivists and club members, something palpable remains of its original, anarchic impulses. Ray Johnson's work already contains many elements which have come to full fruition within the network of artists he initiated: Johnson creates collective products which arise out of the voluntary and involuntary participation of others; in the process, he repeatedly changes his own identity under numerous pseudonyms and in his correspondence he establishes several half-fictional, half-real fan clubs and topic groups.

Many of these elements appear today in worldwide communication via the Internet. News groups, fan clubs, fictional identities and constant recycling and forwarding, as well as the combination of messages to form new information—these developments appear to represent an elemental fascination with complex communication structures—be it via post or the electronic web. In relation to this communication, postal mail has had, until now, the advantage of being able to facilitate the transmission of images and materials of any type, whereas until recently e-mail was confined to mere text in standardized ASCII code.¹ On the other hand, distribution through the digital medium is not confined to originals; every message can be transmitted and modified hundreds of times, without any loss or decay, and can be read and commented upon by everyone on the net. When new software (Mosaic, World Wide Web) makes the net multimedia-capable, this could well lead to a completely new dimension of worldwide montage from a collective world of texts, images and sounds.

Mieko Shiomi started out as a musician and through Nam June Paik she came into contact with the Fluxus movement in the mid-1960s. In 1964, she lived in New York for a short time, where she participated in Fluxus projects. She has lived in Osaka since 1965 and is an active participant in Fluxus. As a result of the distance between her and other Fluxus activists, communication across distance became a central element in her work. She says: "I found a new method for events—I saw the earth as a stage and used the post to present the same event with people in many countries, each with their own interpretations and additions to the piece. I then entered the participants' reports on a map of the world—that is how the series of *Spatial Poems* began" (Letter to the author).² In *Spatial Poem No. 1*, in 1965, every participant was called upon by mail: "Write a word on the enclosed card and place it somewhere." Perhaps the world map with its reports of results most clearly shows the international character of Fluxus as the first truly intercontinental art movement of the twentieth century. Shiomi's work, as

1 #mm: American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII code), originally set of 128 signs based on the English alphabet.

2 #mm: This historic document has incomplete source citations.

with Paik's, has a strong character of immateriality, which reveals its origins in music and in Asian thought. It combines approaches in Conceptual art and Mail art to form a new, global composition which anticipates aspects of telecommunication such as simultaneity and ubiquity. That is why her work has also led Shiomí to enlist telecommunications, as in the Fluxus Remote Festival held in 1994 in Osaka which featured international, simultaneous telephone contributions.

These comparisons cannot obscure the fact that there is a significant difference between Mail art in the 1960s and today's worldwide electronic communication. It is the difference between an artistic experiment and media-technological reality—a difference which is as unbridgeable as that between a bow and arrow and a machine gun. As with many innovations in media technology, the Internet has military origins, and yet in contrast with other technologies, it has primarily served scientific and cultural purposes. As an inter-university network, it has long been an indispensable source of information in the natural-sciences and technology areas. The leap to private users is currently taking place—meaning that it is now the artists' turn.

Approximately three years ago, a veritable boom in art projects using electronic networks began; only a few of these can be briefly sketched here. One of the pioneering projects is *The Thing*, initiated in 1991 in New York by the German-American artist Wolfgang Staehle, and with centres in Cologne, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt, Berlin, Vienna and London. Along with numerous discussion forums on art theory, news and gossip, as well as a few online versions of art periodicals, recently *The Thing* has also offered works of art in the form of graphics which can be downloaded from the web to a user's personal computer. It is art as shareware in a digital, unlimited edition, in exchange for a modest charge and with no storage problems if there is room on the PC's hard drive—undoubtedly a model with promise.

Staehle explicitly situates his theoretical roots in the 1960s and cites Joseph Beuys: "What mattered to Beuys was the social sculpture, an artistic production made jointly by a group or a community. *The Thing* is just such a sculpture: it realizes the Beuysian idea of direct democracy; of political community as social structure. At the same time, it represents an expansion of the notion of what constitutes art" (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, March 22, 1994).³ In the case of Beuys, in spite of good intentions, it led to a unique cult of genius surrounding the person of the master.

The project is also somewhat archaic insofar as *The Thing* attempts to set up an independent art network which to date, with its own hardware, has remained an autonomous unit outside the globe-encircling network structures of the Internet. To that extent *The Thing* has projected onto the electronic network the social situation of contemporary art with all its limitations.

Working on a server in the renowned high-tech forge of MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), the Austrian group HILUS has set up the *UnitN*⁴

3 #mm: This historic document has incomplete source citations.

4 #mm: *UnitN* was established in Vienna for three months (January 17–April 15, 1992). During this time it hosted twenty-seven presentations, projections, performances, conferences and networked events. For more, see *HILUS MATERIAL 92–96*, especially "HILUS—An Austrian platform for art and new technology."

room, which can be accessed via the Internet. It is a virtual exhibition, discussion and project space and the Berlin artist duo of Dellbrügge & de Moll were the first guests. Outside exhibition hours, people who enter the space, which consists of nothing more than a textual description and dialogues among users, are greeted by Victor and Nadine. After a while, however, these two turn out not to be associates but computer programs. What remains is the view from the window looking out upon an industrial district which, according to the description, can be thought of as “typical Vienna.” Indicative of the net projects named (and additional projects such as *Handshake* or *Museum für Zukunft* from Berlin) is that they operate under the name of a collective and are not beholden to the cult of the individual, which is otherwise the foundation of every artist’s career. Beyond doubt, in this regard there are features involved here which can also be found in Mail art and the idea of an open art work which comes into being only with the participation of the observer/user.

[...]

The German-American artist Ingo Günther takes art’s claim that it can provide a model for some future reality a step further, and develops the idea of an entire state constituted primarily via the electronic net: the *Refugee Republic* is intended to bring together the world’s nineteen million refugees to form a shared virtual state, providing them with a political organisation which can make them a “capital” for the rest of the world instead of a burden. The Refugee Republic “requires no national territory in the traditional sense.” Instead, one can “classify parts of the electromagnetic spectrum as quasi-territorial space, thereby making it the economic as well as the public-law basis for the Refugee Republic. The Refugee Republic is based on the shared property of difference and held together through worldwide information networks (Internet)” (Project paper 1993).⁵ If this sounds too speculative for some—especially in the truncated form in which it is presented here—they should recall Günther’s project of a pirate radio station in East Germany, which began in Leipzig in 1990 as *Channel X* and has now become a legal radio station. It will go into regular operation this year.

The fusion of TV and PC to form TV/PC will cast fundamental doubts on the location of the boundaries between individual media and mass media. Does this provide artists with the chance they have been waiting for to finally launch *their* artistic medium? Does it render void any notion of an opposition between a non-cultural mass media and a small, visionary community of artistic utopians? Is art today in any position to stake claim to political effectiveness, or need it do nothing further than satisfy the norms of self-imposed political correctness?

Doubtless, there are ideological bases common to the worldwide net community and Mail art. The catch words: “non-commercial,” “cooperative,” “open to everyone,” “anti-elitist,” “collective-creative,” “politically effective,” etc., enjoyed and still enjoy a high status within artists’ circles as well as among net freaks. Above all, it is the anti-commercial aspect which unites the idea of Mail art; it reaches its collectors with free delivery and carries the ethics of the Internet where, until now, the unwritten law has said that no

⁵ #mm: This historic document has incomplete source citations.

commercial offers or advertising will be fed into the mix. The net, growing and proliferating at colossal rates, “comes closer to genuine anarchy than anything before it” (Internet expert Clifford Stoll, *Spiegel* 32/1994).⁶ Given the enormous expansion of the web, however, the commercial pressure being exerted upon this enormous information potential is growing. Since there is—and this is the flip-side of anarchy—no law and no authority against commercial use, it will hardly be possible to put a stop to this process. But perhaps in this very respect, art is a step ahead of the communications media: In the art world it became apparent twenty years ago that these utopias come to an end the moment the system outgrows its small community of initiates.

This text was written in September 1994. It reflects the situation before the discussion about Net art started. The World Wide Web was not yet the domain of the New Economy and Ray Johnson was still alive.

First published in German as “Die Kunst der Kommunikation: von der Mail Art zur E-mail” in *Neue Bildende Kunst* 5 (1994): 14–18. Print. English translation published in Frohnepfel, Doris. *From Work to Word*. Köln: Korridor 2002.19–24. Print. (Abridged.)

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Refugee Republic (Ingo Günther, 1992) | <http://refugee.net/>

Spatial Poem No. 1 (Mieko Shiomi, 1965)

The Thing (1991) | <http://the.thing.net/about/about.html>

UnitN (HILUS, January 17–April 15 1992)

⁶ #mm: This historic document has incomplete source citations.

(The Artists of Net Art 1.0 Generation as a Specific Subculture)

Marie Meixnerová | 2012

The idea of Net art, as we know it today, strongly contrasts with Net art in its very beginnings. Therefore the following text will primarily introduce the first generation of net artists as a specific subculture working under specific conditions at the very beginnings of the Internet, before the World Wide Web was established.

In accordance with terminology used by German researchers,¹ for the purpose of this work I will refer to them as net pioneers. To understand their status it is necessary to specify the term Net art:

Net art, Internet art, net-based art, or NetArt (web-based art and web art narrow the term Net art down to the period after the establishment of the WWW in the mid-1990s) is a form of art² which may be presented *only in the Internet environment*³ (it has a non-material nature), and deals with computer networks and subject matter which is mainly the medium itself, the testing of its boundaries, and experiences with network and computer aesthetics. Net art is subordinated to the rules of cyberspace and it may be understood only in this context.⁴ Therefore Net art is not *art on the net*—which is a term that may denote any piece of art presented in its digitalized form on the Internet, which does not necessarily need this specific environment for its existence (e.g. photography, Baroque painting reproduction, film, ...). The term Net.art (net-dot-art) is related to a specific movement within the framework of Net art with activist overtones.

Now we will be interested in the period from the beginning of the 1990s to 1994/5 when the World Wide Web was established. This event significantly influenced artists' approaches and the nature of Net art. A specific form of Net art is typical for this period. It is distinctive for its social and communication aspects and the forms of artists' self-interpretation and self-determination from the outside world and artistic background; and it might be understood in the context of the world's avant-garde movements.

1 Compare Daniels and Reisinger 15–61.

2 I intentionally avoid the terms piece of art, work, performance, and possibly project; the area of Net art is too broad, therefore such denotation would be inaccurate. In the context of early Net art and Internet pioneers' activities it would be particularly misleading, as we will see later.

3 In some cases it may even be perceived offline, after being downloaded into a computer.

4 The similarity of Net art and web design which is highlighted by Zbieczuk (see "Net art" and "Web 2.0"), concerns later net artists and in the case of our net pioneers it is not fully relevant (an emphasis on the work-output as such and individualisation is more typical of the period after the advent of WWW than of the pioneer period introduced by Daniels and Reisinger). Despite it, for a certain completeness of the notion of Net art, let's paraphrase Zbieczuk anyway: According to him, any similarity between Net art and web design is more ideological than factual, the difference does not consist primarily of the question of one's own creation, but in the perception of the "wider experience," when the Net art community is typical of a critical attitude to the contemporary social situation.

Specific features of early Net art: community art

The early Net art was the domain of small, serried rings of insiders who were connected by their common fascination with the new medium, and especially by its communication possibilities. One fundamental element of their activities was absolute autonomy, both in an institutional⁵ and in a technical sense—before WWW started, they operated on their own systems, therefore their activities were not regulated and they did not have to conform to technical standards and protocols.

By its very nature, Net art does not have any geographical borders—thanks to the Internet, participants who are geographically as well as culturally very distant can communicate with each other and collaborate on projects. While it used to be unthinkable for artists to communicate across the continents in real time, now small and hermetically closed groups of a global character started to emerge. Within those groups geographical and national borders started to be blurred, thanks to the Internet, and English was their universal language of communication. However, one more crucial communication tool existed; many projects could be understood only by those who knew the source code and “computer language” and thus these people were able to reveal a hidden meaning, artistic pun, poem, allegory etc. in the wilderness of text symbols. Some projects were based on this language aesthetic (i.e. the important thing was not the transmitted meaning, but the beauty of its graphic form, its visual appearance on the screen).

At the beginning of the 1990s even those artists who were previously engaged in traditional institutionalized art, now entered cyberspace, and gallery curators were vainly searching for them for years.⁶ Let me point out that the Internet before WWW was reserved for the academic and military spheres (and a very small share for nerds and hackers). Our social groups of artists were created on individuals’ initiative and had the character of closed communities of people who knew each other in real life. Even if they later became acquainted⁷ on the Internet, it was not primarily about obtaining contacts and creating an Internet social network as we know it today, but it was more about extending an already existing network to the Internet. The described transition may be perceived as a smooth one, because artists already experimented with new technologies (such as television, fax, and telephone), collective authorship and interactive performances by means of technology in real time. Therefore Net art “was in the air” (Daniels and Reisinger). Now driven by the desire to examine the potential and limits of the new media, they embarked upon uncharted territory. The territory that they knew only from hearsay, the mysterious space called cyberspace.

The early projects had character of performances and the artwork was not any material output, which could be mediated to a third person (i.e. to somebody who did not directly participate in the project), but the act of communication itself, which was collective and the authors remained anonymous. It was

⁵ “This development took place in an autonomous situation as unusual for the media as it was for the art world at the time; the frame-works were not only independent of any art institution, but also existed outside state or commercial media control” (Daniels 28).

⁶ “For the rest of the art world, it was as if they had vanished into cyberspace” (Daniels 30).

⁷ Appropriately, they utilised multiple identities; the nature of the Internet art of that period was mostly collective and anonymous (Daniels 15–61).

community art. Here lies the essential difference between pioneers, the initiators of artistic frameworks, who often did not intend to create any art (in fact they were rather sceptical in this respect), and the second generation of net artists (who we encounter nowadays) who already exploited the formal and technological potential of the Internet and its innovative aesthetics, which is somewhat more individualistic, with specific pieces of art such as the outputs created by an individual, surviving through time and enabling their reception outside a closed community, and can be even exhibited in a gallery space.

In contrast, the activities inside small pioneering groups were not accessible to the general public, they were not understood by gallery owners and other artists and they were ignored by academia. Moreover those activities were not transferable to the audience (the act of participation and interaction was absolutely crucial). The individual projects were of a more socio-cultural than artistic character, and their results were organised infrastructures (artistic communities) lasting for several years (e.g. the most famous one was *The Thing*, based as an autonomous zone). The fact that the act of communication and its participants' relationships were considered as art is justifiable in the historical context—as Marc Ries points out: “Much of contemporary art has been moving away from the object. If the object is removed completely, then what is left are the relationships between participants” (72). A new kind of relationship, a coexistence, originated and was labelled as “planetary fellowship” by the British artist and theorist Roy Ascott (Ries 73).

Net pioneers in the context of the avant-garde movement: avant-garde as a subculture

The difference between two generations of Internet artists therefore consists not only in their general approach to creating art on the Internet, but mostly in their self-interpretation, mutual relationships among artists and in their independence from the outside world. In this sense the net pioneers bear the features of a thoroughbred avant-garde movement. In fact Dieter Daniels even identifies them as the last avant-garde.

There are several approaches to define avant-garde, in the same way as there are several phases in the life of an avant-garde movement (Ulver). Within the artistic world, avant-garde, in a way, represents a subculture which is characteristic of its own approach and attitude towards art and towards current artistic streams. The word *l'avantgarde* is derived from French military terminology of the eighteenth century and its literal translation is *vanguard* (Ulver 2). The avant-garde artists are truly ahead of their time and they anticipate further developments; at the same time they delimit themselves against the status quo in art as well as in culture and they reflect on it critically.

According to Crane a movement may be considered as avant-garde in relation to the contents as conveyed by its pieces of art, provided any of the following requirements are met: the artwork “(1) redefines artistic conventions,” “(2) utilizes new artistic tools and techniques,” or

“redefines the nature of the art object, including the range of objects that can be considered artworks” (237). In relation to the conveyed social contents, some of the following requirements must be met: artworks carry “(1) social or political values that are critical of or different from the majority culture,” the movement “(2) redefines the relationship between high and popular culture,” or it “(3) adopts a critical attitude toward artistic institutions” (237–238). Finally, in relation to production and distribution, “if it does any of the following: (1) redefines the social context for the production, in terms of the appropriate critics, role models, and audience; (2) redefines the organisational context for the production, display and distribution of art (for example, the use of alternative spaces; the attempt to create ‘unsaleable’ art works); (3) redefines the nature of the artistic role, or the extent to which the artist participates in other social institutions” (238).⁸ As is obvious from the above information, we can agree with Dieter Daniels and consider the net pioneers as an avant-garde movement. As Pietrasová sums up in her work,

This movement’s main characteristics were the Internet as a newly discovered communication space for sharing and exchanging thoughts, a criticism of consumerism and the commercialisation of art (Net.art [sic!] as a generally accessible non-commodity form of art), as well as an optimism resulting from the globalised possibilities of the Internet in re-creating society.

However, “[i]n order for a group of artists to be defined as engaging in activities associated with the avant-garde, they must first of all have some degree of awareness of one another as a social group” (Crane 239).

This requirement was (but for isolated cases) also met (see establishing groups, collective authorship...).

Moreover the feeling of “being avant-garde” and the impression that their own age was being outrun by them was shared by many artists (Ries; Daniels). According to Daniels, it was as a specific reaction to the artistic world of that age that the net artists dissociated themselves from it (interviews with early artists suggest that this dissociation was bidirectional) and they moved towards new technology.⁹

Daniels specifies three points of contact, on the basis of which net pioneers 1.0 may be identified as an avant-garde movement and their status as a subculture within the framework of artistic universum can also be confirmed:

- Construction of an independent, partly self-designed technological infrastructure.
- Formation of a self-organized, networked community, and the collective design and testing of a corresponding model of discourse.
- Development of a form of art specific to the network, exploring the medium’s potential in an experimental, self-reflective way (26–27).

⁸ Translator’s note: All citations from Crane in this publication were reproduced from the English original: Crane, Diana. *The Transformation of the Avant-Garde*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987. 14–15. Print.

⁹ Criticism of the “bourgeois” conception of art, its commercialisation and institutionalisation in the same way as the conception of artist-genius, was common to most pioneering projects; art was intended for everyone, easily accessible, “guard dogs” of artistic world were circumvented.

Daniels is particularly fascinated by the close connection of these three factors as observed in the case of net artists before 1995. The approaches of individual projects' to authorship and the participants' social interaction were different to a certain extent. This was most obvious after 1995 when a new user interface was established, which led to commercialisation, standardisation and the fact that the Internet became crowded. The medium, previously unapproachable by the public, has become, by means of the World Wide Web's user-friendly interface, a mass medium for all—which has significantly influenced the community spirit of Internet art. "After Internet access was commodified in the second half of the 1990s, net-based art no longer had to operate its own technological infrastructure, and with this the idea of a self-determined community waned" (Daniels 33).

Some Net art projects moved to the WWW, others disappeared. Some projects continued, but at the same time they were distanced from their self-interpretation as art. Great number of participants made participation in the same way as before—with the cooperation of a small group of participants—impossible. This gradually led to the transformation of the Internet art into as we know it today, via the work of the second generation of net artists.

Many researchers consider this period (i.e. after 1995) to be the origin of Net art in the proper sense of the word.¹⁰

The unedited version was first published in Czech in the online film and new media magazine *25fps* as: Meixnerová, Marie. "NetArt před WWW: PLANETARY FELLOWSHIP." *25fps*, 25fps, Feb. 7 2013. Web. Sept. 14 2014.

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¹⁰ #mm: The sorting of net artists into notional generations develops and vary with individual authors. While in this texts are as the artists of the first generation meant Internet art pioneers, in the following curatorial text by Domenico Quaranta are as the first generation considered only the first artists creating in the WWW era, and the artists of Web 2.0 generation as the second one. Meixnerová labels as the second generation the artists making net-based works from after the advent of WWW till her text was written. She does not consider post-Internet artists.

Ries, Marc. "Rendezvous: The Discovery of Pure Sociality in Early Net Art." *Netpioneers 1.0—Contextualising Early Net-Based Art*. Ed. Dieter Daniels and Gunther Reisinger. Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2010. 65–79. Print.

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———. *Web 2.0 – charakteristika a služby*. MA thesis. Masaryk University in Brno, 2007. Print.

Projects mentioned:

The Thing (1991) | <http://the.thing.net/>

2. Net.art

[...]J8~g#||;Net.Art{-^s1 [...]

#net.art #legends #manifestos

Within Internet art, Net.art (net-dot-art) represents a distinct movement with activist tendencies that existed between 1994 and 1999. Net.art is neither equivalent nor opposite to Net art—many artists created net-specific art works in the same era without any connection to Net.art (Dietz). The central figures of the movement were European artists of Russian origin Olya Lialina (b. 1971) and Alexei Shulgin (b. 1963), British artist and activist Heath Bunting (b. 1966), Slovenian artist Vuk Ćosić (b. 1966) and the Dutch-Belgium duo Jodi (Joan Heemskerk /b. 1968/ and Dirk Paesmans /b. 1965/). There is no definitive list of net.artists or formal requirements Net.art should fulfil (Adrian). The movement was not governed by a systematic set of principles, but rather consisted of a loose group of Internet artists and theorists who worked closely together and placed themselves under the banner of Net.art, although their work was substantially different. They were characterized by a specific approach to technology, investigations of aesthetic, linguistic and interactive possibilities offered by the web, discussion of issues of curatorship and a distinctive anti-institutional policy towards creating art (Olson). The latter was connected to an effort to avoid excessive theoretical speculations about the form of the “true” Net.art,¹ to deliberately obscure dates of origin, and to contradict the language and development of a mythology, an action which hinders the work of historians.

The term Net.art is attributed to Slovenian net.artist Vuk Ćosić. Discovered in 1995 when generated by an accidental software error, it seemed an ideal label for the already existing practices in art and communicative activities on the Internet. It was not only self-defining, but also self-ironizing (the word “art” functions in the term Net.art similar to file format extensions such as .txt, .pdf, .doc etc.) and confusing at the same time. The resemblance to terms such as Video art that denote art practice defined by the medium employed,² led to a small etymological confusion. Although net.artists used the Internet or the World Wide Web as a medium to be experimented with, it mostly represented the *place* where art was happening (Quaranta 24). The Internet was not only a creative tool, a medium in the technological sense and material (Sakrowski 211), but a necessary condition, a topic and a means of expression (Blank, Quaranta 24).³ An important text, the manifest *Introduction to net.art (1994–1999)* written by Russian artists Alexei Shulgin and Natalie Bookchin in 1999, was sculpted into marble for the exhibition *netcondition* (1999) by German artist duo Joachim Blank and Karl-Heinz Jerone, and became one of the very first physical works of Internet art (Quaranta 25).

The Internet mailing list *nettime*, through which artists and theorists communicated and where academic discourse took place, played an important role in the introduction of the term Net.art. *Nettime* was founded in 1995 by Dutch media theorist and critic Geert Lovink and Berlin artist Pit Schultz. As a mailing list devoted to Internet culture and criticism, *nettime* attracted attention to art on the Internet and shaped the Net.art movement (Paul 112).

1 David Garcia calls attention to the fact that similar discussions about Video art brought it to an end. See Adrian.

2 Cf. Antin 174.

3 Curator Steve Dietz points out the danger of considering the Internet as “merely another tool” in his commentary to the online exhibition *beyond.interface* in 1998: “what matters is not so much *which* media an artist uses [whether it is a web page, a system of lead pipes or a reverse-remediated sculpture], but *what* she does with them [that is, she reacts to her experience with the worldwide network].” See Dietz.

In this publication, three contributions are devoted to Net.art. In his text from 2005, Italian critic, curator and teacher Domenico Quaranta deals with the mythopoetics of Net.art in relation to the context of art and history, in particular the Dada movement. The manifest *Introduction to net.art (1994–1999)* testifies to the state of Net.art in 1999 and anticipates several fundamental transformations that the complex relations between production, reception and monetisation of Internet art underwent in the following years. Alexei Shulgin explains the origin of the term Net.art in his message sent on Tuesday March 18, 1997 via the electronic mailing list *nettime*. This contribution is reprinted in this book in its original form, including the graphical layout—it is both a good example of a mailing list and a reproduction of a “historical document.”

#mm

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The Legend of Net.art

Domenico Quaranta | 2005

This text was written in 2005 for the catalogue of the show CONNESSIONI LEGGENDARIE. NET.ART 1995–2005, conceived by Luca Lampo ([epidemiC]) and organized in Milan by Luca Lampo, Marco Deseriis, 0100101110101101.ORG and myself. It was the first large-scale exhibition I was involved in, and I'm still profoundly indebted to it and the brand new perspective it gave me. CONNESSIONI LEGGENDARIE was probably the first serious attempt to talk about Net.art as avant-garde, and to relate and document its stories, rather than depotentiating it by bringing its bits and pieces to the gallery space. Unfortunately, the catalogue was in Italian, and the exhibition didn't reach the international audience it was meant for.

Mythology has always played a vital role in art and its narrative. From Leonardo to Duchamp, Caravaggio to de Chirico, Shakespeare to Jarry, all the greatest artists have knowingly encouraged the creation of a legendary superstructure around their identities, with the active participation of historians, narrators and their contemporaries. Few of them have managed to live their legends to the full: more often than not they have cleverly manipulated reality by using the means of communication at their disposal, by effortlessly donning their carefully constructed personalities on all public occasions, while jealously guarding their private lives and concealing their own fragile truths behind armour of mystification.

Historic avant-garde movements painstakingly perfected the weaponry of mystification and constructed solid castles on foundations of thin air: just think of Arthur Cravan, the anarchic Dadaist performer, and Jacques Vaché, a posthumous legend created by the Surrealists out of an epistolary exchange. The avant-garde movements get the credit for having transferred mythology from the individual plane of “genius” to the collective arena, lending the narration of the legend an unassailable coherence.

From this point of view, Dada is a case in point: the narrative constructions overlap, intersect, and contradict each other, but the historic truths they conceal remain out of reach. It was precisely this that transformed a group of mischief-makers, with little to contribute on the aesthetic front, into the most disruptive avant-garde movement of the twentieth century. It would obviously be meaningless to explore Dadaism and not the legendary superstructure it created around itself: the mythopoesis is an integral part of the oeuvre, and one cannot exist without the other. A more sophisticated critic would go so far as to say that the construction of a legend becomes a necessity from the moment in which a work of art loses its “aura”: the alternative is to become a mere product, with no added value.

Throughout the twentieth century mythopoesis was the strategy of choice used by all the movements which opposed the other great mechanisms for the legitimisation of art without an aura: the market and the museum. Strangely enough, as the myth-making machine perfected its tactics, it increasingly

went underground, taking us from Dadaism to Fluxus to Situationism, Punk, Neoism and Luther Blissett. Meanwhile, contemporary art was becoming ever more prosaic and incapable of forging superstructures. The exception that confirms the rule is Young British Art: a weak legend built around the stereotype of a group of “mad, bad and dangerous” youths by a talented advertising executive, in order to support a precise financial strategy.

All of which leads us to the fact that, at the beginning of the 1990s, when a small group of artists scattered around the globe began experimenting with the Internet, they found themselves in an ideal position to fashion a new legend. And they exploited the situation perfectly, giving rise to the greatest artistic set-up of the twentieth century. Net.art, to be precise. But one thing at a time.

Working in an accessible, distributed medium, where the concepts of copy and original no longer have meaning, and property does not exist, the first net.artists were in no position to rely on the legitimisation mechanisms of trade and exhibiting, which they already had a number of reservations about. On the other hand, they now had an extraordinary means of distribution and communication which forged a direct link between sender and receiver.¹ This enabled them to reach a wide public, and they could manipulate people, the other media and the main vehicles of information with equal ease. Here was a medium that went so far as to encourage the creation of fictitious identities, because “on the web, no-one knows you’re a dog.”² The medium had already shown its potential in spawning legends such as Condor—the elusive hacker Kevin Mitnick. It enabled people to work in networks, giving a small group of ground-breaking artists global connotations, and lending their work unprecedented impact.

So browsing through the “deposits” of Net.art today, namely the archives of historic newsletters such as *nettime*, *7-11*, *Rhizome* and *Syndicate*, the art historian gets the impression of perusing a heroic age recounted in real time by scores of poets who constructed their own legends piece by piece. This was done with a sense of irony befitting a postmodern avant-garde movement, and it merely multiplied the levels of mystification. They did it with the active participation of militant criticism, which robs anyone who attempts a reliable reconstruction of events, of even the barest glimmer of truth. Every e-mail, every essay, every interview, is another piece in the puzzle. As is this book.

Net.art produced and challenged the legend of its own genesis, the phrase “automatically generated by a piece of malfunctioning software” (Shulgin); and recounted its first faltering steps; the meeting in Trieste (May 1996) and the London conferences in 1996 and 1997. It laid claim to founding fathers without ever taking a paternity test, and it told its own story, step by step, presenting us with a conveniently pre-packaged version; it predicted the outcome of its encounter with the art world, and its own precocious gallery

1 #mm: The terminology “sender” (the one sending the information) and “receiver” of information comes from the Shannon-Weaver Mathematical Theory of Communication which was key for cybernetics. (Its diagram closely resembles the 1997 MTA *Simple Net Art Diagram* reprinted in the Appendix of Images.) This linear model of communication is typical for Net.art as network art, and for other phases of Internet art we would have to look instead for transactional or ritual models.

2 #mm: Paraphrase of the famous 1993 “On The Internet, Nobody Knows You’re a Dog” cartoon by Peter Steiner for *The New Yorker*.

debut; it told of its own death and built itself an impregnable mausoleum, where its mortal remains attempt to crumble into dust, because this is the only way to ensure a legend has true staying power.

Inconsistencies and contradictions, as we learned from Dada, are an integral part of this hall of mirrors: enabling Alexei Shulgin to pronounce Net.art dead, while continuing to produce unforgettable projects; and allowing 0100101110101101.ORG to hide their identity behind a series of zeros and ones while at the same time adopting a form of explicit openness that bordered on the pornographic, as in the project *Life Sharing* (2000), which granted the viewer complete access to their computer; and for Vuk Ćosić to write: “My next idea is to set up an initiative where the greatest number of finished works by net.artists will be collected on a DVD and given to web masters to create mirror sites. At the same time I am starting my career as an artist, which makes this project impossible” (“One Artist One Art System”).

As the legend was a collective invention, it is clearly impossible to identify individual contributions. We focus on a few, from which it is possible to select a number of particularly meaningful examples. Vuk Ćosić, allegedly responsible for coining the term “Net.art”—allegedly, because as a self-respecting Dadaist he did not invent the term but came across it—has adopted a Duchampian attitude that has taken him from his first brilliant experiments to almost total inactivity. And we had been warned: “I go to the conferences. That’s Net.art actually” (Ćosić, “Vuk Cosic Interview”). The former archaeologist turned net.artist and media archaeologist makes speeches on Net.art with the same nonchalance that Duchamp made art while playing chess. And he is in excellent company in this ironic form of self-historicisation. Alexei Shulgin has inscribed his definition of Net.art, his story, his rules and even his future on genuine Tables of the Law, erecting a monument *aere perennius*,³ as Horace would have put it.

When Net.art first made it into the galleries, Olia Lialina responded by setting up her very own made-to-measure museum online. While Jodi, the first mythological creature of Net.art, the black hole that terrified, exalted and amused thousands of Internet users, studied ways of getting their own legend into real-life gallery and museum venues, 0100101110101101.ORG, with the collaboration of a wider network known as d-i-n-a, organized events and invited the tutelary deities of their own highly (im)personal pantheon, under the telling title of the *Influencers*. And in 2003, less than a decade after the beginning of our story, Josephine Bosma was already talking about a kind of nostalgic revival of Net.art’s heroic period, in the context of a show meaningfully entitled *An archaeology of net.art*. Like every self-respecting legend, Net.art has its heroic episodes: the theft of the *documenta X* site, perpetrated by Vuk Ćosić; the digital hijack etoy used to reveal itself to the world;⁴ the stunt pulled off by Cornelia Sollfrank, who managed to fool one of the first institutional attempts to come to grips with Net.art, by generating more than 200 female net.artists out of thin air.

3 #mm: Latin *more lasting than bronze*. The manifesto by Alexei Shulgin and Natalie Bookchin “Introduction to net.art (1994–1999)” (reprinted also in this publication) was carved into stone by Blank & Jerone in 1999. Cf. “Dump Your Trash.”

4 #mm: The users’ virtual kidnapping via manipulated search engines. See Daniels 43.

In *Toywar*,⁵ Net.art won its battle against the corporate baddies, and 0100101101010101.ORG captured international attention in the space of a few months with a series of masterful thefts, thus becoming the Bonnie and Clyde of Net.art. Notable too were the front page stories relating the feats of The Yes Men and *Vote Auction*.

Before concluding, there is one last question to answer: is Net.art really dead? Obviously not. Its death, like its birth, is part of the legend, and the reality is very different. There are no movements that are born and then die. Here we have an oscillating flow of experiments with the media and new technologies which spans the second half of the twentieth century and extends into the new millennium. It is a flow made up of isolated experiences, key encounters and episodes of networking, with heroic battles and with times when things fell into line with market forces. A flow in which the legend of Net.art represents the great, indisputable masterpiece.

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- Documenta Done* (Vuk Ćosić, 1997)
http://www.ljudmila.org/~vuk/dx/english/frm_home.htm
- Influencers* (2004) | <http://theinfluencers.org/>

⁵ #mm: Toywar refers to exhausting domain-war between the etoy collective and eToys Inc. in the late 1990s and to the creative artistic project thanks to which this war was ultimately won by etoy. For more information see “The Toywar Story.”

Life Sharing (0100101110101101.ORG, 2000–2003)

nettime (1995) | <http://nettime.org/>

Rhizome (1996) | <http://rhizome.org/>

The Digital Hijack (etoy, 1996) | <http://www.hijack.org/>

Natalie Bookchin, Alexei Shulgin | March–April 1999

1. net.art at a Glance

A. The Ultimate Modernism

1. Definition

- a. net.art is a self-defining term created by a malfunctioning piece of software, originally used to describe an art and communications activity on the Internet.
- b. net.artists sought to break down autonomous disciplines and outmoded classifications imposed upon the practices of various activists.

2. 0% Compromise

- a. By maintaining independence from institutional bureaucracies
- b. By working without marginalization and achieving a substantial audience, while having communication, dialogue and fun
- c. By implementing paths away from entrenched values arising from structured system of theories and ideologies
- d. T.A.Z. (temporary autonomous zone) of the late [19]90s: Anarchy and spontaneity¹

3. Realization over Theorization

- a. The utopian aim of closing the ever widening gap between art and everyday life was perhaps achieved for the first time and became a real, everyday, routine practice.
- b. Beyond institutional critique: whereby an artist/individual could be equal to and on the same level as any institution or corporation.
- c. The practical death of the author

B. Specific Features of net.art

1. Formation of communities of artists across nations and disciplines
2. Investment without material interest
3. Collaboration without consideration of appropriation of ideas
4. Privileging communication over representation
5. Immediacy

¹ #mm: Refers to the temporary spaces that elude formal structures of control (spatial, temporal and imaginary) as defined by Hakim Bey in his 1985 eponymous text concerning various social relations and activities and natural creative activities that are outside control from above and resistant to any totalitarian regime. See Bey and "Hakim Bey and Ontological Anarchy."

6. Immateriality
7. Temporality
8. Process based action
9. Play and performance without concern or fear of historical consequences
10. Parasitism as Strategy
 - a. Movement from initial feeding ground of the net
 - b. Expansion into real life networked infrastructures
11. Vanishing boundaries between private and public
12. All in One:
 - a. Internet as a medium for production, publication, distribution, promotion, dialogue, consumption and critique
 - b. Disintegration and mutation of artist, curator, pen-pal, audience, gallery, theorist, art collector, and museum

2. Short Guide to DIY net.art

A. Preparing Your Environment

1. Obtain access to a computer with the following configuration:
 - a. Macintosh with 68040 processor or higher (or PC with 486 processor or higher)
 - b. At least 8 MB RAM
 - c. Modem or other Internet connection
2. Software Requirements
 - a. Text Editor
 - b. Image processor
 - c. At least one of the following Internet clients: Netscape, Eudora, Fetch, etc.
 - d. Sound and video editor (optional)

B. Chose Mode

1. Content based
2. Formal
3. Ironic
4. Poetic
5. Activist

C. Chose Genre²

1. Subversion
2. Net as Object
3. Interaction
4. Streaming
5. Travel Log
6. Telepresent Collaboration³
7. Search Engine
8. Sex
9. Storytelling
10. Pranks and Fake Identity Construction
11. Interface Production and/or Deconstruction
12. ASCII Art
13. Browser art, Online Software art
14. Form Art⁴
15. Multi-User Interactive Environments
16. CUSeeMe, IRC, E-mail, ICQ, Mailing List Art

D. Production

3. What You Should Know

A. Current Status

1. net.art is undergoing major transformations as a result of its newfound status and institutional recognition.
2. Thus net.art is metamorphosizing into an autonomous discipline with all its accoutrements: theorists, curators, museum departments, specialists, and boards of directors.

B. Materialization and Demise

1. Movement from impermanence, immateriality and immediacy to materialization
 - a. The production of objects, display in a gallery
 - b. Archiving and preservation
2. Interface with Institutions: The Cultural Loop
 - a. Work outside the institution
 - b. Claim that the institution is evil
 - c. Challenge the institution

² #mm: The genres are largely based on personal experience of the manifesto's authors, and quite faithfully reflect the possibilities of Internet art between 1994 and 1999.

³ #mm: Compare Roy Ascott's 1990s telepresence and VR systems.

⁴ #mm: "Form Art" is a "new art form based on Internet technology" that was invented by Alexei Shulgin, see Shulgin and his project Form Art.

- d. Subvert the institution
 - e. Become an institution
 - f. Attract the attention of the institution
 - g. Rethink the institution
 - h. Work inside the institution
3. Interface with Corporations: Upgrade
 - a. The demand to follow the trail of corporate production in order to remain up-to-date and visible
 - b. The utilization of radical artistic strategies for product promotion

4. Critical Tips and Tricks for the Successful Modern net.artist

A. Promotional Techniques

1. Attend and participate in major media art festivals, conferences and exhibitions.
 - a. Physical
 - b. Virtual
2. Do not under any circumstances admit to paying entry fees, travel expenses or hotel accommodations.
3. Avoid traditional forms of publicity, e.g. business cards.
4. Do not readily admit to any institutional affiliation.
5. Create and control your own mythology.
6. Contradict yourself periodically in e-mail, articles, interviews and in informal off-the-record conversation.
7. Be sincere.
8. Shock.
9. Subvert (self and others).
10. Maintain consistency in image and work.

B. Success Indicators: Upgrade 2

1. Bandwidth
2. Girl or boy friends
3. Hits on search engines
4. Hits on your sites
5. Links to your site
6. Invitations
7. E-mail
8. Airplane tickets
9. Money

5. Utopian Appendix (After net.art)

A. Whereby individual creative activities, rather than affiliation to any hyped art movement becomes most valued.

1. Largely resulting from the horizontal rather than vertical distribution of information on the Internet.
2. Thus disallowing one dominant voice to rise above multiple, simultaneous and diverse expressions.

B. The Rise of an Artisan

1. The formation of organisations avoiding the promotion of proper names
2. The bypassing of art institutions and the direct targeting of corporate products, mainstream media, creative sensibilities and hegemonic ideologies
 - a. Unannounced
 - b. Uninvited
 - c. Unexpected
3. No longer needing the terms “art” or “politics” to legitimize, justify or excuse one’s activities

C. The Internet after net.art

1. A mall, a porn shop and a museum
2. A useful resource, tool, site and gathering point for an artisan
 - a. Who mutates and transforms as quickly and cleverly as that which seeks to consume her
 - b. Who does not fear or accept labelling or being unlabelled
 - c. Who works freely in completely new forms and older more traditional forms
 - d. Who understands the continued urgency of free two-way and many-to-many communication over representation

First published in English as Bookchin, Natalie and Alexei Shulgin. “Introduction to net.art (1994–1999).” *Easylife.org*. N.p., April, 1999. Web. Sept. 17 2014.

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Form Art (Alexei Shulgin, 1997) | <http://www.e3.hu/collection/form>

Nettime: Net.art—The Origin

Alexei Shulgin | 1997

- *To:* nettime-l {AT} Desk.nla
- *Subject:* nettime: Net.Art - the origin
- *From:* alexei shulgin <easylife {AT} hawk.glas.apc.org>
- *Date:* Tue, 18 Mar 1997 01:05:08 +0300
- *Organisation:* moscow wwwart centre
- *References:* <Pine.SUN.3.95.970308103406.11504C-100000 {AT} unix1.netaxs.com>
- *Reply-To:* easylife {AT} hawk.glas.apc.org
- *Sender:* owner-nettime-l {AT} Desk.nl

I feel it's now time to shed light on the origin of the term - "net.art".

Actually, it's a readymade.

In December 1995 Vuk Cosic received a message from an anonymous sender.

Because of the incompatibility of software, the text was practically unreadable ascii abracadabra.¹ The only fragment of it that made any sense looked something like:

```
[...] J8~g#\;Net. Art{-^s1 [...]
```

Vuk was amazed and excited: the net itself had given him a name for the activity he was involved in! He immediately started to use this term. After a few months he forwarded the mysterious message to Igor Markovic, who managed to correctly decode it. The text was a controversial and vague manifesto in which the author accused traditional art institutions of committing every possible sin. He/she declared freedom of self-expression and independence for all artists on the Internet.

The part of the text so strangely converted by Vuk's software was (quotation by memory):
 "All this becomes possible only with emergence of Net. Art as a notion becomes obsolete...", etc.

So the text was not so interesting but the term it had indirectly brought to life was already in use by that time.

Sorry about future net.art historians - we don't have the manifesto any more. It was lost with other precious data after tragic crash of Igor's hard disk last summer.

¹ #mm: Unreadable nonsense.

I like this weird story very much, because it's a perfect illustration of the fact that the world we live in is much richer than all our ideas about it.

Alexei

--

.....
moscow wwwart centre.....
<http://sunsite.cs.msu.su/wwwart>

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*distributed via nettime-l : no commercial use without permission
 *<nettime> is a closed moderated mailinglist for net criticism,
 *collaborative text filtering and cultural politics of the net
 *more info: majordomo {AT} is.in-berlin.de and "info nettime" in the msg body
 *URL: <http://www.desk.nl/~nettime/contact>: nettime-owner {AT} is.in-berlin.de

This text is reprinted as originally published via the electronic mailing list *nettime* and stored online as: Shulgin, Alexei. "Nettime: Net.Art – the Origin." *Nettime*. Nettime, Mar. 18, 1997. Web. Sept. 13 2014.

Related projects:

ASCII History of Moving Images (Vuk Ćosić, 1998)
<http://www.ljudmila.org/~vuk/ascii/film/>
nettime (1995) | <http://nettime.org/>

3. Web 2.0

Brought Up on the Web We Think Differently.

*#web_2.0 #netizens #web_kids #net_art #digital_natives
#social_network #facebook-based_art*

In the era of Web 1.0, there were specialists on one side who created the content and users on the other side who looked for and consumed the content on the Internet. In the subsequent era of second-generation web, the situation changed radically—thanks to the advent of blogging platforms, open encyclopaedias, social networks and servers for video sharing, the boundary between the contributor and the recipient of information dissolved, and all users instantly became active creators of web content—prosumers (producers + consumers). The era of Web 2.0 brought an increase in the centralized services which we use today for receiving and sharing our contents rather than individual websites.¹

The term Web 2.0 already appeared in 1999 (DiNucci 32, 221–222). Although the free-access encyclopaedia Wikipedia has been in existence since 2001 and the now deserted pioneering social network MySpace² was launched in 2003, Web 2.0 was only fully developed after 2005, by which time YouTube (2005), Facebook (2004, accessible world-wide since 2005) and others were already thriving. The era of Web 2.0 has lasted for 10 years—long enough for us to get perfectly accustomed to it.³ Since the advent of the World Wide Web, a completely new generation of artists has successfully matured. They are no longer “immigrants” and pioneers entering the Internet from the physical world to explore yet unexplored territory; they are digital natives who literally grew up with the Internet and are hardly able to imagine life without it. These digital natives, Netizens or Web Kids, for whom Web 2.0 represents a more natural living environment and a space often more real than the physical world, are the focus of the following chapter of this anthology.

In his text “The Art of the Netizens” (2010), the Italian curator, theorist and teacher of Net art Domenico Quaranta (b. 1978) provides Net art with a sociocultural definition and deals with several historical terms. In the past, the media theorists Harold Innis, Marshal McLuhan and, above all, Walter J. Ong pointed out that a change in the dominant communication media in a given society is also linked to a transformation of mindset and expression (Innis, Ong).⁴ The Polish author Piotr Czernski’s (b. 1981) lively manifesto “We, the Web Kids,” describes the change of viewpoint in the new generation brought about by the arrival of the new dominant medium—this time the Internet. Such changes already took place in Western society with the introduction of the written word, more precisely the phonetic alphabet, and later electricity. Although similar claims could be criticized for technological determinism, observable psychological and social consequences have also been brought about by the Internet, Web 2.0 and Facebook. A distinct world view as increasingly perceived fact has

1 #mm: See the graph in the Appendix of Images for an overview of the evolution of the web. Web 0.0—development of the web; Web 1.0—expert-generated content; Web 2.0—user-generated content; Web 3.0—system-generated content; Web 4.0—intelligent personal agents.

2 Cf. Pachal. MySpace changed its character and name (to Myspace) in 2013 and entered a new era of its existence.

3 We have not quite yet arrived at the third generation web discussed today (where content is generated automatically).

4 Cf. also Briggs and Burke. This text cites translations of Ong’s and McLuhan’s works; for the originals, please refer to: McLuhan, Marshall. *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962. Print. Ong, Walter J. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. London: Methuen, 1982. Print.

become the topic of works and public manifestations by a whole range of artists.⁵

The text “Club Kids: The Social Life of Artists on Facebook” (2012) was originally published in the cultural online (administered by the New York-based collective DIS⁶) *DIS Magazine* (2010) which focuses on contemporary art, fashion, music and culture. Brad Troemel (b. 1987), Artie Vierkant (b. 1986) and Ben Vickers’s (b. 1986) collective essay expresses the different attitudes of otherwise affiliated artists and theorists born into the generation of Web Kids, and illustrates the possible diversity of approaches in the discussion of contemporary Internet culture which, however, often leads to disagreement on terminological matters. The article, whose authors are among the most visible and provocative writers born in the second half of the 1980s, provoked a range of contradictory reactions. Within the context of this anthology, it belongs to manifests which can be pardoned for containing some imperfections in both style and content. Its collective authorship leads to certain clumsiness; it is, however, especially valuable as it provides a practical illustration of the social phenomena it discusses,⁷ and these are questioned and analysed in other texts published in this anthology. It also offers an important insight into the authors’ peer group (colleagues, compatriots, friends and people of the same age) and provides general information on social networks, in particular on Facebook, and the relationship of a certain artist circle to Facebook.

My article “Facebook: Social Network as a Space For Art” finally deals with Facebook-based Net art in more detail; Internet art derived from the specific character of the social network Facebook. The original magazine article was updated with a note from December 2014.

#mm

5 Besides seeing themselves as inhabitants of the Internet (Netizens who are said to “live and work on the Internet”), net artists of the Web 2.0 generation often tend to perceive the virtual environment in terms of physical space. At the first Tumblr Art Symposium in 2014, sociologist Tricia Wang compared the Internet to a landscape with countless nooks, mountains, rivers and islands. On the one hand, this might tempt us to the application of landscape studies that might characterize numerous Internet projects not only as site-specific or conceptual, but often more precisely as Land art works. Nevertheless, it is most helpful to realize that many promontories of the Internet are distinctive and to a certain extent autonomous environments, abundant in their own dialects, codes of expression and in the communicative strategies of their users who share their experience and history within a community, and this is what makes them different from other similar platforms. Various specific Internet nooks indeed have come into existence, inhabited by permanent residents and occasional visitors, and they exhibit (locally) specific manifestations of Net art that cannot be created or received anywhere else—not only in the technological, but especially in the socio-cultural sense of the word. “The Stranger” who finds himself in a certain environment without any knowledge of its customs and rules of communication is often unable to understand the forms of art on offer. Such specific nooks of the Internet with distinct iconography and spatial laws are represented, for instance, by YouTube, Tumblr, Twitter and Facebook.

6 According to the official statement of the collective, *DIS* “explores the tension between popular culture and institutional critique while facilitating projects for the most public and democratic of all forums—the Internet,” see „About DIS.“

7 A fact that is unquestionable today follows from the text: it is the relationships between the participants that represent the essential determinant of success in the contemporary saturated world of Net art. These relationships are not primarily based on the physical world, but rather on the network where they have, thanks to computer-mediated communication, a much more intense and personal (personalized) character; they are also often influenced by hidden algorithms of the service providers (such as Facebook) which therefore also influence, to an arguable extent, art discourse. As net artist Sterling Crispin notes in his comment to Troemel, Vierkant and Vickers’s article in the *DIS Magazine*, the article itself is a product of the topics it reflects and therefore part of a certain feedback loop.

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Domenico Quaranta | 2010

In the beginning [there] was Jodi, and Jodi was within the Internet, and Jodi was the Internet. Not joking. It was 1995 when Jodi appeared in a still relatively small, slow and amateurish World Wide Web. If you were unlucky enough to get into it by chance, you will have never forgotten it. Jodi was a trap, a black hole into an under-construction universe, a trash bin, a dumpster. It was a place you had to navigate without a map, without directions, and without knowing how to get out. It was a place where all the history of the Internet collapsed into a dada collage, an evergrowing Merzbau,¹ showing what the Internet has been, was and would be in the future.

This place was built by a Dutch-Belgian couple, Joan Heemskerk and Dirk Paesmans. Some of the people who were trapped in its sticky web thought it could be seen as art, and started thinking that a specific *Net art* was possible. The term was, and still is, quite problematic. During the twentieth century, we became used to such terms as Video art, Performance art and Land art. This may lead us to think that the term *Net art* describes a practice defined by the medium it uses. Big mistake. The Internet is not a medium: it is a place. Thus, the term Net art doesn't describe a medium, but a citizenship. It is more similar to *American art* than to *Video art*. But while terms such as American art make little sense today because we live in a global village where local identity often has to fight against global mass culture, the term Net art makes more sense than ever since more and more people think of themselves as Netizens, that is "citizens of the Internet." Net art is art made by Netizens. You make Net art because you are a net artist, not the other way around. Sometimes it takes the shape of a website, but more often than not it doesn't. This is not really important, however: what defines Net art is not the medium used, but the cultural background and habits of those who make it. Thus, the term Net art describes something more similar to Dada or Fluxus than to Video art: not a medium-based practice, but a community sharing a common culture and a common approach to art.

Net art

This is, by the way, the reason why the term was often replaced by other labels, such as Net.art, Neen, and more recently, *Post-Internet*. Net.art was actually the first term adopted, in 1996, to define the practice. Even if they look quite similar, the little dot makes a big difference. If Net art is an art label, Net.art is the parody of an art label. The dot refers to domain and file names, thus to the computer culture shared by netizens; and turns the word "art" into nothing more than a file extension (like .txt) or a top level domain (like .com).

¹ #mm: Also the "Merz buildings," bizarre rooms built by German painter Kurt Schwitters (1887–1948). He is famous for redesigning a number of building interiors, the best known of which is his family house at Waldhausenstrasse 5 in Hannover. See Glenn, Burns or Luke.

Neen was a term chosen by the former artist (since known as Neenstar) Miltos Manetas in 2000, in order to describe the work of a “still undefined generation of visual artists” (Manetas, “Neen Manifesto”). According to Manetas, “computing is to Neen as what fantasy was to [S]urrealism and freedom to [C]ommunism. It creates its context, but it can also be postponed. [...] Neen is about losing time on different operating systems.” Finally, *Post-Internet* was quite recently born out of the same need that produced Net.art and Neen: to describe the art of the Netizens without forcing them into the straitjacket of an (apparently) medium-based definition.

However, both *Net.art* and *Neen* ended up to be identified with a specific community of people; and *Post-Internet* is too a bad term to work as an art label. So, I will go on using the term Net art, meaning *the art of the Netizens*.

Pioneers

The first net artists were very similar to the first Mormon settlers going west in the seventeenth century. It was a generation of immigrants: they came from a world where art was a product and they entered a world where art could either be a process, an action or a place. They came from a world of objects, and they entered a world of digital data. They came from a world with borders and they entered a free and wild west. They came from a world where copying was illegal, and entered a place that Cory Doctorow described as “the world’s most perfect and most powerful copying machine.” It was no surprise that in the beginning they insisted on: making art that can be experienced anywhere in the world; making and copying websites, appropriating and simulating identities, coordinating events, playing with codes and inventing new codes. They were pursuing their own frontiers, building places, and making things that were impossible in other places. Building places: black holes such as Jodi, open platforms such as Irational.org, online galleries such as Teleportacia.org and closed laboratories such as Hell.com. They were making things that were impossible anywhere else: hijacking thousands of people to their own place, as the etoy collective did in 1996; acting as if they were 200 different artists instead of one, as the German feminist Cornelia Sollfrank did in 1997; playing the role of the Holy See online for over a year, as the Italian duo 0100101110101101.ORG did in 1998; fighting against a giant corporation and winning the battle, as the whole online community did in 1999 in support of etoy; persuading the American media and intelligence that they were going to auction actual votes online, as the Austrian collective Übermorgen.com did in 2000.

Neen

Of course, many of these early pioneers knew it was possible to make Net art out of the Internet, and even without using a computer. Thus, when invited to perform in real venues, etoy came up with the tank system, a large scale installation of pipes that worked as a metaphor for the digital space of the net. In 2001, Epidemic and 0100101110101101.ORG used the Venice Biennale as a platform to spread a computer virus and they actually used t-shirts, not

computers. However, they were too involved in building places and taking actions to fully explore the possibilities. We have to thank Miltos Manetas for stating it clearly, with the “Neen Manifesto” (“computing [...] creates its context, but can also be postponed”) and in his own work. Manetas made Net art—or, in his words, Neen—in the form of websites, but also in the form of paintings, prints and videos. Other Neenstars made songs, buildings, installations, games, performances. Let’s consider Manetas’ paintings—something that a “radical” net artist would never have done: physical objects for a luxury market, created in a traditional medium and a quite conventional style. The subjects are cables, computers, videogames, people involved with computers and videogames, websites, navigators, GPS and, more recently, Internet icons such as the Pirate Bay logo. Paintings for a post-digital, post-Internet age. On the other hand, his websites are graffiti for the streets of the Internet: instant, one-liner works often consisting of a single page, where a playful animation, or the relation between the content and the address is enough to turn them into little treasures found among the garbage.

Manetas and the Neen movement are not alone in this process. In the same years the original Net.art group started making things that are not websites: Jodi subverted corporate softwares and made installations with hacked hardwares; Alexei Shulgin turned an old 386 *DX* into a pop star; Vuk Ćosić made ASCII movies. Other artists such as Claude Closky and Cory Arcangel, never distinguished between their online activity and their offline works.

Digital natives

All this has opened the path to a second generation: the natives. They are born in a world where any distinction between media and reality doesn’t make sense anymore. They are always online, not because they chose it, but because they don’t even know an offline status. To explain it with a paradox: they wouldn’t be surprised to discover that the office desktop borrowed its name from the computer desktop. They always make Net art, even if their personal homepage is usually built with Indexhibit or Tumblr, and their works are often installations, performances, prints and videos. Does this mean that all contemporary art is Net art? No, it doesn’t. If digital nativity is a condition, Net art is still a matter of choice. Or, to use Manetas’ words: “They are Friends of the information and not Users.” Everybody is a user today, but only if you are a “Friend of the information” will everything you do bring the Internet watermark in its source code. No surprise that many of them gathered in the so-called surfing clubs: online communities that elevate browsing, copying and recycling to an art form. They are interested in the “digital folklore,” to use the term suggested by Olia Lialina and Dragan Espenschied. They browse, copy, edit, share. They often make professional use of amateurish tools, or amateurish use of professional tools. To the clean, polished style of “users” they react with their dirty style and their conceptual focus on the tool’s basic features. Thus, Petra Cortright makes plain webcam videos of herself where the simple use of a filter is enough to turn them into something magical and disturbing. Harm Van Den Dorpel and Damon Zucconi often play with the layers of an image, modifying found material in order to generate in the viewer new associations and expectations. The

duo AIDS-3D creates performances and installations which explore the spiritual side of technology. Rafaël Rozendaal makes playful, apparently dumb flash animations that turn interaction into a discovery device. Oliver Laric is interested in versioning as the driving force behind many Internet subcultures. The Italian collective Alterazioni Video turns popular online obsessions—such as making a stack of bowling balls—into sculptures, installations and performances. And Jon Rafman travels the world via Google Street View.

Jodi again

Of course, the first generation is still there and still doing interesting things. I have no room for other examples, so I am happy enough to end up with Jodi; our starting point. The ineffable duo have never stopped acting as a virus, commenting on the world they live in and cracking the polished surface of the corporate web, now turned “social.” Recently they started thumbing YouTube, replying to the most viewed videos with a simple thumb print. Think digitally, act physically: Net art is nothing else, after all.

First published in Spanish in the Mexican magazine *La Tempestad*, Issue 72 in May and June 2010. Reprinted from the English translation published as: Quaranta, Domenico. “The Art of the Netizens.” *In Your Computer*. Brescia: Link Editions, 2010. 169–172. Print.

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We, the Web Kids

Piotr Czerski | 2012

There is probably no other word as overused in media discourse as *generation*. I once tried to count the “generations” that have been proclaimed in the past ten years, since the well-known article about the so-called “Generation Nothing.” I believe there were as many as twelve. They all had one thing in common; they only existed on paper. Reality never provided us with a single tangible, meaningful, unforgettable impulse, the common experience of which would forever distinguish us from previous generations. We were looking for it, but instead the groundbreaking change came unnoticed, along with cable TV, mobile phones and, most of all, Internet access. It is only today that we can fully comprehend how much has changed over the past fifteen years.

We, the Web Kids, who have grown up with the Internet and on the Internet, are a generation who meet the criteria for the term in a somewhat subversive way. We did not experience an impulse from reality, but rather a metamorphosis of reality itself. What unites us is not a common, limited cultural context, but the belief that the context is self-defined and an effect of free choice.

Writing this, I am aware that I am abusing the pronoun *we*, as our *we* fluctuates, discontinuous, blurred, according to the old categories: temporary. When I say “we,” it means “many of us” or “some of us.” When I say “we are,” it means “we often are.” I say *we* only so I can talk about us at all.

1.

We grew up with the Internet and on the Internet. This is what makes us different; this is what makes the crucial, although surprising from your point of view, difference: we do not “surf” and the Internet to us is not a “place” or “virtual space.” The Internet to us is not something external to reality but a part of it: an invisible yet constantly present layer intertwined with the physical environment. We do not use the Internet, we live on the Internet and along it. If we were to tell our buildings roman to you, the analogue, we could say there was a natural Internet aspect to every single experience that has shaped us. We have made friends and enemies online, prepared cribs for tests online, planned parties and studying sessions online, fallen in love and broken up online. To us the web is not a technology which we had to learn and come to grips with. The web is a process, happening continuously and transforming before our eyes; with us and through us. Technologies appear and then dissolve in the peripheries, websites are built, they bloom and then pass away, but the web continues, because we are the web; we, communicating with one another in a way that comes naturally to us, more intensely and more efficiently than ever before in the history of mankind.

Brought up on the web we think differently. For us the ability to find information is as basic as the ability to find a railway station or a post office in an unknown city is to you. When we want to know something—the first symptoms of chickenpox, the reasons behind the sinking of the Estonia, or whether the water bill is suspiciously high—we take measures with the certainty of a driver in a SatNav-equipped car. We know that we are going to find the information in many places and we know how to get to those places and how to assess their credibility. We have learned to accept that instead of one answer we find many different ones, and out of these we can abstract the most likely version, disregarding those which do not seem credible. We select, we filter, we remember, and we are ready to swap the learned information for better, when it comes along.

To us, the web is a form of shared external memory. We do not have to remember unnecessary details: dates, sums, formulas, clauses, street names, detailed definitions. It is enough for us to have an abstract, the essence that is needed to process the information and relate it to others. Should we need the details, we can look them up within seconds. Similarly, we do not have to be experts in everything, because we know where to find people who specialise in what we do not know, and whom we can trust. People who will share their expertise with us, not for profit, but because of our shared belief that information exists in motion, that it wants to be free and that we all benefit from the exchange of information. Every day: studying, working, solving everyday issues, pursuing interests. We know how to compete and we like to do it, but our competition, our desire to be different, is built on knowledge, on the ability to interpret and process information, and not to monopolise it.

2.

Participating in cultural life is not unusual to us: global culture is the fundamental building block of our identity, more important for defining ourselves than traditions, historical narratives, social status, ancestry, or even the language we use. From the ocean of cultural events we pick the ones that suit us the most; we interact with them, we review them, we save our reviews on websites created for that purpose, and which also give us suggestions for other albums, films or games. Some films, series or videos we watch with colleagues or with friends from around the world; our appreciation of some is only shared by a small group of people that perhaps we will never meet face to face. This is why we feel that culture is becoming simultaneously global and individual. This is why we need free access to it.

This does not mean that we demand all products of culture be available to us without charge, although when we create something, we usually just release it into circulation. We understand that, despite the increasing accessibility of technologies which make the quality of movies and sound files, previously only reserved for professionals, available to everyone, creativity requires effort and investment. We are prepared to pay, but in our opinion the commissions that distributors ask are exorbitant. Why should we pay for the distribution of information that can be easily and perfectly copied without any loss of original quality? If we are only receiving information, we want the price to be in proportion. We are willing to pay more, but then we expect to receive

some added value: interesting packaging, a gadget, higher quality, the option of watching here and now, without waiting for the file to download. We are capable of showing appreciation and we want to reward the artist (since money stopped being paper notes and became a string of numbers on the screen, paying has become a somewhat symbolic act of exchange supposed to benefit both parties), but the sales goals of corporations are of no interest to us whatsoever. It is not our fault that their business has ceased to make sense in its traditional form, and that instead of accepting the challenge and trying to reach us with something more than those things we can get for free, they have decided to defend their obsolete ways.

One more thing: we do not want to pay for our memories. The films that remind us of our childhood, the music that accompanied us ten years ago: to the external memory network these are simply memories. Remembering them, exchanging them, and developing them is to us something as natural as the memory of *Casablanca*¹ is to you. We find online the films that we watched as children and we show them to our children, just as you told us the story about *Little Red Riding Hood* or *Goldilocks*. Can you imagine that someone could accuse you of breaking the law in this way? We cannot, either.

3.

We are used to our bills being paid automatically, as long as our account balance allows for it; we know that starting a bank account or changing mobile networks is just a question of filling in a single form online and signing an agreement delivered by a courier; that even a trip to the other side of Europe with a sightseeing stopover of another city on the way can be organised in two hours. Consequently, being the users of the state, we are increasingly annoyed by its archaic interface. We do not understand why a tax act takes several forms to complete, the main one of which has more than a hundred questions. We do not understand why we are required to formally confirm moving from one permanent address to another, as if councils could not communicate with each other without our intervention (not to mention that the necessity to have a permanent address is itself absurd enough.)

There is not a trace in us of that humble acceptance displayed by our parents, who were convinced that administrative issues were of utmost importance and who considered interaction with the state as something to be celebrated. We do not feel that respect, rooted in the distance between the lonely citizen and the majestic heights where the ruling class reside, barely visible through the clouds. Our view of the social structure is different from yours: society is a network, not a hierarchy. We are used to being able to start a dialogue with anyone, be it a professor or a pop star, and we do not need any special qualifications related to social status. The success of the interaction depends solely on whether the content of our message will be regarded as

¹ #mm: In the Polish original (see Czernski) the author refers to the notorious Polish television series *Cztery pancerni i pies* (Four Tank-Men and a Dog, 1966–1970). In her well known English translation, Marta Szreder chooses to replace the series with the feature film *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, 1942)—a somewhat inappropriate example considering the film's release date See Czernski, Piotr. "We, The Web Kids." *Pastebin*. Pastebin.com, Feb. 15 2012. Web. Sep. 9 2014.

important and worthy of reply. And if, thanks to cooperation, continuous dispute, defending our arguments against criticism, we have a feeling that our opinions on many matters are simply better, why would we not expect a serious dialogue with the government?

We do not feel a religious respect for “institutions of democracy” in their current form, we do not believe in their axiomatic role, as do those who see “institutions of democracy” as a monument for and by themselves. We do not need monuments. We need a system that will live up to our expectations, a system that is transparent and proficient. And we have learned that change is possible: that every uncomfortable system can be replaced and is replaced by a new one which is more efficient, better suited to our needs and provides us with more opportunities.

What we value most is freedom: freedom of speech, freedom of access to information and to culture. We feel that thanks to freedom the web is what it is, and that it is our duty to protect that freedom. We owe that to future generations, just as much as we owe it to them to protect the environment.

Perhaps we have not yet given it a name, perhaps we are not yet fully aware of it, but I guess what we want is real, genuine democracy. Democracy that is perhaps more than is dreamt of in your journalism.

First published in Polish as: Czernski, Piotr. “My, dzieci sieci.” *Polska Dziennik Bałtycki*, Feb. 11–12 2012: 11. Print. The original is also available at: <<http://pokazywarka.pl/pm1pgl/>>. Date of access: Sept. 14 2014.

Reprinted from the English translation by Marta Szreder: Czernski, Piotr. “We, The Web Kids.” Trans. Marta Szreder. *Pastebin*. Pastebin.com, Feb. 15 2012. Web. Sept. 9 2014.

“My, dzieci sieci” by Piotr Czernski is licensed under a Creative Commons CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 licence.²

² #mm: Minor spelling changes have been made to correspond with the chosen citation style of the publication #mm Net Art.

Club Kids

The Social Life of Artists on Facebook

Brad Troemel, Artie Vierkant, Ben Vickers | 2012

Text by

Brad Troemel

Artie Vierkant

Ben Vickers

Brad Troemel & Artie Vierkant

Ben Vickers & Artie Vierkant

~~Strikethroughs~~ signify disagreement

Underlines signify agreement

Concept by

Brad Troemel

//

Facebook is the platform on which our generation negotiates its artists' respective brands and the tenuous connections between them. Facebook is tactically governed by a form of silent populism—the subtle linking of identities through likes, shares, and brief but favourable comments. Some people buy Facebook fans' and likes in order to increase their fan base. Silence fits in this case because the formation of social ties is a gradual process on the part of the Facebook viewer, who accumulates an understanding of which artists are in lockstep with others through incremental calculations based on memory, number of **views**, and **discussion**. The blurred borders of who belongs to which clique form over time and are highly permeable. ~~This is unlike the directly communicative methods of OWS,² for instance, where the decisions and allegiances of a group are established and necessitate the simultaneous participation of all members in a single moment.~~

Silent populism's faintly projected image of communal support is solidified through one's placement in group exhibitions. Today there are many such exhibitions originating on the Internet with high numbers of participants (*JstChillin*, *BYOBs*, *Speed Shows*, *Immaterial Surveys*,³ etc.).⁴ Group exhibitions are the punctuation to an ongoing social media conversation where individuals promote one another until those very promotions materialize with the names of the individuals shown side by side, categorized by a curator and legitimized by a gallery.

1 See <http://themarketingheaven.com/buy-facebook-likes>. #mm: At the time of publication of this book, the article was no longer online and was not archived by *Internet Archive*.

2 #mm: Occupy Wall Street. See *Occupy Wall Street*.

3 #mm: Curated by the web collective The Jogging, see <http://thejogging.tumblr.com/>. For *Immaterial Survey*, also see Gaboury, "Empty Space" and "Immaterial Incoherence."

4 #mm: See Jennifer Chan's text "From Browser to Gallery (and Back): The Commodification of Net Art 1990–2011" in this publication.

The physical display of these artists' works next to one another is similar to the photos from the parties the artists attend, where they strategically tag each other and post the images on Facebook for their online audience to digest. Both are a means of making literal the otherwise loose social ties exemplified through text's silent populism. The image—both of gallery installations and social life—operates in a liminal space between the projected conception and a firmly believed-in reality. While artists have always consorted in packs, the process of distinguishing and joining such groupings has never been as formalized as it is today through Facebook. The need to socially orient oneself has now been reversed from its normal position: today's Internet artist needs an audience to create art, as opposed to the traditional recipe where you need to create art to have an audience. Posting work on the Internet with no social network readily in place is synonymous with the riddle: if a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound? For young artists on the Internet the answer to the forest question is no—their work will easily go unnoticed, making their participation as a social actor an a priori necessity in order to contextualize what they do as art.

If Anton Vidokle suggested we are entering a period of “Art Without Artists,”⁵ we suggest instead that we are present in a moment of artists without art. We live in a time when young artists look at each other's Facebook pages more than each other's art. One effect of Facebook may be that only a few online artists create much art—because they aren't being rewarded for anything but the performance of their own personal brand online. Thus, the strongest ties the artworks in today's group exhibitions often share are the mutual friends the artists have, rather than the work itself.

But what is it that we call “work?” Alternatively one could argue that in this situation, if the ultimate goal of an artwork is to in some way transform the consciousness of the individual receiving it (to follow a traditional model), what is happening as we speak between artists who connect with each other via Facebook and other social networks could be seen as cutting out the aesthetic middle man.

The traditional method of interaction between Artist and Other is through exhibition, i.e., generating a scenario in which a predetermined Artist exists and individuals who happen upon the work in space or through images are transformed into Viewers. When the primary audience for the work becomes a core network of selected peers, the traditional boundaries of Artist and Viewer can no longer be solidified in the same way. Rather than creating discrete moments of exhibition and reception, the artist-viewer and other artist-viewers are caught in a sphere of perpetual reception and distribution.

This liberates the practice of aesthetic consciousness transformation from the confines of the art-object-as-delivery-method. In its place, people are understood within their peer group as Artists, every public or private act taken within social relations acts as an influence on consciousness at a minute level. Rather than sharing or enforcing a certain aesthetic value structure through a set of objects, this same information is transmitted through a direct, consumable lifestyle

5 #mm: See Vidokle.

projected by peers through a sequence of posts. This could account for the condition of “artists without art:” rather than artists producing identifiable aesthetic works, their disruptive and compositional energy is used for relational exchange. Why go to such great lengths to make and photograph a painting that will net five likes when a photo of you and your friends eating fifty McChickens could net hundreds?

Is this to say that interactions on Facebook are now artists’ work? If so, how may we qualify a “good” work of art on Facebook? Is it a meaningful conversation? Is it a commentary that draws attention to the apparatus through which it is being transmitted? Is it merely a personality capable of drawing attention by whatever means necessary? My perception of artists’ social media personas is that they are a vehicle for creating an authorial context for viewers to better understand the origins of the artists’ “actual” work (i.e. what they’d exhibit in a gallery or show on their portfolio website). Be it “politicized,” “sexy,” “ironic,” or anything else, the artist’s online brand tends to function as a live-action, role-playing, artistic statement.⁶ Though these brands tend to eclipse an artist’s work due to the amount of attention (perhaps wrongly) heaped upon them, I doubt that many artists would categorize their work on Facebook as art unto itself,⁷ however socially performative they may be. To call these online exchanges “relational” would shift their authorship to the creator of the context through which the social exchanges take place, so the creators of Facebook would become the artists with us as mere participants in their system.

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While it’s impossible to speak of art which has never been produced, an argument can be made that the emphasis on projected lifestyles through Facebook has a regressive effect on the willingness of artists to take bold social risks with their work and/or online personas. After all, social contact is the lifeblood of young Internet artists, it is their peer group and target audience combined, their judge and their jury. The ability to risk antagonism or to criticize a peer becomes unnecessarily divisive on Facebook; comment sections more often than not remain empty. Any feedback is always on a scale ranging from positive to non-existent—the Like function itself is explicitly designed as a binary function between total consensus and total lack of response. Instead of moving the artistic conversation forward, most people are literally just happy to be part of the online conversation, to be part of the club or whatever other indistinct social group they silently pledge allegiance to.

However, it may well be possible to move artistic conversation forward through venues such as online clubs and Facebook. With the rise of bio-capitalism and radical shifts in the way we value labour and objects, the only way to produce meaningful artistic dialogue may

6 #mm: Cf. Goffman.

7 #mm: Cf. Marie Meixnerová’s essay “Facebook: Social Network as a Space For Art” and “From Browser to Gallery (and Back): The Commodification of Net Art 1990–2011” by Jennifer Chan in this publication.

be through a series of mediated social relations and exchanges. As Christian Marazzi writes of the financialization of the global economy,

81

There has been a transformation of valorization processes that witnesses the extraction of value no longer circumscribed to the place dedicated to the production of goods and services, but that extends beyond factory gates so to speak, in the sense that it enters directly into the sphere of the circulation of capital, that is, in the sphere of the exchange of goods and services. It is a question of extending the processes of value extraction to the sphere of reproduction and distribution...⁸ (48).

In the same way, the value of artists' productions is not in the value of the works they construct (a decidedly subjective idea) but instead, in the net of relations and citations they instigate socially.

The shrinking difference between *social networking for the betterment of your art career (a traditional view)* and *social networking as an art project unto itself* (an idea now raised in this essay) may be part of a greater trend in our contemporary understanding of celebrity. Prior to reality television, the distinction between a celebrity's private and public life was tenuously kept but widely believed. Gossip magazines served to satisfy our lust for celebrities beyond the brief screen time we were able to spend with them as public figures. Though the narrative arcs created by gossip magazines intentionally resembled the plot lines of the movies and television shows their subjects starred in, the sensationalized nature of these publications—disparagingly referred to as “rags”—maintained an air of uncertainty over whether the private information revealed in their pages was true or not. Reality television effectively banished the borders between public and private for the celebrities it created, ideally establishing a constant stream of people behaving in public as they would in private and all for the viewing public. In one fell swoop reality television simultaneously usurped the function of the gossip magazines and the movies which the celebrities appeared in. The purportedly objective, documentary-style filming of people in everyday situations made the grainy, decontextualized still images of gossip magazines second rate material. The lure of real embarrassment, secrets, sex, violence, and much more, quickly eclipsed the fictional characters portrayed by celebrities in sitcoms and other fictional creations, and established the new dominance of cable television. Nowadays, actors who once devoted their time to projects, sets and the performance of characters distinct from their real-life persona, increasingly choose to have the camera follow them in their day-to-day lives as celebrities. Similarly, artists who at one point may have created art, now spend time publicly exemplifying their lifestyle as an artist through Facebook.

Furthermore, the social venue is a critical component—private discussion, social networks, and the browser-based web each have their own relative levels of engagement, audience, and influence. For each area there is a different kind of social levy: the relations of which we currently speak, not adhering to traditional artistic forms of saleable objects, produce little

⁸ #mm: The quotation has been taken directly from Marazzi for *#mm Net Art* since the original web article (see Troemel, Vierkant, and Vickers) quotes Marazzi's text inaccurately.

or no economic advancement for the average artist, but at the same time they generate profit for the venue. With Facebook's revenue from ads and Facebook Credits expected to hit 4.27 billion USD this year⁹ (Womack) and with 870 million individual visitors per month ("The 1000 most-visited sites"),¹⁰ Facebook makes about four cents for every hour we spend trolling through photo albums wishing we had been at some important gathering in some distant city filled with diverse cultures and complicated intellectuals.

If we can agree that Facebook has become the dominant platform, not just for the dissemination of, but the very constituent parts of an artist's practice, it's in this context that we must question the implication of the shift to artists without art. In a recent *Forbes* article, it was stated that the social graph that tracks and consolidates every action or relationship defined in a social network, would soon be an exploitable resource comparable to crude oil (Rao). With Facebook's IPO¹¹ set to enter the market shortly, at around forty times the value of the average large-scale IPO, we are about to find out to what degree our social connections are valued as investment commodities ("Facebook's IPO"). This places us squarely in a period of net-time not dissimilar to the rise of early service providers such as AOL, Prodigy and CompuServe, who fought to become the dominant mass-market gateway to the Internet. The analogy now presents itself in Google and Facebook's attempts to become the new mass-market gateway to the social graph.

Hidden from the sight of users, a generative system has been developed to mine the implicit and explicit actions of millions of users globally. Where Myspace failed to grasp the monetary implications of the vast aggregation of personal data, Facebook reigns supreme. The manifestation of such technological innovation can be witnessed first-hand in recent shifts towards the personalised web ("Zuckerberg talks"). With the introduction of Google's personalized search for every user, there is no longer any form of collective or empirical search result. Equally, in the case of Facebook's implementation of algorithmic viewing, the ability to opt out of a personalised wall feed, governed by your clicking activity was recently revoked, condemning the user to experience all social relations through the lens of Facebook's financially weighted algorithms.

Such developments are brought to the fore in Eli Pariser's recent book *The Filter Bubble*, which elucidates the possible outcomes of the transformation to an analytical web, governed by personalized experience. Pariser cites a combination of damaging societal effects that may arise in the event of being overexposed to preferable and "relevant" content. Perhaps the concluding ethical dilemma inherent in this question of preferable content is demonstrated most starkly by Zuckerberg's claim: "A squirrel dying in front of your house may be more relevant to your interests right now than people dying in Africa."¹²

9 #mm: 2011.

10 #mm: No longer online. Accessible from the Internet Archive Wayback Machine: <<http://web.archive.org/web/20111219180329/http://www.google.com/adplanner/static/top1000/index.html>>, date of access Dec. 21 2014.

11 #mm: Initial Public Offering, i.e. the first sale of stock by a private company to the public.

12 #mm: See Kirkpatrick 296.

The accusation of a world dominated by filter bubbles is given significant weight in the social demographic research conducted by Ethan Zuckerman. In mining the class composition of Twitter users, Zuckerman found that on average most users communicated in codified form within groups defined by their own race and class. Self-evidently this is one element that is unequivocally true of the young Internet based artist, a seemingly dramatic contradiction to the presumed sense of *horizontalism* and democratised exchange that previously characterised our perception of the web. In this instance it might be suggested that today's young Internet artists provide an exceptional case study for such research, for it is the reserve of a few Netizens¹³ for whom the materiality of the Internet provides the platform by which work is produced, consumed, branded, discussed and socially defined.

If we are to accept the previously stated logic that “individuals promote one another until those very promotions materialize with the names of the individuals shown side by side, categorized by a curator and legitimized by a gallery,” then we should also accept that to a lesser or greater extent it is Facebook's implicit populist algorithms that form the foundations for an outcome on the aforementioned trajectory.

On this basis we can see the artist and their behaviour within this network as the performance of a personal brand, particularly in the instance “Why go to such great lengths to make and photograph a painting that will net five likes when a photo of you and your friends eating McChickens could net hundreds?” Because of this reliance it is possible (in speculative terms) to think of structuring a formal or statistical analysis of the rise of particular aesthetic tropes based on the edge-ranking system by which Facebook aggregates its content (Kinkaid). Likely this will greatly benefit quantitative art historians and mass marketers.

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As the number of network participants rises, leaving that network or creating an alternative to it becomes increasingly difficult. With this in mind it's fair to say Facebook will play a primary role in the dissemination of culture for at least this generation, and as such the topic warrants a discourse separate from talk of “the Internet and art” at large. The problem is, as with any social network or discipline, as we are wont to describe art, is that it engenders a sense of impassable boundaries—leaving the walled garden involves too many risk factors. The danger is that this or any walled garden is taken for granted. One can all too easily venerate the Facebooks or Tumblrs of the world for establishing what amounts to an infinite space for free exhibition and expression: what it amounts to, for many young artists, is the false promise of free exhibition and studio space with unlimited access and viewership potential. Instead it is important to realize that these spaces remain a *bad infinity*.¹⁴

13 #mm: Cf. Domenico Quaranta's text „The Art of the Netizens.“ Reprinted in this publication.

14 “Bad infinity” is a term used by Hegel in his *The Science of Logic*, published in various versions beginning in 1812. The term is used here to describe a system wherein the possibilities seem limitless (infinite), while in fact they are inherently limited by what is possible within the system itself (bad infinite). #mm: See for example Martin.

The dream is of an egalitarian space of cultural exchange. However, the notion of creating a structure or a network for this purpose inevitably leads to the same pitfalls, wherein this liberal logic circles in on itself. As an individual recently explained to me when describing his company's plans for a new social network for fashion, "We want to create a network where people can be recognized for their talents and rise above those who already have clout, without relying on a third party network [...] as long as they rely on our third party network."

First published in English as Troemel, Brad, Artie Vierkant, and Ben Vickers. "Club Kids: The Social Life of Artists on Facebook." *DIS Magazine*. DIS, n.d. Web. Jan.10 2015.

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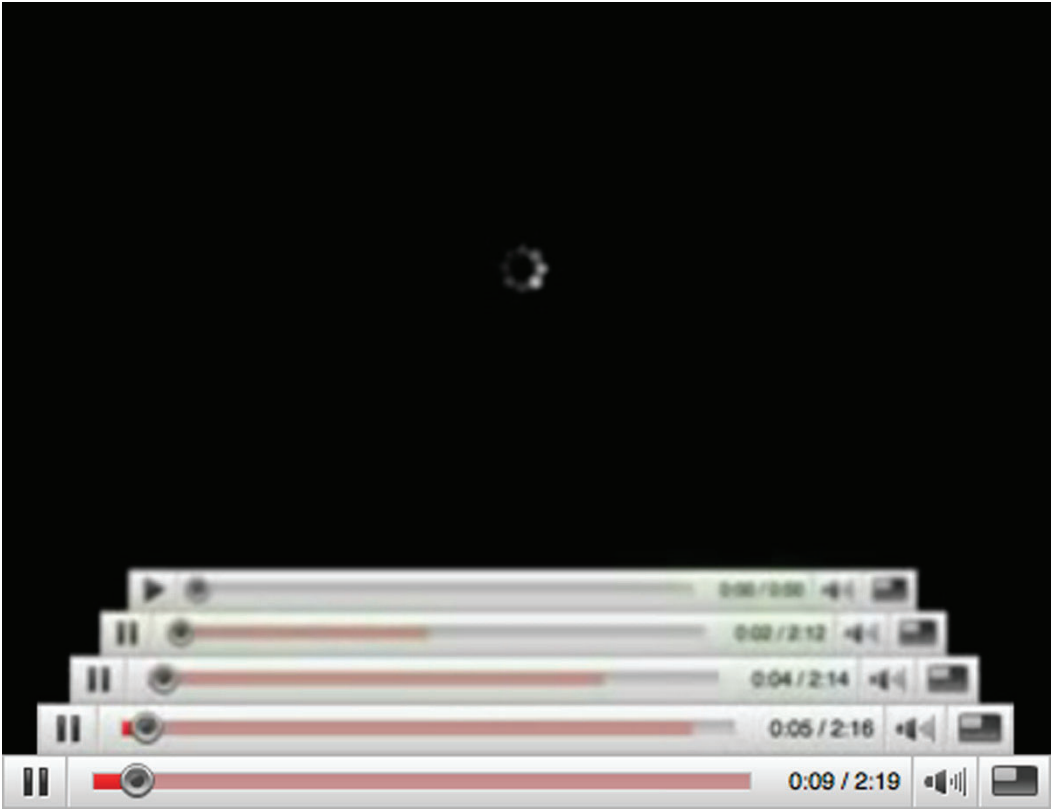
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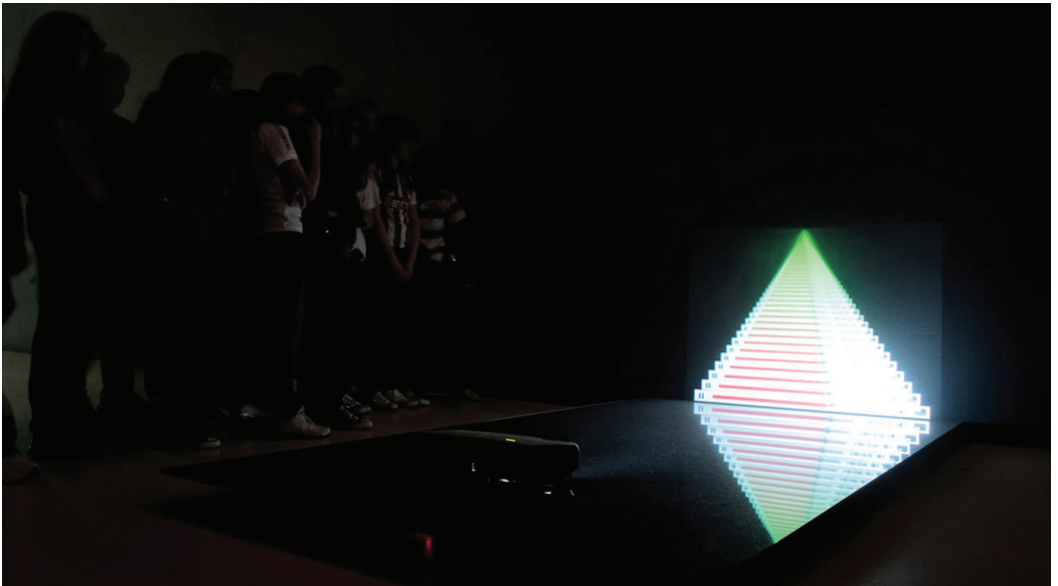
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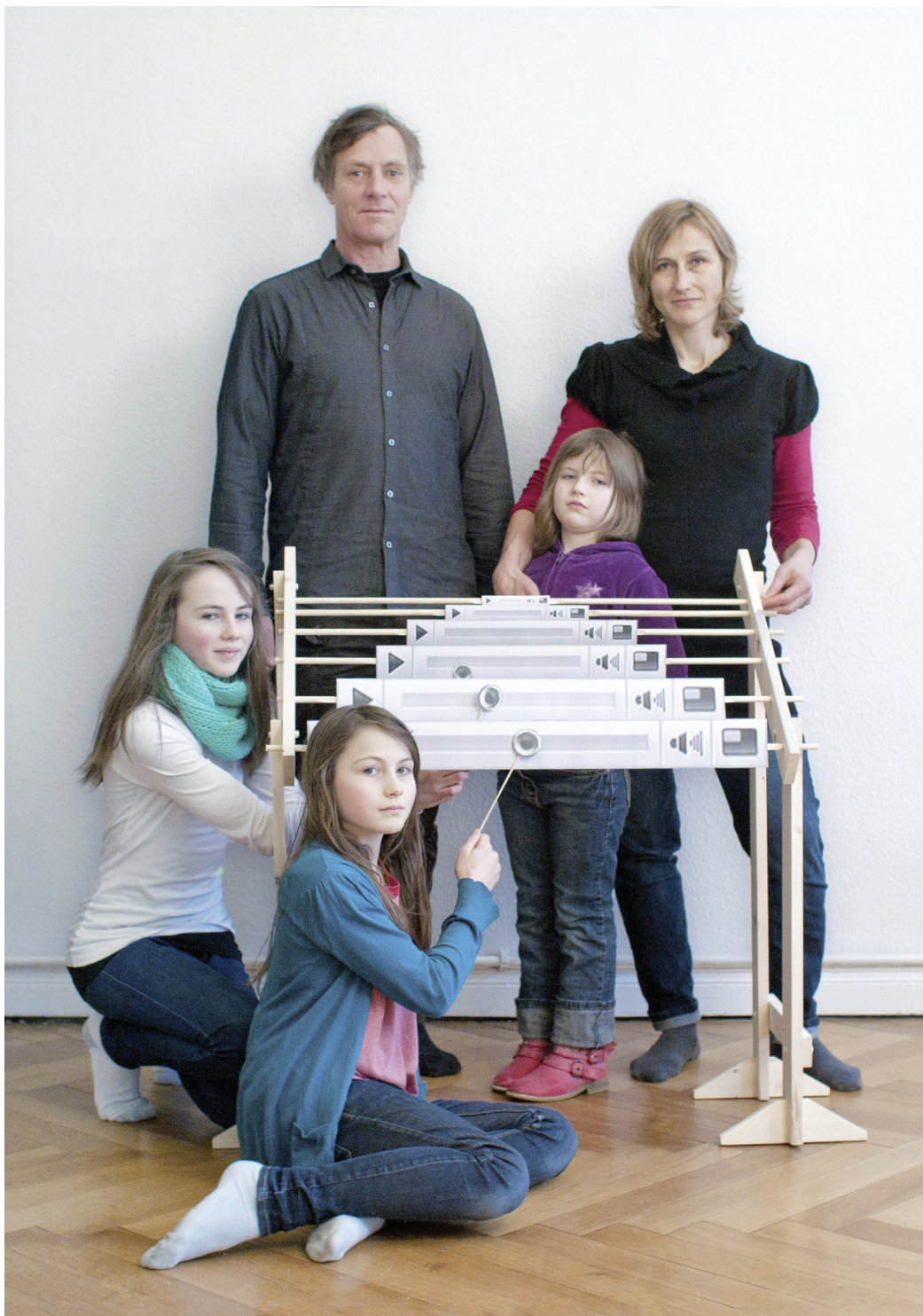
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Martin Kohout, *Moonwalk*, 2008
YouTube video

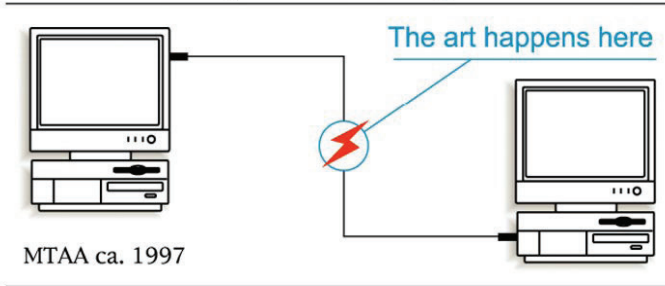


Martin Kohout, *Moonwalk*, 2008
Installation in physical space, 7a Bienal do Mercosul, Porto Alegre, 2009

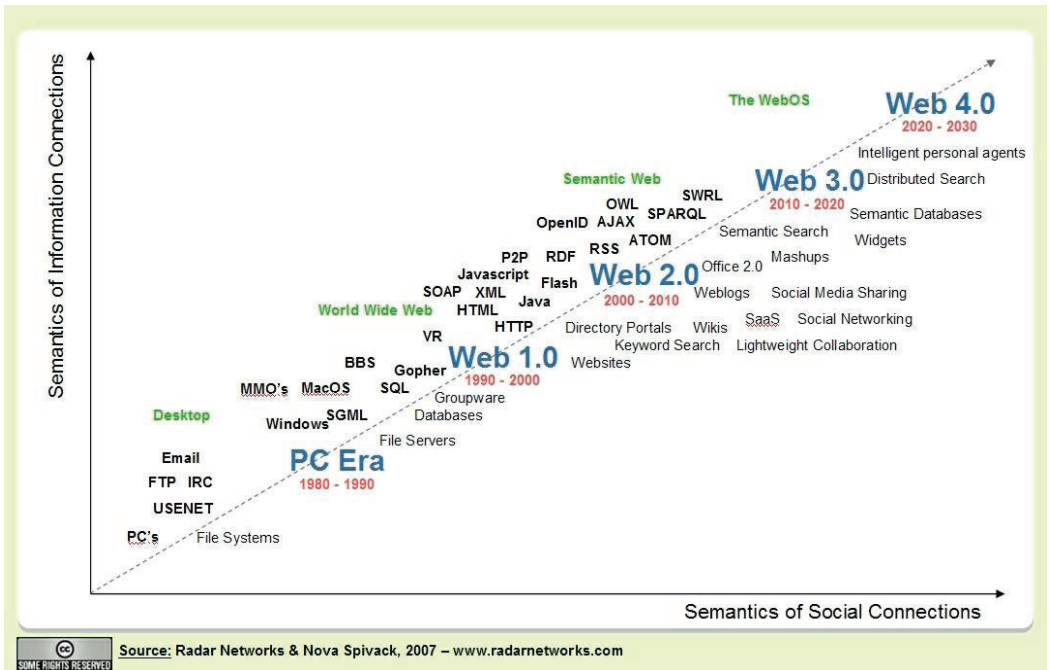


Martin Kohout, *untitled*, 2011
Photograph

Simple Net Art Diagram



MTAA, *Simple Net Art Diagram*, 1997
GIF animation—Basic diagram for Networked art



Evolution of the web

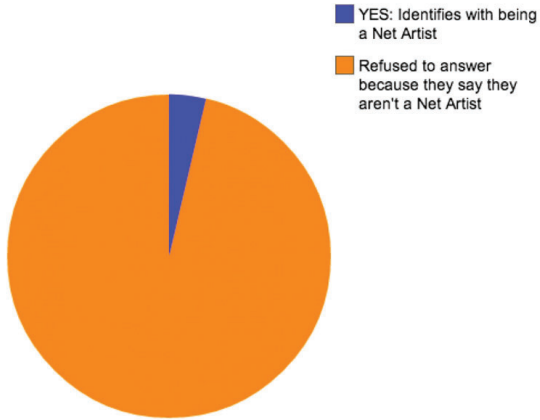
Web 0.0—developing web; Web 1.0—producer-generated content; Web 2.0—user-generated content;

Web 3.0—system-generated content; Web 4.0—intelligent personal agents

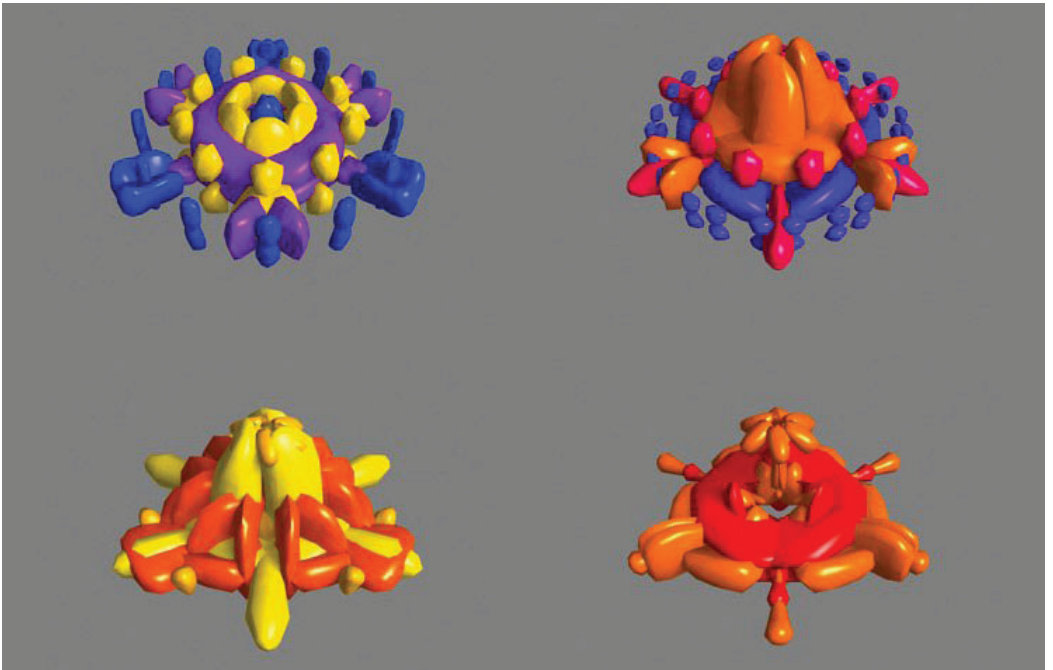
[POLL] Majority of Net Artists are not Net Artists

Tweet 1 Like 70 +1

POLL of Net Artists: Do you identify with being termed a 'Net Artist'



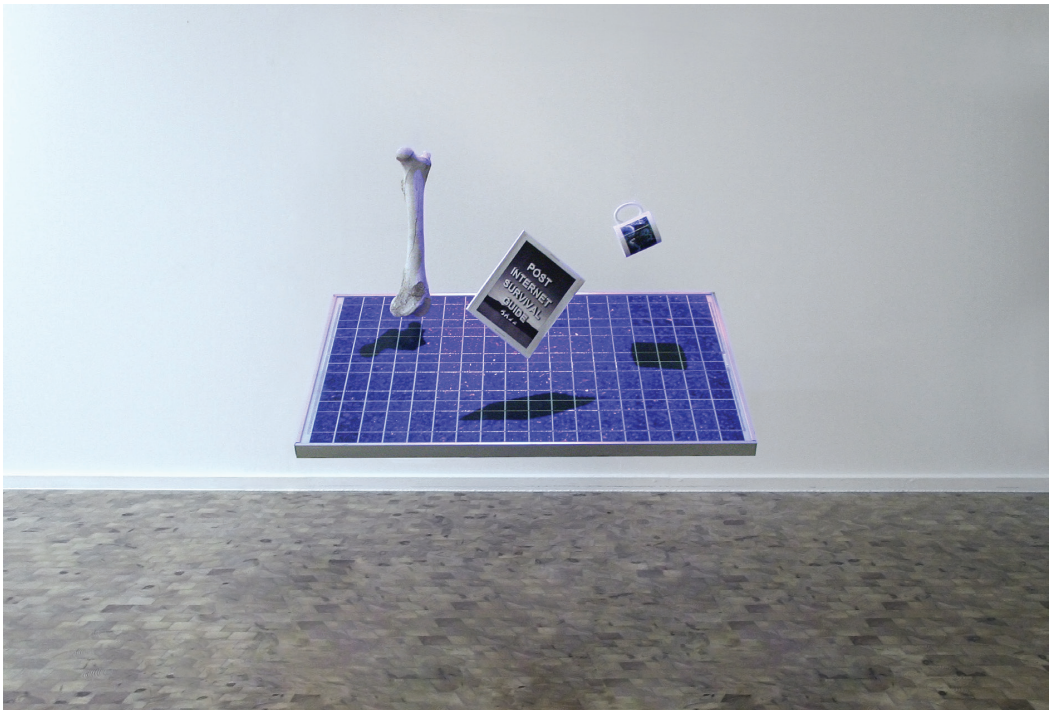
Anthony Antonellis & Arjun Srivatsa, *Net Artist Daily*—*The Huffington Post Internet*, 2013
Fictitious poll



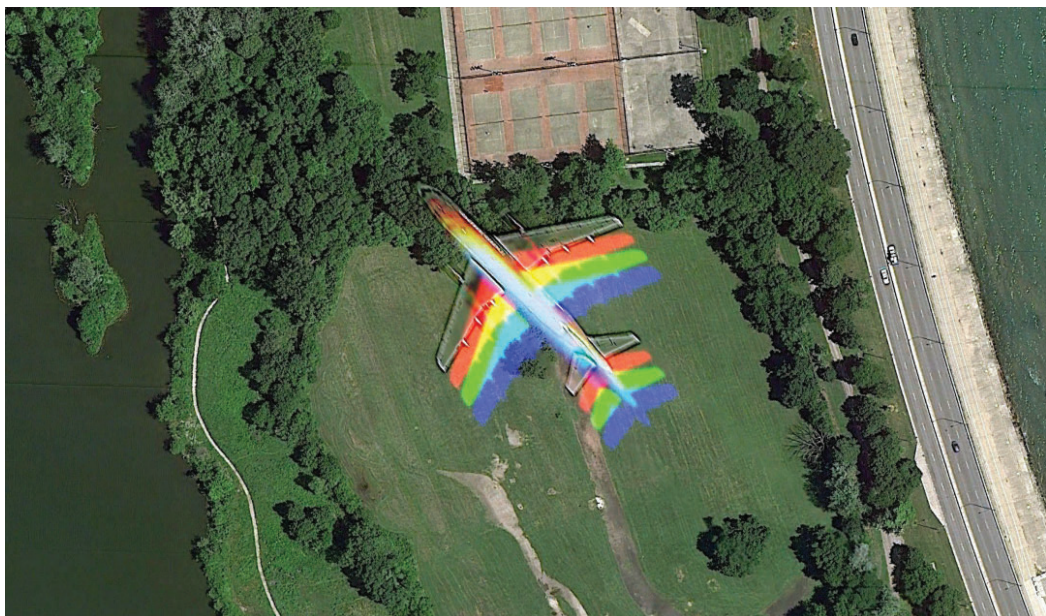
Silver (Petr Svárovský), *Rose*, 1997
Virtual sculpture generated by user input
Project documentation



Anthony Antonellis, *put it on a pedestal.com*, 2011
Interactive virtual gallery space
Screenshot



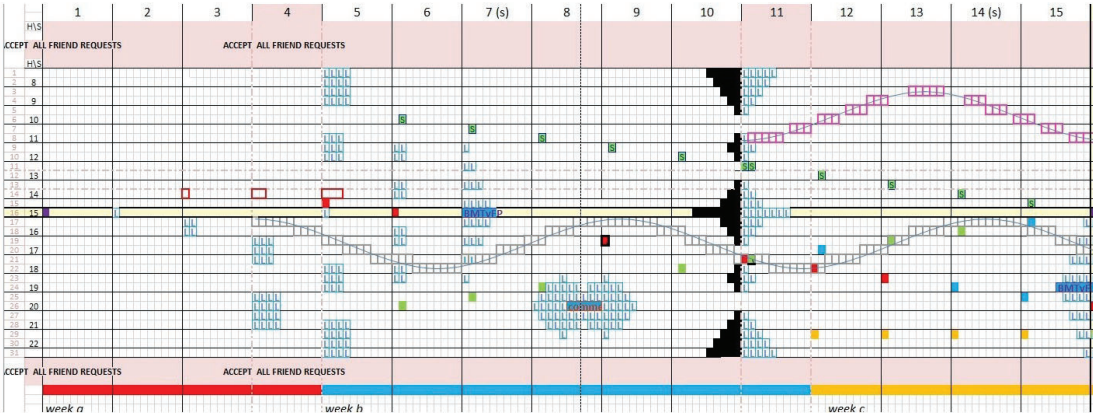
Katja Novitskova et al., *Post Internet Survival Guide*, 2010
FORMATS—installation in physical space, Brakke Grond, Amsterdam, 2010



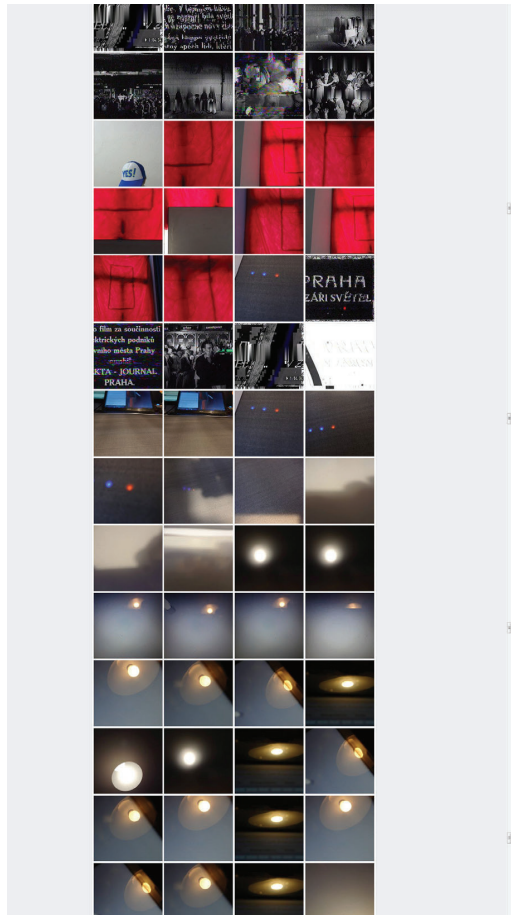
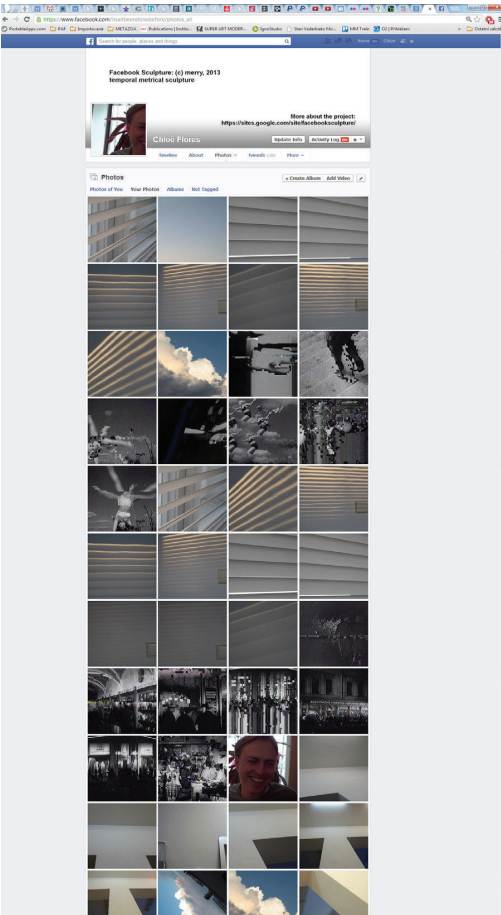
Chicago: 41.785420°, -87.578890°, July 1 2010
Satellite image



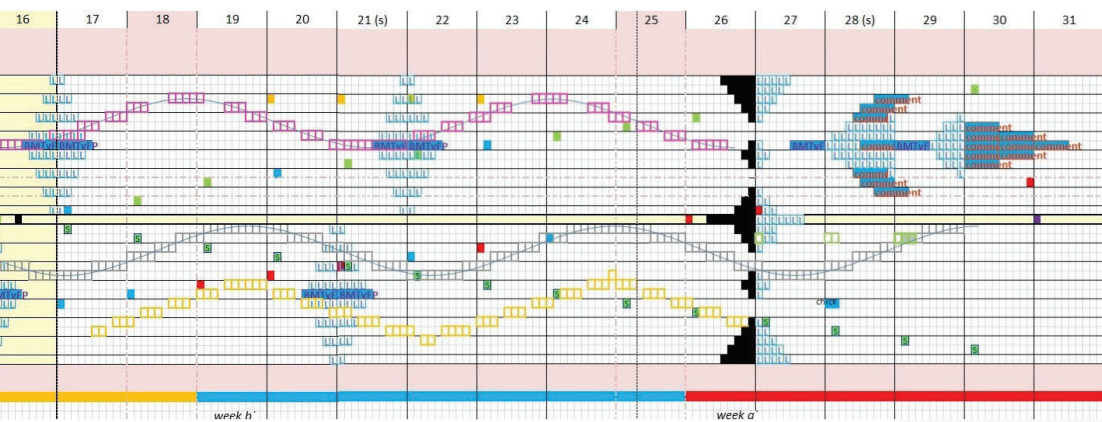
James Bridle, *Rainbow Plane 002*, 2014
1:1 image of a Gulfstream V jet as seen from a satellite, Future Generation Art Prize, PinchukArtCentre, Kiev, 2014



(c) merry, *Facebook Sculpture*, 2013
 Temporal metrical sculpture
 Score



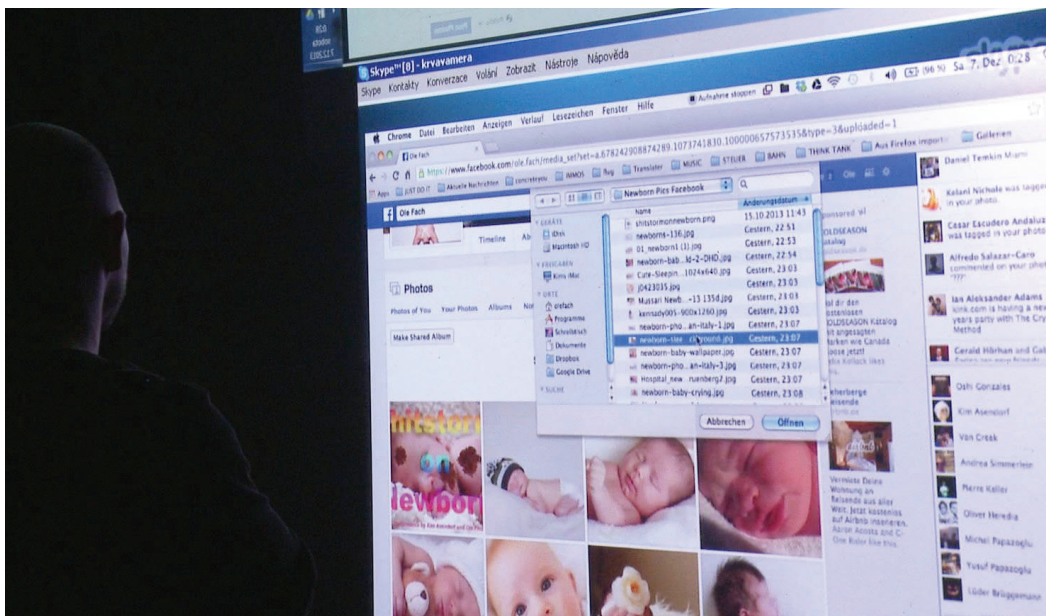
(c) merry, *Facebook Sculpture*, 2013
 Temporal metrical sculpture
 Fragment of the visual line, screenshot



Felipe Rivas San Martín, *El retrato de Intimidat*, 2012
Oil on canvas, 150 × 86 cm
Photo documentation of the painting



Ole Fach, Kim Asendorf, *Shitstorm on Newborn*, December 6 2013
 Online Facebook performance, installation in physical space
 Opaque projection screen, two HD projectors, 12th PAF—Festival of Film Animation and Contemporary Art, Olomouc, Czech Republic



Ole Fach, Kim Asendorf, *Shitstorm on Newborn*, December 6 2013
 Online Facebook performance, installation in physical space
 Video documentation

Marie Meixnerová | January 2013 | December 2014

Our experience with the Facebook network in recent years has influenced not only our use of the Internet and our behaviour, but also the world of art. Art exhibited in galleries, the means of presenting art on the Internet and even more so, the *Internet art*, have all been considerably influenced. “We live in a time when young artists look at each other’s Facebook pages more than each other’s art” (Troemel, Vierkant, and Vickers) and hopefully they have good reason for that. In fact this statement kind of—perhaps absolutely intentionally¹—circumvents the fact that this is no contradiction in terms. The following essay reflects on the social network as a *space for art*.

Owing to Facebook the world is a warm, friendly place where one may acquire hundreds or in fact thousands of friends. These figures do not refer to an ordinary user, however, such figures normally appear on Internet artists’ and other Netizen’s friendlists, therefore they are not exceptional in this environment. Many artists utilize their Facebook friends not only for self-promotion, but also as an *audience* for their live Facebook performances and other specific forms of Net art that are only viable in the Facebook environment (so called *Facebook-based net art* if we are to follow the logic of terms such as Internet-based art, web-based art, YouTube-based net art, laptop-based art, etc.), as well as *material* for their Internet works. Because of such a mass of allied audience which is, thanks to the social network, easy to find, actively become involved in and enlarge, artistic activities on Facebook cheerfully proliferate.

Not only subscribers, friends and friends of friends, but also Facebook pages and their fans, and special Facebook groups clustering users with—ideally—similar interests, serve as hangouts for an ever ready² instant audience. However, since many of these groups are either closed, secret or just poorly accessible to ordinary users, we are not going to deal with them in detail now,³ but we will focus on “open” Facebook projects intended for public presentation on Facebook.

From the very beginning the Internet hosted specific artistic forms, depending on the subject matter of the medium itself. Owing to an unstable nature caused by hasty technological development, Internet art in general is

1 The statement is a result of reaching mutual consensus by the authors of a group article published in the Internet magazine *DIS* (dismagazine.com)—by the authors and curators who have, euphemistically speaking, close relation to the Internet and who here express themselves about their experience with Facebook (Troemel, Vierkant, and Vickers). At the same time it may be understood as a creative act highlighted by overall conception and graphic design of an article based on openly confessed and explicitly (colourfully) marked collective authorship, result of which is the text that can be actually perceived as a textual sculpture.

2 Everyone probably assumes that readiness is not such burning topic here: it is necessary to say that in the wild environment of Facebook, algorithms and users’ settings as well as users’ online and offline habits depending for example on a weekday and day-time, it isn’t the entire content that finds its way to the desired absolute amount of all “waiting” recipients and potential recipients, who are connected with these people.

3 From the viewpoint of this study concern we are interested especially in groups that not only collect references to external works of art, but those that actually share and create art which is receivable only on Facebook network, possibly the art drawing from this network’s aesthetics and rules. Such groups are usually formed of those artists who are at the same time recipients of their colleagues’ works, because they perfectly understand specific expressional dialect and used creative methods (Cf. Troemel, Vierkant, and Vickers). Many of these groups intended primarily for artists are therefore “invitation only” and people may be added only by their member.

relatively fragile and ephemeral when it is not archived in time or able to be restored later. In these cases we are obviously losing the original context—both archived and restored works are predisposed to more advanced software and hardware and therefore they are perceived by means of different technology and (!) moreover in a different contemporary context. Internet art was always associated with being up-to-date and temporary and also with respect to its content, for its ancient effort to respond to current trends and socio-cultural and political issues.

However, art struggles on Facebook with an entirely specific temporal burden which is only barely encountered in other forms of its presentation. Facebook is a real-time web based on an infinite and unflagging stream of information, and on users' reactivity. Compulsion to register information *immediately* and react to it *promptly* is very strong, because it will be lost in this virtual storm in a moment, it will not be up-to-date anymore and it will sink to the bottom of the timeline. Its power will be considerably weakened because people will not try hard to find it retroactively, or search for old news in their feed that occurred while they were offline. It is just too inefficient, and meantime they are being overloaded with new and even newer information, probably more than they are able to process. What is not processed *now* does not actually exist; with delay it is perceived as either inferior or as nothing at all.

Currently Facebook is not merely a tool for *sharing* art which could be presented in other forms (e.g. offline)—nowadays there are better equipped applications for this purpose, such as Pinterest, and especially ArtStack, which is specialised in visual art, based on the principle of following combined with a certain degree of reactivity, enabling users to create collections and arrange materials into sets—but also for using the context of the social site to create.

“Site-specific” is perhaps the best fitting attribute for the individual artistic and presentational projects on Facebook, since they adapt to this specific environment which brings absolutely distinctive reception strategies and they intimately operate with them.⁴ In other words they directly rely on specific temporal and spatial disposition of this medium. For that reason this text is significantly limited by my personal experience and my friends' Facebook engagement, activities, that reach my field of vision. Therefore it involves only information that appeared in my feed, did not escape my attention and has not yet been forgotten. In part this text is also about myself and my Facebook friends.

As indicated above, we will now be interested in artistic forms that are non-perceivable outside Facebook, or perhaps non-decodable without immediate knowledge of its laws, layout and accessible tools, as well as specific forms of art presentation adapted exactly to this particular social network.

Those include the creative use of a user's profile for the purpose of artistic activities that are of a purely aesthetic nature and of a conceptual nature. Instead of status, Rozita Fogelman publishes images composed of graphical symbols. Mastery of this activity was achieved on Facebook pages, especially by Laimonas Zakas, aka Glitchr, who is now a well-known artist whose digital graffiti floods social networks (as well as books, textile goods and gallery premises) and Sayuri Michima's page with minimalistic graphic contents formed of facebookish blue, black, grey and white monochromatic blocks.

⁴ Nicholas O'Brien deals with artists' approach to space in digital projects quite interestingly, see O'Brien.

Textual glitch art and digital graffiti are, however, from time to time and to a certain extent, applied by other users, കൂറിയകൂറിയകൂറിയകൂറിയ, Miron 3 and hundreds of others. It is not “ordinary” ASCII art,⁵ but, as in the case of Glitchr, it is, for example, the hacking of a common function for text entry fields on social pages. Zakas uses non-character Unicode signs so that he utilizes programme mistakes on Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and Google for the purpose of very impressive disturbance of their standardised layouts.

What occurs on Facebook profiles is also the play with identity:⁶ e.g. the curator Chloë Flores interprets her Facebook profile as a public space in which artists from various fields reside, each for one month,⁷ Constant Dullaart gave up on his Facebook profile in May 2012 on the occasion of his public speech *Terms of Service* in New Museum, New York, when he made his login details accessible to the public (“Constant Dullaart”). Now his profile (login: Dullaart@gmail.com, password: depersonalisation) can no longer be entered, because someone else has “empowered” it. Now they are strategically waiting on this seemingly dead account and in due course will probably pose as Dullaart.⁸ As long as you feel an urge to stand out as someone else on Facebook, Kristýna Lutzová’s *loginlogout.cz* Czech project will be enough. Under the author’s name you can log in on perhaps all accessible social networks (login data are published along with the profile picture and in the introductory picture of *loginlogout.cz*).⁹ Another Czech artist, Stanislav Abrahám, publicly opened his account during a Facebook performance/installation in a gallery. *Circle is not line* enabled visitors to participate in the project by uploading white squares.¹⁰

Intentional constructions of reality and purposeful disinformation also occur on Facebook profiles; they are presented either as innocent and relatively witty manifestations, such as duplicating users’ profile pictures with pictures of users with the same name, and then sending them friend requests (due to his project the user known as Casino Roy became famous on the Internet in autumn 2012),¹¹ creating mirror fake profiles of their own doppelgangers (the Polish artist Dominik Podsiadly and his Facebook doppelganger Dominik Podsiadly/Mirror/)—and we also should mention a peculiar network of Luther Blissett users whose friendlists include dozens of identical people,¹² and who

5 ASCII art in Facebook statuses is represented for example by the Czech artist Pe Ku (See <http://www.facebook.com/pe.ku.756>).

6 Construction of avatars on the Internet is interestingly mentioned in the text “Masks of the Global Net.Art” that appeared in the manifesto of global Net.art practice SCHIZOLOGIES. N.I.E.I. (Network Identity Experiments Institute), see “Masks of the Global Net.Art.”

7 For more see Flores.

#mm: “Chloë Flores Facebook Page” residential program (CFFB) was finished at the end of 2013 and during its two-year existence it hosted twenty six artists.

8 We may even guess which artistic group it is (private conversation with Constant Dullaart, December 2012).

9 <http://loginlogout.cz> is a project composed of a website, accounts established via Skype, CSFD, Sound Cloud, Vimeo... ending with Twitter and Gmail where you can log in with the username loginlogout2012 and password kristynalutzova, and of a video (depicting Lutzová browsing) which is usually installed in gallery spaces against an object made of Perspex, personalising a logging window. (As exhibited for example in December 2012 in the Gallery U Mloka in Olomouc as an event of the 11th PAF—Festival of Film Animation in Olomouc).

10 Cf. with Finishing School group residency on Chloë Flores’ profile, see *Being Chloë Flores | 2012*.

11 See for example the note on BuzzFeed: “Guy Duplicates People’s Facebook Pic Then Requests Friendship.”

12 #mm: All would be explained during a brief visit on Wikipedia or directly on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Luther-Blissett/143422539007048#>. Luther Blissett is an “open reputation,” artificially created identity, shared by hundreds of artists and activists all over Europe and the United States since 1994. Borrowing the identity of Luther Blissett guarantees anonymity in a similar way to *loginlogout.cz*. See “About Luther Blissett.”

fill their own “about sections” with clearly false information (non-existing places, fake companies, professions, careers), mostly with the purpose of having an aesthetic or humorous impact on other users, but also of course to protect their own privacy, and perhaps to express their displeasure with the enforced filling in of personal data, maybe just to make a prank of this absurd process.

The submission of misleading information, both in obligatory fields, and by means of one’s own conduct on Facebook, including mystifying the content of status (one strategy frequently applied all over social networks is the sarcastic copying of an offered text: for example Constant Dullaart’s Facebook fan page was entirely based on this strategy) is used to a certain extent by most users. Netizens with friendlists of thousands often manipulate reality and only their “real friends” are able to recognise the manipulation. It can be presented either as liking inappropriate pages, tagging in photos where the concerned person is missing, or Facebook visits to events and places where the person has never actually been. Such a profile on Facebook becomes more and more confusing because these tactics intentionally distort reality and self-presentation. People we don’t know dispose of false information material, context advertising is ineffective, etc.... Something that Facebook *rigidly* disavows in its rules¹³ thus occurs (therefore “dear kids, do not try it at home”). Sometimes it is only about mere users’ fancies, but in some cases it is about artistic acts that go considerably beyond the framework of Facebook (artistic projects even do exist based directly on the manipulation of one’s own identity), becoming, in a way, long-term performances. Facebook itself played with its users’ identities, when icons of profile pictures and followed pages were weirdly mixed this year¹⁴ shortly before midnight of New Year’s Eve.

Fan pages, which are abundantly used by artists, serve the purpose of live Facebook performances in real time, as well as for their retroactive documentation. *Will Miss You* presents a collection of Esteban Ottaso’s abandoned Facebook friends (*Will Miss You—An (abandoned) Facebook friends collection*. Esteban Ottaso, 2012) and thematises the persistent struggle of Facebook to keep its users through (unpleasant) emotional blackmail (and visual storm). *I Like It* is about coping with the omnipresent Like button, which persistently appears within various, often considerably obscure contents scattered all over the Internet, and which people accidentally encounter during their work. In this project the artist known as (c) merry¹⁵ did not create any content but only liked every time she encountered this option. The *I Like It* is interesting when contrasted with the *Tweet It* project, which was carried out at the same time and offers a possible comparison between the servility of these two networks.

Analogously, the same author commented on the flood of unvalued data during the performance appealing in an open participation, *2013 Welcome Future* (December 31, 2012 and January 1, 2013), consisting in the persistent sharing of all contents concerning the New Year’s arrival as displayed in the Facebook feed. “A collection of shared love, transformed by Facebook into something unwanted and annoying,” was thus created.¹⁶

¹³ See “Facebook terms and policies.”

¹⁴ #mm: December 31, 2012.

¹⁵ #mm: The artist working under the alias (c) merry is a creative alter-ego of the author of this essay. As part of the complicated work with identity during the time this essay has been written, Marie Meixnerová refers to (c) merry in the third person.

¹⁶ #mm: See “Merry—crazy stuff created by (c) merry” for the official description of the project *2013 Welcome Future*.

Facebook fan pages also serve as an ideal place of origin for special online exhibition premises; Facebook artistic galleries with their own exhibition programmes and operating under curatorial patronage. (We do not mean Facebook pages of either online¹⁷ or offline galleries, but exhibition premises in the true sense.) Also these galleries rely on specific Facebook dispositions and their programme composed of digital art is fed to their fans gradually. Worth of attention is #0000FF,¹⁸ which, in 2012, organised four high-quality exhibitions and the Gallery Online, led by Ronen Shai from New York and Thomas Cheneseau from Paris, which originated around June 2012 and since then has presented the work of several famous figures such as Laimonas Zakas, MESMEON, Erica Lapadat-Janzen and Tony Stirner. The watching a recording of Zakas/Glitchr's solo show *Horse* is highly recommended, since it is impossible to make such animation on Facebook nowadays.¹⁹

Other noteworthy projects include art works and art projects re-contextualising and transforming the typical iconography of this social network and are again managed on Facebook or they go beyond this platform, into online and offline space. Breath taking videos (e.g. Thomas Cheneseau's page *χοοqεεβε*, including such videos as *News Feed*, *FACEBOOK INSIDE*, *Cycles*, *αρεβη* and a portrait of a girl composed of Facebook icons, which is called *FACEBOOK ICONES GIRL*), graphical collages and digital art (*Δεριζαματζορ Προμπλεμ Ιναυστραλια*, Kaja Cxyzy Andersen, Ellectra Radikal, Anthony Antonellis, Jasper Elings, Thomas Cheneseau, The Rodina...) and audio files verbalising Facebook operations that are often combined with videos²⁰ are therefore spreading through the network.

Other projects play with the Facebook layout: some of them (often fictitious) offer a change from boring blue to more creative colours such as green, pink and red. *Pizzabook* may change your Facebook into a pizza, but go ahead, put your trust in the artists-hackers and install strange and insidious files into your computer, as Mark Zuckerberg warns in his status: "Information for all who using Facebook / Hello all !, Greetings from me, I asked you all, don't ever try to use a program that changes Facebook's Background. The Facebook team would never support that so be careful. Maybe the program that tells you to change the Facebook Background is just a virus! Regards, Mark Zuckerberg." But thanks to Wall Cover any profile may be quite easily personalised "within the law and safety."

The fact that distinctive works of art, which use aesthetic starting points offered by this specific space, originate on users' homepages is highlighted by Kamilia Kard's project *Best Wall Cover* which gathers creative profile headers—Wall Covers—on an external page (at the same time many participating artists considered that contributing to Kard's collection was a kind of performance, e.g. Erica Lapadat-Janzen). Wall Cover is thus a refuge for not only visual creative expression, but also for conceptual performances

17 Such as Bubblebyte.org, Click Gallery, Temporary Stedelijk, Print Fiction, e-permanent, CERMÁ, SUPER ART MODERN MUSEUM—SPAMM, Domain Gallery, GLLTC/H and others.

18 #mm: #0000FF ended its exhibition activities in September 2014. "#0000FF was a non-commercial online gallery, operating under the guise of a [F]acebook fan page, devoted to promoting the work of upcoming new media and [N]et art artists. After running for two years and presenting [fourteen] shows, the project has exhausted its potential (that of a gallery operating in a social media confinement) but I hope it has contributed its two cents worth to the discourse about online/emerging curatorial practices and [N]et art. [...] All the shows will remain accessible for an indefinite period and a screenshot archive is also available upon request" (*Georges Jacotey*).

19 #mm: Zakas hacks existing errors in systems through his works. These errors are usually removed by programmers, since he actually highlights them with his artistic activities.

20 For example insertion of a link to sound file—I Like It message "read" by a text-to-speech software—into a commentary instead of liking a contribution, and documentary screen capture video by Anthony Antonellis *How Nicolas Bourriaud Uses Facebook*.

(Silvio Lorusso, *851px x 315px—A Facebook Cover Performance*, 2012) and curatorial projects (what the Facebook page *Netarty* is aiming for within the framework of guerrilla curating conception).

Similar to the web extension *Text Free Browsing* (Rafaël Rozendaal and Jonas Lund), which enables one to eliminate disturbing text and enjoy the raw visuals of a website (including Facebook) during surfing, *Facebook Demetricator* also offers Facebook free from all annoying figures. This Ben Grosser's project stirred up enthusiasm in the autumn,²¹ but it remains a question as to how many people actually decided to deprive themselves of the possibility of checking the number of notifications and friend requests. Anthony Antonellis' external page *Facebook Bliss* works the other way round: users' instant cognitive joy is generated by the opportunity to adjust the number of notifications which may be manually increased at will.

And what about all those friends you have gathered? Erica Lapadat-Janzen's Facebook video *Lost + Found FB friends 2012*, a short gloss uploaded as a New Year's evaluation (consisting of screen-captured rolling through an endless friend list, which remind us of the perverted user/social habits of heavy users in similar way to the already mentioned screen-capture video *How Nicolas Bourriaud Uses Facebook*), and a video tutorial suggesting how to unsubscribe from the Facebook activities of the artist and theorist Brad Troemel (by Will Neibergall and Julian Restrepo),²² will serve as an inspiration to put your feed into some sort of order. If you just want to fight the never-ending flood of selfies, you can avail yourself of Dušan Barok's *FaceLeaks* project; by means of an additional button you can easily and quickly "leak" your Facebook friends' pictures on the FaceLeaks website. Paolo Cirio and Alessandro Ludovico, the authors of the *Face to Facebook* project, have "leaked" profiles on a large scale. In 2011 they gathered one million Facebook profiles and with the help of facial expression analysis software they placed them on www.lovely-faces.com, the dating agency website. Detailed information about how and why they did that and on the effect it had (including a legal dispute) may be found on the project website.

If you are *truly* fed up with virtual reality, here comes the *Web 2.0 Suicide Machine* that helps you terminate your life on a social network comfortably and to once again meet your real neighbours (it is something that developers are not happy to see,²³ but on the other hand it saves you the troubles of a deserter as thematised by the above mentioned collection of "persistent friends" *Will Miss You*).

A large number of mutually connected friends with similar information background and knowledge of the same visual vernaculars form great conditions for the successful transmission of these elements—specific visual signs and Facebook means of expression—into an external environment, and for further creative work with them.

The project of the net artist Kaja Cxy Andersen, whose Tumblr account appears as a quite disturbing, tuned high-tech version of Facebook,²⁴ and

²¹ #mm: 2012.

²² #mm: Inaccessible at the time of publication of this book.

²³ See the letter which authors of *Suicide Machine* received from Facebook, and on basis of which Facebook had to be removed from the list of comfortable suicides "Re: Cease and Desist Violating Facebook's Statement of Rights and Responsibilities."

²⁴ #mm: Other "Facebook" Tumblrs included for example <http://faobook.tumblr.com/>, however, it was no longer accessible at the time of publication of this book (nevertheless it is archived by the Internet Archive, see <http://faobook.tumblr.com/>).

Anthony Antonellis' *Facebook Timeline 2012*, both met with great success. Owing to Facebook developers, each user could sweeten their boring festive days during last December with automatic generation of the most significant moments of their Facebook life of the past year. What Antonellis thinks about Facebook life (and be sure his opinion is not atypical) may be recognised in his *Year in Review*, which is strongly authorial and enriched with the biggest Facebook hoax of 2012.²⁵

Bringing Facebook out of Facebook—literally—is applied by Ryder Ripps in his *Ryder Ripps Facebook* project, which enables users to download the author's whole Facebook profile up to November 2011, as an archive.²⁶ Several artists lay out their professional websites on the basis of the notoriously known blue layout (e.g. Martin Mlaka),²⁷ and others (such as Pedro Paulo Rocha aka Molotov Frames or Atraktor Null) take photos of their onscreen experiences and then upload them on Tumblr.

The effect achieved is similar to that of the *Polaroid Cacher*, the tool which enables users to catch digital experiences from the online world by means of instant photographs (Adrià Navarro and DI Shin, in cooperation with Ananya Mukherjee and Marta Augé). Of course users can bring Facebook iconography into the real world (such as the above mentioned Ryder Ripps in his project *Facebook Art*) as authentic and material works of art in physical spaces, as graffiti and as oil paintings exhibited in galleries.

Before abandoning Facebook-based art for good, it is necessary to add one more technical note concerning Facebook use: even artists follow EdgeRank (Widman) and they try to reach satisfactory merits within the range of contents. In what way does the effort “to endear” influence the aesthetic tropes used, or possibly lead to an aggregation of prefabricated contents with a high probability of “popularity” at the expense of the artistic contentment of the work? These questions must be asked individually. This is where the assumed border between a user and an artist, art and meme, or possibly, with great exaggeration, Net art mainstream and the “real art”, belongs. As it results from this text, as I firmly believe, not only pop Net art and digital art proliferate on Facebook, but also their more experimental forms, conceptual Facebook-based, site specific Net art and Net art which extensively uses the processes of remediation.

A note on Facebook as a space for art: update from December 2014

These enthusiastic remarks from a few years ago reflect the situation at the end of 2012 (one which also persisted in 2013) in which, from the present viewpoint, Facebook artistic activities reached their climax. Many galleries and curatorial projects to which this text refers have, in the meantime, closed down. The feeling of enthusiasm and longing to explore the possibilities of distinctive space have been replaced by feelings of tiredness. Does it mean that Facebook art has become empty?

²⁵ Concerning copyright of the contents inserted by users in connection with modified Facebook terms and conditions see Antonellis. <http://anthonyantonellis.com/yearinreview>.

²⁶ The work was presented as a part of “The Download” Series on Rhizome server (<http://rhizome.org/the-download/>), the programme that offers its users a free download of one selected work of art every month, and thus ranges on the boundaries of curatorial, exhibition and collection projects, making interesting news from digital art famous. The whole Facebook profile is exhibited on <http://ryder-ripps.com/facebook/html/profile.html>.

²⁷ This practice is in contradiction with copyright, therefore neither <http://martinmlaka.com/> web page kept its blue layout for long.

Individual artistic projects continue, as shown by the *Facebook* page which was established at the end of 2014 for the purpose of gathering information for the forthcoming publication on Facebook-based art which is to be released in 2015.²⁸ Transformations of Facebook algorithms mean that the programme of galleries is no longer displayed in feeds, but you have to visit the gallery yourself. Therefore it is increasingly difficult to follow individual artistic activities. Friends and community members are disappearing from your feed. Facebook is restrictive, corporate, exhausting and being abandoned. Facebook elements are slowly increasing, declining, changing; a visual vernacular is being developed. The form of Facebook and its functions are different with respect to its geographical locations and language variants; some of the artistic projects that rely on certain Facebook “appearance” and functions may therefore be perceived differently than intended.

On Facebook as a social medium it is possible (absolutely naturally) to observe the prevailing tendencies to the performativity of projects. However, the character of performances is also being transformed, becoming more and more conventional and losing the features that made them unique. Even from now on Facebook complies with identity performances.²⁹ However, temporarily oriented projects based on an artist’s physical presence “at a keyboard” (or more precisely in virtual space) have lost their sense because the function enabling timing of posts has been introduced, which enables Facebook users to publish anything at any time with no referential connection to the “here and now” (Facebook is not “home” any more, but it can be “paid a visit” from time to time to schedule one’s posts). Temporal, and maybe the most interesting element, slipped away. A signal of a physical presence became its mere index, and even worse, a flabby symbol.

The fundamental moment for preserving social-media-based art “for future generations” is the development of the archiving tool *Colloq*, which was released by *Rhizome* in 2014. “Colloq, a new conservation tool that will help artists preserve social media projects, not only by archiving them, but by replicating the exact look and layout of the sites used and the interactions with other users” (Sutton). Of course, not all projects may be preserved in this way, but it may definitely help their documentation. The first and so far the only project archived in this way was the social media performance *Excellences & Perfections* by the artist and feminist Amalia Ulman.³⁰

What continues to thrive is “Facebook beyond Facebook,” the remediation tendencies that have been quite successfully incorporated into mainstream art. Conversely, Facebook-based net art per se—projects which originated on Facebook, from Facebook and for Facebook that are absolutely non-transferable and absolutely (?) impossible to exhibit—are disappearing because of the restrictive Facebook policy as well as the growing number of “inhabitants” of this specific environment. Avant-garde is becoming pop and Facebook-based art is dead. Does that ring a bell?

28 “We are launching *Facebook*, a page dedicated to a future edition of a book. We want to collect all Facebook art activities. Please LIKE & SHARE the page. Feel free to post your screenshots, videos, .gif, sounds, art projects, references... Deadline February 10th, 2015” (*Facebook*).

29 Recently e.g. *Excellences & Perfections* by Amalia Ulman across the social sites (especially on Instagram).

30 For more details see Conor.

First published in Czech in the film and new media magazine *25fps* as Meixnerová, Marie. "Facebook: sociální síť jako prostor pro umění." *25fps*. 25fps, Feb. 22 2013. Web. Sept. 21 2014.

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For the purpose of this publication, the text has been updated with the final section "A note on Facebook as a space for art: update from December 2014."

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Facebook pages:

#0000FF | <http://www.facebook.com/h000off>
 Atraktor Null | <http://www.facebook.com/DzigZ>
 Constant Dullaart | <http://www.facebook.com/constantdullaart>
 constant dullaart | <http://www.facebook.com/pages/constant-dullaart/7367582617>
 കുറിച്യകുറിച്യകുറിച്യ (Digitalcorpse) | <https://www.facebook.com/AaBbCcDdes>
 Dominik Podsiadly (Mirror) | <http://www.facebook.com/dominik.podsiadly.fake>
 Dominik Podsiadly | <http://www.facebook.com/dominik.podsiadly.art>
 Facebook | <https://www.facebook.com/unlikeart/>
 Gallery Online | <https://www.facebook.com/GalleryOnline>
 Chloë Flores | <http://www.facebook.com/itsallbeendonebefore>
 I Like It, / (c) merry, 2012/ | <http://www.facebook.com/pages/I-Like-It/243658325718831>
 ശ്യാമപ്രസാദ്, Systaime (MichaëlBorras) et al.
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/ശ്യാമപ്രസാദ്/188539507829810>
 LaimonasZakas | <http://www.facebook.com/glitchr>
 loginlogout.cz | <http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100003092834024>
 Luther Blissett | <http://www.facebook.com/luther.blissett.3597> (and many others)
 Netarty | <http://www.facebook.com/netarty/info>
 Pe Ku | <http://www.facebook.com/pe.ku.756>
 Rozita Fogelman | <http://www.facebook.com/rozifogel>
 Sayuri Michima | <http://www.facebook.com/sayurimichima>
 Will Miss You—An (abandoned) Facebook friends collection (Esteban Ottaso, 2012)
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Will-Miss-You/313937475385504>

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 2013 Welcome Future / (c) merry, Dec. 12 2012 – Jan. 1 2013 (documentation/
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Merry-crazy-stuff-created-by-c-merry/103382753059393>
 851px x 315px—A Facebook Cover Performance (Silvio Lorusso, 2012)
<http://silviolorusso.com/work/851px-x-315px/>
 Being Chloë Flores (Finishing School, March 2012)
<http://finishing-school-art.net/Being-Chloe-Flores-2012>
 Best Wall Cover (Kamilia Kard, 2012) | <http://bestwallcover.tumblr.com/>
 Bubblebyte.org | <http://www.bubblebyte.org/>
 CERMÂ | <http://www.cerma.de/>
 Circle is not line (Stanislav Abrahám, 2012) | <https://vimeo.com/45731362#at=0>
 Click Gallery | <http://clickgallery.us/>
 Domain Gallery | <http://www.domain-gallery.net/>
 e-permanent | <http://www.e-permanent.org/>
 Excellences & Perfections (Amalia Ulman, 2014)
 Excellences & Perfections / Amalia Ulman, 2014 (documentation/
<http://webenact.rhizome.org/excellences-and-perfections>
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<http://www.face-to-facebook.net/>
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- GLI.TC/H | <http://gli.tc/h/>
- How Nicolas Bourriaud Uses Facebook* (Anthony Antonellis, 2011)
<http://www.youtube.com/embed/NWLOobt86mc?rel=0>
<http://faeobook.tumblr.com/> | x
- Laimonas Zakas—Solo Show (Laimonas Zakas, July 20 – Sept. 16 2012 /documentation/)
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- loginlogout.cz* (Kristýna Lutzová, 2012) | <http://www.loginlogout.cz/>
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http://www.facebook.com/video/embed?video_id=10151187998629856
- The New Museum | www.newmuseum.org
- Pizzabook* (Hypercolour, 2012) | <http://www.pizzabook.biz/>
- Polaroid Cacher* (Adrià Navarro; DI Shin; Ananya Mukherjee; Marta Augé, 2013)
<http://adrianavarro.net/projects/polaroid-cacher/>
- Print Fiction | <http://www.printfiction.net/>
- Ryder Ripps Facebook* (Ryder Ripps, 2011) | http://ryder-ripps.com/ryderripps_facebook/
<http://ryder-ripps.com/facebook/html/profile.html>
- SUPER ART MODERN MUSEUM—SPAMM | <http://spamm.fr/>
- Temporary Stedelijk | <http://temporarystedelijk.com/>
- Text Free Browsing* (Rafaël Rozendaal; Jonas Lund; 2013)
<http://www.newrafael.com/text-free-browsing/>
- To se mi libí* / (c) merry, 2012/ | <https://soundcloud.com/m-160/to-se-mi-l-b>
- Tweet It* / (c) merry, 2012/ | <https://twitter.com/#!/TweetIt6>
- Web 2.0 Suicide Machine* (moddr_ & Fresco Gamba et al., 2009) | <http://suicidemachine.org/>
- Webenact (live web archive) | <http://webenact.rhizome.org/>

4. *Post-Internet*

*Stand for Nothing, Fall for Everything.*¹

#post-internet #current_trend #presentation #monetization

¹ Pallasvuo, Jaakko. *Stand for Nothing, Fall for Everything*. 2011. Digital image. *You Are Here—Art After the Internet*. Ed. Omar Kholeif. Manchester: Cornerhouse, 2014. 119. Print.

The term Post-Internet was probably used for the very first time by German artist, critic and curator Marisa Olson (b. 1977). Luis Doulas explains that Olson was looking for an appropriate expression to describe her own artistic practice while giving an interview for the website *We Make Money Not Art* (2008).¹ “Her definition acknowledges that Internet art can no longer be seen as strictly computer/[I]nternet based, but rather, can be identified as any type of art that is in some way influenced by the [I]nternet and digital media” (qtd. in Olson, “Postinternet”). *Post* was not to mean *after* in the sense of the end of, or taking a stand against the Internet, but should indicate a recourse to Internet ways of thinking. Similar concepts were labelled at approximately the same time by Los Angeles net artist and founding member of the *Nasty Nets* surf club, Guthrie Lonergan (b. 1984) in an interview with Thomas Beard as Internet Aware Art. So-called New Aesthetics is among the categories of contemporary art based on experience with the Internet. “The New Aesthetics is a term coined by James Bridle, used to refer to the increasing appearance of the visual language of digital technology and the [I]nternet in the physical world, and the blending of the virtual and the physical” (Kholeif).²

While New Aesthetics is a relatively new term that simply refers to the research of its author, a lively discussion has unfolded over the last six years around the phenomenon covered by the previously mentioned terms, Internet Aware Art and Post-Internet. Since its origin, the term Post-Internet has frequently been rejected as an opaque, confusing and ill-defined neologism which, however, has gained acceptance and become deeply rooted in the contemporary discourse about the condition of contemporary art and culture (Connor, “What’s Postinternet”).³ Today, the term is used primarily as a popular label for contemporary visual art and is associated with specific techniques and visual styles, consisting mainly of “blending digital collage with digital painting in 2D prints, videos, or sculptural objects, and the appropriation or adoption of glossy commercial aesthetics, images, and products” (“Video of Post Net Aesthetics”). It refers to the creation of art structurally based outside the Internet network, which is often designed for its presentation online (objects that are objects and concurrently images of those objects circulating in the specific context of the network).

However, a convincing and generally accepted definition of Post-Internet still does not exist. On the contrary, constant correction and redefinition of the term represents an integral part of the lively and ever-evolving debate on this issue. Marisa Olson revised her original proposition with respect to the next five-years’ evolution, to state that all contemporary works are already Post-Internet, since they have been produced in the Post-Internet era (Olson, “Postinternet” 215). Similarly, according to Louis Doulas, the founder of the project *Pool*, which between 2011 and 2012 explored the relationship between contemporary art and the Internet, “Post[-]Internet is not a category but a condition: a contemporary art” (Doulas). Rather than only referring to art, this term can denote the whole era. Questions relating to Post-Internet artworks, their production, presentation, monetisation and

1 See Olson, “Interview with Marisa Olson.” What she later called Post-Internet, Olson already described as “art after the Internet” in an online discussion in 2006 (see Olson, “Net Results: Closing the gap between art and life online”) and subsequently in the first *Net Aesthetic 2.0* panel Rhizome in 2006 (See Connor). However, the text does not contain the term “Post-Internet” that only appears on the art scene later.

2 For more on the New Aesthetic, see Bridle, “About”, “The New Aesthetic” and “The New Aesthetic: James Bridle”; Covert; or Kasprzak and Hyde. The term only acquired larger attention in 2012 at the SxSV conference in Austin, see Bridle, “#sxaesthetic”.

3 Cf. also Connor, “Post-Internet: What It Is and What It Was” 57.

theoretical conception are the focus of the fourth thematic chapter of this anthology.

After Marisa Olson and Guthrie Lonergan, the next most important figure for the beginning of the theoretical discussions is New York critic and curator Gene McHugh (b. 1981). In 2009, the Warhol Foundation awarded McHugh the Arts Writers Grant and that allowed him to devote nine months to a critical examination and historical contextualisation of contemporary art that could be considered “Post-Internet.” Olson’s and Lonergan’s theses, that McHugh further articulated, served as the starting point for his blog entitled *Post Internet*. His introductory contribution from December 2009 is published in this anthology under the title “Post-Internet.”

In her scholarly essay “From Browser to Gallery (and Back): The Commodification of Net Art 1990–2011,” American artist and theorist Jennifer Chan (b. 1988) offers an overview of the principles of presentation and monetisation of Internet and Post-Internet art up to 2011.⁴ In her second text “Notes on Post-Internet” she critically evaluates the sphere of contemporary Post-Internet art and theory. Curator Omar Kholeif, editor of the book *You Are Here—Art After the Internet*, included her essay from 2014 in the section entitled “Provocations.” Two formally very different texts from a single author are published in this anthology to illustrate the diversity of discourse and the alter egos which a contemporary artist-curator-theorist-critic-teacher has to adopt in order to succeed in expressing their opinions.

#mm

4 A number of significant events also took place in this area between the writing of this essay in 2011 and the release of this publication in 2015. These include, for instance, the first auction dealing exclusively with digital art *Paddles ON!* organized by the auction house Phillips in collaboration with the microblogging platform and social network Tumblr. The auction took place for the first time in October 2013 in New York and for the second time in July 2014 in London (see *Paddles ON!*). At the turn of 2014, the first edition of *The Wrong—New Digital Art Biennale*, a large-scale biennale of contemporary digital art with thirty online curated pavilions that was centred on the network and originated in São Paulo, took place between November 1, 2013 and January 31, 2014. The second biennale is to take place between November 1, 2015 and January 31, 2016. See *The Wrong*. In August 2013, New York net artist Anthony Antonellis get a “digital tattoo”—he had an NFC chip implanted in the back of his hand that he later used to exhibit animated gifs (see Antonellis). The online tabloid Net art magazine *Netartist Daily* (2013, created by Anthony Antonellis and Arjun Srivatsa; no longer active) gave net artists space to express their strong, often theoretical viewpoints on contemporary Internet art without being restricted to the essay format or having to produce an academic text. (One such viewpoint is expressed in the form of a false pie chart placed under the title “[POLL] Majority of Net Artists are not Net Artists. Net Artist Daily.” in the Appendix of Images.)

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From Browser to Gallery (and Back): The Commodification of Net Art 1990–2011¹

Jennifer Chan | September 2011–January 2012

Since its beginnings in the late 1990s, Internet art has had a fickle relationship with museums. While commissions and grants have been established for media arts in Europe and America, the relationship between Internet art and its irregular appearance in institutions demonstrates that it has not yet been fully embraced by mainstream contemporary art.

Due to variations in the ease with which it can be reproduced, the curation and collection of Net art has presented challenges and transformations to the traditional operations of art distribution. Sculptures, digital paintings, installations and performances appear on the Internet as documentation of art, whilst animated GIFs and videos are moving images that require browsers, screens or projections as the apparatus for (re)presentation. This essay traces the shifts in the value of Internet art from browser to gallery, and compares disparate examples of the curation, collection and sale of Net art, past and present. Some of the questions that initiated this inquiry are:

- Can Internet art make money as with other artistic genres?
- Who buys Internet art?
- How has value been ascribed to Net art as a freely accessible form?
- How has web-based art been curated and sold in the gallery system?
- What implications does monetisation have for existing modes of distribution and the definition of a collectible art object?

As a result of decentralized distribution, the media object undergoes reification when the documentation of an art object is reproduced and viewed more than the object that is represented within it. In its move from digital to physical exhibition spaces that can be self-organized or affiliated with professional institutions, web-based art accrues exhibition value. As Nicholas O'Brien has observed concerning the paradoxical installation demands of media objects: "...there is an unexpected reliability and expectancy for physicality to substantiate a work—or else to give any ephemerality of a medium some sense of belonging within the gallery."

Commodification occurs in the physical representation of a digital media object for exhibition in a physical gallery space, where screen-based media becomes an object of culture for visual consumption and contemplation. I will compare traditional approaches to selling with alternative, artist-run exhibitions in order to explore the creation of value for Net art beyond the computer interface. In this study I trace shifts in the value of Net art (in particular, the concept of aura and the move from free distribution to

¹ Advised by Professor Chris Hanson, Syracuse University. Special thanks to Jon Cates and Curt Cloninger.

spatialized, saleable commodities). Finally, I argue that the most effective way to monetize Net art is not through selling a physical analogue of the digital object, but through the contextual integration of the buying process into the completion of the artwork.

A brief definition of Net art

There are many definitions of what constitutes Internet art of the present. Known interchangeably as “Net art” (and “Net.art” in its early days), Internet art has developed into a pluralist practice that takes form not only as websites, but as livestreamed performances, software modifications, online games and applications, anonymous personas, image collection, and digital imaging.² Besides commenting on web culture and the influence of technology on everyday life, Net art practices utilize the Internet as the primary context for art distribution. However, for the purposes of this investigation I will examine the shifts in economic and cultural value in terms of browser-based and screen-based art, because it is included less often in museum exhibitions.

Net.art, Net art, Post-Internet art, web-based art

Media art historians and curators have characterized Net art as anti-institutional because its earliest artists chose the Internet to provide a cost-free encounter with art outside a gallery setting.³ These principles are echoed in an instructional Net.art manifesto by net.artists Alexei Shulgin and Natalie Bookchin in 1999.⁴ Their definitions of Net.art maintained that the genre would compromise “0%” to traditional models of distribution and institutional operations (Bookchin and Shulgin). However, as the list of declarations continued, both artists self-deprecatingly noted that the key to long-term success included involvement in both online and contemporary art events in physical museum spaces. Museums and galleries are always valuable exhibition venues for net artists as any work exhibited gains affiliation with a concrete institution in the larger art world (Graham and Cook). Besides the possibility of elevating it to canonical status, an artist’s work reaches a gallery-going audience instead of disparate and inattentive Internet users. It is the liminal context of the museum that grants the artwork the space for viewer contemplation.

In recent years, scholars have employed *Post-Internet* to describe art with regard to the condition where the Internet has become more of a necessity and a banality than a novel technology (Olson). Such works differ from the

2 Josephine Bosma notes that the definition of Net art is not confined to websites, but also surprisingly incorporates pre-existing, non-technological media such as performance. “It covers not only browser[-]based art (which should be clear) or the even more restrictive definition of ‘site[-]based’ art, but also art that happens in any other kind of software, any different kind of time frame to the individual now-ness of site[-]based, site[-]anchored art.” See Bosma, “Between Moderation and Extremes.”

3 Curators Christiane Paul and Steve Dietz mentioned that Net art operates rather independently of museums. Paul notes that “...characteristics of so-called new media art have introduced a shift from the object to the process [...] digital art resists ‘objectification’ and has changed traditional notions of the ‘art object’.” See Paul, “Challenges for a Ubiquitous Museum;” or Dietz.

4 #mm: See Bookchin, Natalie and Alexei Shulgin. “Introduction to net.art (1994–1999)” reprinted in this anthology.

formalist play on code and information architecture that was more visible in late-1990s Net.art. More willing to exhibit in galleries and mostly trained in art institutions, emerging artists are modifying artworks for different contexts of presentation in physical space and cyberspace. Having witnessed increasingly postmedia processes of art production on the Internet, I am prompted to use the term *web-based art* interchangeably with *Net art*. It suggests that the Internet is the artwork's primary medium for public distribution, but also implies a possible exhibition in offline environments.

Styrofoam, histogram curves from video stills, auto exposure, colour digital fingerprint. Exploring the unfixed properties of the digital index and its representation of objects, the artwork of Oliver Laric and Artie Vierkant demonstrates the versioning⁵ of an image and an idea for both online and physical exhibition environments. Artie Vierkant's *Monochrome Arc* and *Copy* are auto-exposed video stills that have been converted to digitally printed sculptures. Their shape and structure symbolically refer to light values (histograms) in the original images. Citing different models of exhibition, from the physical gallery to the "online-only" Whitney Museum, curator Christiane Paul observed: "Variability entails a fluent transition between the different manifestations of a 'virtual object' [...] the same work could potentially be shown as an installation, projection, or within a kiosk set-up" (Paul, "Challenges for a Ubiquitous Museum"). Laric and Manovich refer to the process of adapting an artwork for a gallery as versioning; Quaranta calls it "translation" (*In Your Computer* 76). Assembled by Katja Novitskova, *The Post Internet Survival Guide* is a collection of net artists' artwork that exists as a peer-curated blog,⁶ a printed book, a PDF file for user download, and also as a gallery installation of found and modified objects which refer to the books' contents.⁷

Art and cultural value

The western artistic canon has traditionally ascribed cultural value to a work of art as art through the effective experience of it as a unique, finished object in a particular time and space. Walter Benjamin employed *aura* to describe the aesthetic presence of original art objects; Carol Duncan compared the socialized codes of art viewership in museums to religious ritual in a secular context—a civic ritual where found and carefully crafted objects are thoughtfully arranged for quiet contemplation and transcendent viewing. In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin warned that mechanical reproduction would lead to the loss of aura, an increasingly distracted mode of observation and a loss of authenticity. In conversation with this notion of complete artwork, a common complaint with curating and selling new media art is its lack of "objecthood," physicality and temporal stability. The screen-based, gratuitous distribution of information on the Internet challenges notions of tangibility and uniqueness. In 1988, Bill Nichols wrote a pointed response to Benjamin's arguments, titled "The Work of Culture in the Age of Cybernetics." Nichols argued that the computer

5 #mm: Making different versions of a work, for example for exhibition in a physical gallery space.

6 #mm: Also available at <http://survivaltips.tumblr.com>.

7 Also available at <http://katjanovi.net/postinternetsurvivalguide.html>. #mm: See Appendix of Images.

was more than an instrument, but also an icon and metaphor that would radically alter human subjectivity. Later, Domenico Quaranta referred to the re-emergence and re-consideration of aura in the form of a website and the curation of its contents within an exhibition context (“The Unbearable Aura of a Website”).⁸ Along with Boris Groys, he observed that aura is not destroyed through digitisation of images because each image or media object has a specific code for computers to decode in order for the image to appear on the screen (Groys). The (code of the) original image is therefore essentially an “invisible original,” made invisible due to its infinite possibilities for reproduction. Furthermore, digital files are no less “real” or immaterial, because they are formatted in files that occupy space on hard drives and servers, which require cables and computers to facilitate their displays.

Quaranta argues that a website’s domain name has a specific place that can be synchronously accessed by anyone on a computer or networked device. If there can be no copy without the notion of an original, digital art accrues substantiation as art through the abundant (re)distribution of the copy. In his video-essay *Versions*, Oliver Laric describes the facile and credible manipulation of the found image in everyday media, before and after the popularisation of digital media. Over images of classical sculpture, a robotic female voice reads: “Multiplication of an icon, far from diluting its content power, rather increases its fame, and each image however imperfect, conventionally partakes in the properties of its precursor.” Later in *Kopienkritik*, Oliver Laric arranges similarly-posed multiples of Greco-Roman sculptures in a museum installation.

Taking the copy as subject matter and appropriation as genre, this installation emphasizes the power of the conceptual original and its use in art—even as canonical tastes filter through time. His curation of these objects is a comment on how even historians are sometimes unable to distinguish the Roman copy from the Greek original in their analysis of historically “authentic” art. As Nichols noted, “The ubiquitous copy also serves as an externalized manifestation of the work of industrial capitalism [...] simulation displaces any antecedent reality, any aura, any referent to history. The very concept of a text, whether unique or one of myriad copies [...] undergoes slippage.” When simulation (copy) begins to conflate with reality and copy begins to stand in for concept, documentation of art becomes as real as the physical version of an artwork, and also the exhibition of it in real life. We, as cybernetic subjects, have become sophisticated enough, in recognising the mechanisms and contingencies of mediation, to view documentation as art, and also to anticipate the representation of art as documentation.

Due to their reliance on networked technologies to distribute and create art, net artists were inherently critical of technology’s ideological and economic determinants from its beginnings. In the late 1990s, to subvert the increasingly commercial nature of the web, Eva and Franco Mattes (0100101110101101.ORG) copied and reproduced websites such as Hell.com, Jodi.org and Art.Teleportacia.org in 1998. They hosted the copied websites under their own domain, which drew media attention to the definitions of commercial and public property. From 1998 to 1999, 01.org created a series

⁸ Also available at http://www.lulu.com/items/volume_70/9992000/9992921/3/print/In_Your_Computer.pdf. Date of access: Sep. 9 2014.

of websites with appropriated code and content from their peers' websites and they titled the remediated work *Hybrids*. Despite challenging notions of authorship in a networked public domain, the efficacy of their critique relied on viewers being familiar with their peers' websites so the audience could identify the reappropriation of others' Net art. Currently, the lack of recognizable aesthetic references or knowledge of other net artists' makes their process redundant. Furthermore, their peers' websites have also changed in layout, thus decontextualizing the reading of the embedded code. Therefore to today's online viewers it looks like a typical piece of 1990s Net.art. Nonetheless, their projects invoked the redundancy of intellectual copyright in a networked economy. Any work posted on the Internet would be part of the public domain since it would be accessible to anyone with a computer.

Large cultural institutions and the art economy have adapted to accommodate presentations that suit the technical constraints of different media. The white-cube gallery, the cinematic "black box" or a museum is usually the liminal context for contemplative viewing of pre-existing media genres such as film, video, photography and installations. Thus, the technical apparatus that a media is installed on emphasizes the currency and redundancy of the technological apparatus that is channelling it.⁹ For example, the use of boxy 4:3 television sets now harkens more to 1970s video installations at a time when media reception has converged onto flat screen LCD monitors.

Anthony Antonellis' *Put It On A Pedestal*¹⁰ playfully challenges such ideas of original, copy and reproduced objects and aesthetics. With a white-walled gallery background, the artist offers the user a selection of animated icons and floating digital objects to assemble freely on various forms of generic gallery furniture such as plinths and glass cases. As with Laric's installation of Roman sculptural multiples and Sterling Crispin's collection of *Greek New Media Shit*, Antonellis' moveable collection of digital and classical objects comments on the memetic value of classical motifs and how their production was based on the reproduction of copies.

Deal or no deal: exhibition installation from screen to gallery

Since its induction into museums and galleries, members of online art communities have been divided on how digital art should be exhibited and sold. While some artists maintained that digital work could only be exhibited in online, screen-based contexts, others were enthusiastic about merging its aesthetics and approaches with mainstream contemporary art. Darren Tofts believed that digital art could only be computer-based in presentation; there could be no website displayed without the representational subtext of the computer.¹¹ According to him, digital art's interactive and ephemeral nature has often placed its content at odds with exhibition conventions. Contradictorily, he anticipated that "unencumbered movement through

9 O'Brien calls these physical representational tools *sub-content* as he feels they are highly determinant of how the viewer perceives screen-based work. See O'Brien, also available at <http://badatsports.com/2011/hyperjunk-notes-on-the-installation-demands-of-media-objects/>.

10 #mm: See Appendix of Images.

11 Writing in 1996, Tofts characterized digital art as "endemic to the computer."

a compellingly realistic environment” would be most appropriate for attracting gallery visitors. This immersive, walkthrough-exhibition is usually implemented through the integration of installations or responsive media with larger institutions that are technically and financially equipped to accommodate such installations. In Ryan Trecartin’s solo exhibition *Any Ever* (2010–2011), the online video auteur projected his videos in a maze of darkened rooms. Each contained installations of picnic tables, leather sofas, airline seats, and beds in front of the projection to entice gallery-goers to spend a longer time viewing his rapidly edited videos.

On the *nettime* mailing list net artists and curators complained about the lackadaisical installation of web pages on desktop computers during *documenta X* [1997] in Kassel (Quaranta, “Lost in Translation”). However, the office-like installation of desktop computers within a separate lounge space resonates with contemporary exhibitions such as *Speed Show*. As an informal social-exhibition, the Internet-café serves as a casual, yet web relevant setting for artists to meet face-to-face (Archey).

The “first” piece(s) of Net art ever sold

A general Google search at the time of writing (November 2011) finds multiple results proclaiming the “first net art sold.” One of the earliest self-proclaimed examples is Teo Spiller’s website, *Megatronix*. In 1999 Alexander Bassin, the buyer at the Municipal Museum of Ljubljana,¹² purchased the work for 85,000 SIT, or approximately 500 USD. During a discussion panel on the topic, the issue of who owned the advertising revenue and the website after its sale and maintenance service were not clearly defined (Spiller and Goldfarb). Spiller had agreed to allow the museum to place a banner on the website’s opening page to indicate ownership by the Ljubljana Municipal Gallery. However, such a branded presence could aesthetically impair its interpretation as art and interrupt the typical online experience with the website. While published online news articles and conference press testify to the sale having occurred, the website is no longer accessible on the Internet (see “Link rot” below).

Later in 2002, the Guggenheim collected formalist Net artworks such as John F. Simon’s *Every Icon* (1996). For this artwork, Simon wrote a Java-based algorithm to convert every element in a white square to be black, and vice versa. He then sold unique versions of code for 20 USD each and attached a certificate of authenticity with each version that was sold. These works might have appealed to art historians and collectors due to resonances with formalist painting and 1970s Conceptual art which was concerned with language as a starting point for creative production. With *Every Icon*, the coding offered every possibility for conversion as an impossible task, recalling the redundancy of visual-verbal puns in Sol LeWitt’s *Red Square, White Letters* (1962). Another contemporary approach that adheres to the artist-buyer contract is reinforced by Rafaël Rozendaal, who created *Art Website Sales Contract*, to share his own version of the website sales contract with the online art community. Both the sales of *Megatronix* and *Every Icon* awkwardly imposed traditional

¹² #mm: Mestna galerija Ljubljana.

models of collection and selling onto digital works. In the case of *Every Icon* the artist chose to custom-code the reproducible art object to reinforce the notion that the intellectual artistic labour attributed to authoring code was worth money. Because it was mutable and reproducible, Simon offered it for an extremely affordable cost. Meanwhile, *Megatronix* was sold with ownership stipulations like any other art object. However, the ephemerality of art existing on a network was not accounted for. The buyer did not anticipate issues related to archival and preservation of the website, which may have led to its eventual unavailability. In this case, selling a Net art piece for money devalued its status and possibly shortened its longevity as art.

Commissioned by Ars Electronica in 1999, Eduardo Kac's *Genesis* is an early example of institutionalized Net art that was made saleable. The immersive installation of bioluminescent bacteria consisted of projection and sound. Kac had written a synthetic gene that would translate a sentence from the Bible into Morse code, and then into DNA base pairings. A computer connected to the Internet broadcast the project's developments and allowed remote viewers to comment on the growth of the bacteria. The installation was first shown at the O.K. Centre for Contemporary Art in Linz.¹³ Eventually it was priced at 150,000 USD by a gallery in Chicago; meanwhile engraved sculptural objects which were part of the installation (*Encryption Stones*, 2001) sold for 13,000 USD per piece (Berwick).

Link rot

"Link rot," or the unavailability of preexisting web pages, occurs because of their incompatibility with newer browser technologies.¹⁴ While there are multiple attempts to archive and preserve older web pages, broken links and redundancy are inevitable in a consistently upgrading and innovating networked culture. Although projects such as *Internet Archaeology* and *Wayback Machine* preserve the digital artefacts from early Internet culture, link rot is inevitable if the web designer or artist does not migrate their website to operate with newer versions of an Internet browser. In this case, another argument for aura could be applied in regard to the specificity and currency of technologies that are required to effectively display a website and its media contents. As Christiane Paul observed, "From its very beginning, an online project or exhibition is not bound by the framework of one institution but exists in a larger network where institutional control tends to be more distributed" ("Context and Archive"). Once technically outmoded by newer browser-based technologies, upgraded application plug-ins, and new uses and redundancies of web development code, the web-based work is no longer accessible. This results in a dead link, or a loss of context for any work that remains displayed.

Internet-based institutions: the virtual gallery

Since the late-1980s, artists have made efforts to collect and show work in the form of a website-gallery. Online galleries have either appropriated

¹³ #mm: O. K Centrum für Gegenwartskunst.

¹⁴ #mm: Cf. Martin Strnad's essay "Introduction to the Past and Present of the Web" in this book.

conventions of existing museums or operated in a completely extra-institutional nature. Ten years before the boom of e-commerce in 1986, artist-producers Carl Loeffler and Ted Truck started the *Art Com Electronic Network*. Based in San Francisco, it was one of the first networks that gave artists access to electronic publication, mailing systems, and even an electronic art shopping mall and gallery. The network started as a mailbox on a bulletin board system WELL (Whole Earth Lectronic Link). They also began charging for access to Net art. In 1996 the net.artist Olia Lialina started Art.teleportacia.org; one of the first online galleries to exhibit and sell artwork that was vernacular to 1990s computer culture and the browser. Although the original gallery no longer exists, a collection of Net art from 1998 titled *Miniatures Of The Heroic Period* can be found on the website.¹⁵ Accompanied by artist-determined price tags of approximately 2000 USD, the pieces are displayed as click through links in a formal table layout much like that of the late *Bubblebyte.org*.

In 2004, Tim O'Reilly coined the term *Web 2.0* to describe a set of new and pre-existing technologies that enhanced the experience of user-generation in online environments (O'Reilly). Afterwards, the popularisation of social media such as Facebook, Tumblr, Digg and Twitter seemed to inspire net artists to use such platforms for art production and distribution. Soon, emerging artists began co-opting social networks for performance, curation and art distribution. Curated by Parker Ito and Caitlin Denny, *JstChillin* is a recent example of a self-organized online curatorial project (Denny and Ito). For a year, the curatorial collective featured a different net artist's work every two weeks on its index page. They used media sharing websites such as Tumblr and Facebook to promote and appeal to emerging artists who used the Internet in a similar fashion. Most of their selected artists created work about web aesthetics, online friendships and trivial digital interactions. The project culminated in *READ/WRITE*, a gallery exhibition at 319 Scholes, an artist-run space in New York City. While the plurality of styles were appropriate to the informal environment of the Internet, much of the gallery-adapted artworks appeared to be disjunctive assemblages of installations and found object sculptures that bore little reference to their "original" digital context and counterparts. Art from and about the Internet began to look like any other contemporary art in the gallery.

The virtual museum

Institutions adopting online exhibition models

During the late 1990s and early 2000s, a handful of curators who worked at large cultural institutions were invested with curating, collecting and preserving digital media artworks. What follows will be a long and incomplete list of names and institutional affiliates who were fundamental to the commodification of Net art. Each had their own reasons for spatializing web-based work within museums; some initiatives started independently and others were endorsed by institutions.

¹⁵ Available at: <http://art.teleportacia.org/exhibition/miniatures/>, date of access Sep. 19 2014.

Supported by a group of major institutions, Jon Ippolito and Alain Depocas led the Variable Media Initiative for preserving future access and the presentation of digital artworks in the face of software obsolescence and redundancy. Their website attempted to establish a vocabulary for conservation of ephemeral media art. With case studies that compared and contrasted the characteristics of existing artworks, the website provided a framework for museums to think about the curatorial translation of art into exhibitions and networked contexts, as well as the need to upgrade software for the future presentation of media works. However, many of these administrative and research efforts require maintenance. The website has not been updated for years, and only features one clear example of Net art preservation (i.e. Mark Napier's *net.flag*).

Curated by Christiane Paul, Whitney Artport attempted to introduce artworks before users clicked through to its website. This way, the curatorial scope and context of production was provided before the experience of the art. Similarly, Steve Dietz at the Walker Arts Center in Minneapolis acquired Benjamin Weil's *ada web* to aggregate a canon of web projects. In Canada, the Daniel Langlois Foundation granted new media artists 10,000–100,000 CAD for production, research and conservation of digital art projects (Jennings). In the UK, the Tate Museum began commissioning and presenting art online in 2000; artists were invited to submit proposals for selection by a jury of institutional gatekeepers. In 2002, they launched a permanent Net art program to commission works by two net artists every year. Like *STATE* and *PAINTED, ETC.*, critical texts have accompanied the online launch of each of these works.

On the other hand, *Rhizome* started as a mailing list for new media art community members, and was eventually bought by the New Museum. The organisation started their commissioning program in 2001. Successful submissions are voted on by its online members and a jury of institutional leaders. The mailing list developed into a content aggregator or collection, journalism, review and distribution of new media art. Its community art portal is open to all registered members to submit artworks, however its collections manager curates work into their public digital archive, the ArtBase. Much like the Variable Media Initiative which included a questionnaire for artists and curators, users may tag and enter technical information about their works to make it easy to find on the web when they submit it to the ArtBase (Fino-Radin).

Image aggregation and distribution

Online image collection and art blogging reinforces the cult value and exhibition value of web-based artwork. The practice of conversing with images emerged from online friends who chose to share images on “surf club” websites and forum threads. Media-sharing micro-blogs such as FFFFOUND! and Tumblr would allow users to categorize and rate found media with meta-tags and reblogging functions. The decontextualized, screen-based representation of art documentation as a stream of images, or a grid of thumbnails, imbues images with a transformed sense of aura.

Perhaps there is cult value attached to web culture and the forms of seeing images as a stream, as a thumbnail on a shared URL or a hovering preview. Inquiring into the concept of aura in relation to traditional and digital forms, Gene McHugh noted that [Walter] Benjamin had never provided a concrete definition [of aura]. However, he proposes that the “ornamental halo” Benjamin described in relation to viewing an original artwork stemmed not from an artwork’s historical, timeless beauty, but from an underlying notion of its linear social history.¹⁶ This includes ideas of where it has been exhibited and who has owned, bought, sold and handled it. Regardless of size and quality, the existence of art documentation on the Internet testifies to an original idea of an artwork having been installed somewhere in physical space, thus lending the art objects authority and validity in distribution.

On white-space¹⁷ blog-websites such as *VVORK*, *PAINTED*, *ETC.*, and *Greek New Media Shit*, artists curate and collect artwork and its documentation with little or no discursive dimensions. Instead of ideological continuities, aesthetic vernaculars become the basis of image curation and community formation (Vierkant 9).¹⁸ Curatorial cohesion is determined instead by conceptual and aesthetic conventions, such as ironic references to ancient Greek culture in Crispin’s *Greek New Media Shit* or the lineage of painting in computer culture in Ry David Bradley’s *PAINTED*, *ETC.* Operating on similar vernaculars but on a non-profit basis, the late Widget Art Gallery accommodated for the fluidities of image presentation on browser- and screen-based mobile devices by curating works for both computer-based and smartphone access.¹⁹

Meanwhile, *STATE* foregrounds the intellectual dimension of art production by featuring a didactic caption on each blog post. This approach recalls the online component of curated Net art for *documenta X* in Kassel, which would feature a web page with curatorial text before linking to a title page. This page would show the artist information and contain an external link to the Net art website. While innovative at the time as a web-based analogue for a physical exhibition of Net art, the website’s “broad and deep” information architecture is cumbersome in comparison with contemporary virtual gallery pages. With no verbal labelling, the navigation toolbar iconography was also small and unrecognizable. In addition to multitudes of nested pages users would need to click through to see each website, the design would likely discourage viewers from returning to the exhibition website.

In terms of art criticism, independent yet reputable art review blogs such as *networked_performance*, *Furtherfield*, and *Art Fag City* offer casual criticism and image posting to reinforce the exhibition value of Net art through

16 #mm: By the time of this publication the article was no longer online. Available in printed form in McHugh, *Post Internet. Notes on the Internet and Art*. For more on how art accrues aura online in a social network, please see “Accordant Aesthetics.”

17 #mm: A modification of the term *white cube*, which is signifying classic gallery exhibition space (often painted white). The expression used here by Jennifer Chan, *white-space*, describes a curated exhibition space on a blog platform, critically recognized by the community and experts. At the time of release of this publication, *VVORK* has already ceased its active existence; however its archives are still available online.

18 “Posting an image of a gradient implicates an artist within a particular aesthetic mindset in the same way that having a Tumblr adheres an artist to a particular format of transmission [...] the architecture of the Internet [...] helps facilitate an environment where artists are able to rely more and more on purely visual representations to convey their ideas and support an explanation of their art independent of language” (Vierkant 9).

19 #mm: This app simulates the physical 3D environment of the exhibition room—white cube, and was primarily developed for Apple devices.

the reblogging and citation of existing art practices. The aforementioned image blogs are run by contemporary artists who are active within Internet art communities. The presence of such websites forms an alternative venue for taste making and art distribution. While operating without large juries at museums or galleries, the apparent anonymity and professionalism of these media aggregating website-galleries cause them to appear as though they are institutions in and of themselves. In my own practice, *Installation Fail* is a “white-space Tumblr” that uses these non-discursive codes of image curation to critique the trope of found object installation in contemporary art.

Accordant aesthetics

Reblogs, shares, likes

Academics and art communities responded to the use of Web 2.0 distribution platforms differently. Emerging post-2.0 net artists such as Brad Troemel and Artie Vierkant revelled in the circulation of decontextualized media as a way to reconsider art production practices. Art was able to reach larger and more specific audiences, while specific tastes were likely to be understood by interested subscribers. On the decentralisation of art on the Internet, Brad Troemel declared that the advent of Web 2.0 technologies progressively democratized art distribution from surf clubs (*Nastynets*) to the use of media aggregating online services such as Google Reader (“From Clubs to Affinity”). Positing that the many-to-many sharing allowed by media-aggregation sites such as Delicious and Tumblr cultivated methods of image curation that became “externally contingent on a network of other artists’ content [sic],” an unspoken contract of peer-aware art production began to emerge.

Troemel had speculated that artists with an existing following on the Internet found institutional recognition after a period of showing their work in DIY gallery exhibitions.²⁰ Net art historian and critic Josephine Bosma challenges this notion of democratic gatekeeping in regards to an older collection website from 2002 (“Collecting Net Art”). Started by Doron Golan, *Computer Fine Arts* was a website which featured links to alphabetical folders of Internet artists’ works. Bosma questioned whether any user’s collection of art may be valuable for others beyond their immediate online community. While any person may develop a distinct curatorial vision by sharing media on a micro-blogging platform, its existence does not guarantee they will receive viewership or subscription from other users. Not every net artist uses Tumblr or YouTube. Although Web 2.0 may have enhanced practices of collaboration and user-generation, Troemel overlooked the similarly decentralising impact of mailing lists, forums and bulletin board systems in early Net.art.

As social media offers each user an enhanced sense of personalized media consumption, the public sphere exists in a fragmented manner

²⁰ Troemel coined the oxymoronic term, “the minor league” to describe postundergraduate net artists who would gradually become inducted into the gallery system. See Troemel, “The Minor League.”

on the Internet. Perhaps the post-2.0 user generation has irreversibly shifted subjectivity to a disembodied, spaceless, and placeless position (Nichols 631). If this is the case with contemporary net artists, then the practices of decontextualized content curation are problematic as the reblogging of uncritical, odd media could produce a surge of irreverent “hipster capital,” according to Nelson. In other words, a ubiquity of non-discursive art blogs might only serve a niche group of viewers who are interested in a narrow set of conventions, thus creating aesthetic homogeneity and insularity. This way the peer-validation of user-generated online galleries runs the risk of self-marginalising Net art instead of elevating each featured work. Nelson also warned of decreasing attention spans and declining visual ethics as users may quickly scan through an abundance of media on image aggregator blogs.

Net artists often gauge community responses to web-based art through the liking and sharing of a project’s URL within and beyond an online community. In a networked environment, attention and peer approval is currency for freely accessible media. In reconsideration of the Benjaminian aura of Net art, McHugh observed that artwork gained authority not only through its reproduction provenance, reproduction and social transactions, but through its dispersion among smaller niche communities.²¹ For Troemel post-2.0 practices are rhizomatic, but I anticipate a coterminous trickledown effect²² between authors and peers. Users who consistently contribute content and have a longer history of content curation may become opinion leaders for their networks of peers. This might explain the difference between blogger art critic Paddy Johnson’s categorisation as a “thought leader” on Klout as opposed to a “socializer” or “specialist” as a geek Internet user may be. To borrow from the logic of a two-step flow media reception theory, a peer or friend would be more likely to view a link that a respected peer approves of. Similarly, McHugh cites Delicious users accruing gatekeeping power through a publicly viewable “track record” of shared links.²³

On Facebook, liking is an extension of rapid and non-discursive tendencies in the informal spaces of the Internet. Louis Doulas cites Rafaël Rozendaal’s *Pleaselike.com* as an artwork that exemplifies the non-specificity of liking in online art communities. While it is not indicative of the quality or sophistication of the artwork’s content, attaining a high number of likes, comments and shares on a Facebook post soon after its publishing raises its EdgeRank position of social newsworthiness (Gerlitz and Helmond). There is no inherent political ramification or specific content with liking an artwork, but users do so as a form of public support. Therefore the appearance of a greater number of shares for a post would increase the probabilities of an artwork URL reaching the audience—an indirect way of “seeding” social-art capital.

21 “The aura of a work of [N]et art is not necessarily based on its dispersion through mass culture, but through the combination of both mass dispersion and dispersion through the smaller community of net artists and fans of [N]et art.” McHugh, 2010, op. cit.

22 #mm: “Trickle-down effect” is an economic phenomenon whereby wealth gradually “trickles down” from the wealthy to the poor.

23 #mm: Gatekeeper is another term from mass communication theory. Gatekeeper holds the position in a media structure where they have authority over the selection of topics and the events to be processed into media contents. Therefore in this case gatekeeping can be characterised as defining the confines of information distributed within the Delicious network. See for example Roberts.

Net art in the home and the city

Aside from ad-hoc one-night exhibition projects, physical spaces for Net art exhibitions have sprung up around the world. Appearing as rented storefronts and apartment galleries, PRETEEN (Mexico), Future Gallery (Berlin), and Butcher Gallery (Toronto) all emulate the white cube, while providing a venue for emerging net artists to exhibit web-based work. These spaces are often self-funded and appear to exist only for showing, not selling art. Here the value of such exhibitions is often social, not monetary. Such exhibitions become occasions for what used to be called *face-to-face* (F2F) meetings—now known as *in real life* (IRL) meetings (Greene 75). Besides networking, artists who have artwork curated in exhibitions around the world are able to add the event to their CV, regardless of location.

Away from bureaucratic operations of large art institutions, self-organized exhibitions created an informal social-exhibition environment where unfinished work may be installed unconventionally. Operating on a similar self-organized logic to *BYOB* (Bring Your Own Beamer), *Crates and Laptops* featured artists showing web-based work laptops on top of milk crates (“Crates and Laptops”). With exhibition titles that are laced with raunch and controversy like *Cat Fight Gang Bang*, curator Gerardo Contreras takes the emphasis away from the technological dimension of new media and offers a hypersexual and provocative lens to view Net art.

Reflections on and discontent with the form of curation of these early Net art shows were topics for the Third Baltic Seminar, where the inadequacies of the installations of Net art were debated in one of the first academic gatherings of net artists and curators (Graham and Cook). Previous curatorial errors such as presenting multiple web pages on full-wall projections or computer screens were disapproved of by many artists at the time (Quaranta, “Lost in Translation”).

However, the continuation of such installation decisions can be seen in recent DIY social-exhibition formats for Net art. *Speed Show*'s Internet-café setting harkens back to the office-style presentation of websites on desktop computers in *documenta X* in 1997. Aram Bartholl later revived this concept by initiating *Speed Show* in 2010. This inspired a global organisation of casual exhibitions in Internet-cafés. In the same year, Rafaël Rozendaal also initiated the *BYOB* format, which consisted of artists showing work from their projectors in an open indoor space. This informal exhibition strategy demonstrates more lenient installation standards in comparison to museum opening receptions. Artists may be attracted to participate in such an exhibition to have their work aligned with the exhibition-as-movement, or to become affiliated with artists working in a regional community.

For *BYOB* and *Speed Show*, accreditation of the “initiator”²⁴ (instead of curator) would become attached to any promotional material for the event, such as press releases, Facebook events, and Tumblr posts. While an emerging artist may benefit from exhibiting work with other established

24 #mm: Rozendaal or Bartholl.

artists in such a vanguard exhibition format, their organizers' authorship of a mundane exhibition concept (a prototypical multi-projection exhibition) continually returns to these two artists, regardless of how each rendition of the exhibition differs in curatorial theme and location. As much as it has allowed regional net artists to meet in the cities where these DIY events have been organized, *BYOB* and *Speed Show* have become franchise exhibitions due to their authorship and affiliation to a particular group. Furthermore, conscientious citation of the "initiator" contradicts ideas of inherently decentralized authorship and seeming anonymity that defined Net art.

Objectifying Net art

*artobj(ect)-cult(ure)*²⁵

"The ability to 'objectify' digital art and make it palpable and saleable [...] is raising questions as to whether a genre based on the community-focused ethics of open-source computer programmers has lost the edge that made it exciting in the first place." (Berwick)

The aforementioned examples I have mapped have been concerned with funding and how curators and administrators have determined the sales and exhibition of Net art. Writing on the integration of Net art in institutions in 2002, Carly Berwick observed that the monetisation of Net art was both a blessing and a curse. On one hand, its appearance in institutions would contribute to the autonomy of the form and give it presence and value in the mainstream contemporary art market. On the other, net artists may come under pressure to modify or create work for large institutional presentations.

After the initial wave of net artworks entered museums, art fairs and Biennales, artist-researchers such as Mark Amerika and Patrick Lichty declared Net.art "dead" (Amerika 113; Lichty).²⁶ According to Lichty, artists had pandered to a curatorial dialogue race on technology's effect on art. Unlike *01.org* or Jodi's view of the exhibition context as an opportunity to infiltrate the museum's rigid distribution systems, they felt that the original impulses of Net.art to remain cost-free and separate from the art market had been tainted by pursuits for fame and money. Contemporary artists are more open to parodically or sincerely selling digital art objects than before. However, the tension between utopic visions of the self-funded exhibition and a commercially adapted practice remains an ongoing topic of contention in the online art community.

A recent example that plays with the literal notion of the art object is *artobj(ect)-cult(ure)* by Lucy Chinen and Emilie Gervais. The two artists started the online venue and invited net artists to create saleable digital items, curated images and editions for sale on the homepage. Here the

²⁵ #mm: This collaborative exhibition project between Emilie Gervais and Lucy Chinen is no longer online by the time of this publication. You can find documentation and discover more in the interview "ARTOBJ-CULT.BIZ," see Gervais and Chinen.

²⁶ #mm: By the time of this publication, Lichty's article was no longer online and the original URL <http://www.voyd.com/texts/lichtydeathofnetart.pdf> was not archived by *Internet Archive*.

exhibition combines with storefront—a reference to the selling of artist multiples at Printed Matter (NYC) and Art Metropole (Toronto). While conceptually ironic and quirky, the exhibition-projects featured fluctuate in terms of conceptual innovation. The selling of products that have physical bearing may differ little from the processes of an average online shopping experience. Here, paying for the “aura of the digital” can be followed by the anticipated acquisition of a physical object.

Emergent practices of monetising the digital

etoy, GIF MARKET, and Ten Thousand Cents

What I propose as effective ways to monetize browser-based digital arts are websites that require a financial transaction as process and product of the artwork. This approach to monetisation is contextual to both online and offline practices of art economy and artistic activism. A past example of such a move was *etoy*, a Swiss collective who employed their website as a corporate social sculpture. With the intention of infiltrating everyday life with overriding digital professionalism, they created a website to sell shares of cultural value in 1994. Like *Yes Men*, *etoy* employed corporate aesthetics in their web design to satirise the profit-driven mechanisms of dotcom operations (Greene 65). Users would be invited to enter an arbitrary value for investing in a share of “cultural value” on the website.

A contemporary example of selling an unflattering digital object is *GIF MARKET* by Kim Asendorf and Ole Fach. The website is designed in a professional-amateur manner with a grid of 1024 pixelated GIFs displayed on a white background. An “Order” button on the interface invites users to purchase any number of GIFs from the web page through PayPal. The GIFs are not spectacular; in fact the number of moving pixels in the GIFs decreases near the top row of the website. Asendorf and Fach satirically extended the concept of unique coding in their explanation of their formal decisions to make a series of lackluster GIFs:

“The GIFs show a black line which marks the centre for the 1px large particles rotating around it. #1 is the most unique, it has only 1 pixel flying around[...] the most expensive [...] The price gets calculated by this [sic] formula: PRICE = SALES / NUMBER * 16. So each sale increases the price, at the end the #1 will cost 16,384.00€ (“GIFMARKET.NET”).

Referencing a stock market system, the value of GIFs in higher rows increases every time a GIF is purchased. The sponsor’s name and website may be linked to the name or word they choose to feature underneath their selected GIF. This possibly provided new visitors with a first impression that funders who had their names linked to the GIFs had authored the GIFs. On the other hand, visitors are presented with the opportunity to join the community of funders. The inclusion of simple GIFs demonstrates that Asendorf and Fach are not appealing to viewers’ aesthetic sensibilities to attract purchases. In fact they are asking viewers to speculate on the prospective gains of buying a digital object on a particular part of the website. A net artist may receive more relevant traffic from backlinking to their website if they purchase a GIF near the top. Soon artists who had “bought” GIFs began to reappropriate the

spinning pixilated GIFs into other GIFs of their own—a recycling of value into aesthetic despite the reproducible copy.²⁷

An online project that rigorously applies a Marxist critique of the postindustrial economy to the information society is *Ten Thousand Cents*. Using Amazon's Mechanical Turk distributed labour tool, Aaron Koblin and Takashi Kawashima crowdsourced 10,000 Internet users and paid them one cent each to digitally paint a tiny fraction of a hundred dollar bill. In the same way proletariat worker's consumption and labour is separated from the product, the users would not know each other or what the final product would be. All painted works were collected to create a digital representation of an American hundred-dollar bill. Koblin and Kawashima put the collected works up for sale on the website for 100 USD each and decided the proceeds would go to charity. Using the process and product as a critique of labour in digital capitalism, *Ten Thousand Cents* extends etoy's satire of corporate aesthetics and the related novelty of using networked technologies to make money.

A platform that employs similar crowdsourcing logic to attract donations is *Art Micro Patronage*. Started by Eleanor Hanson Wise and Oliver Wise, the project attempts to provide artists with income consistent with the amount of positive feedback (reblogs, likes and thumbs-up) from their online viewers. The highly animated website displays monthly exhibitions of digital art that are compiled by guest curators. Interested patrons are asked to pledge donations to online artwork by creating an account in which they may dispense likes of values from fifty cents to twenty dollars. Alternatively, they may become a member, where membership fees would pay artist fees at the end of six exhibitions. As the project is relatively new at the time of writing, it is hard to speculate on the efficacy of this model for selling Net art. Perhaps one problem with this model is that artists require curators to introduce their work to this platform to gain distribution in this manner.²⁸

As an artist-curator, I am interested in artists politicising their production practices instead of creating a saleable version of their artwork. The artists of the aforementioned projects decided to use their projects to determine the conditions of distribution and participation, rather than working with a gallery, buyer or platform for distribution. They utilized the website and the financial transaction to force the user to consider their role as consumer of supposedly free culture. Although projects like *etoy* and *Ten Thousand Cents* may require viewer knowledge of the processes and conditions of production in order for viewers to understand its politics of representation, it nonetheless demonstrates a deviation from the usual course of creating a gallery-ready object for sale.

²⁷ *untitled* (Michael Manning, 2011). Available at: https://lh3.googleusercontent.com/-MXdLen_cmzc/TjoraCnpA2I/AAAAAAAAAJ8/vPKuCs3YZjQ/s300/313_sculpture.gif, date of access Dec. 23 2014.

²⁸ #mm: At the end of 2014 we can say that the last *C.R.E.A.M.* exhibition curated by Lindsay Howard took place in April 2012. AMP thus feels like another great but suddenly stagnating project in the world of Net art exhibitions (as with the excellent informational portal and directory *netartnet.net* and others).

In this study I have identified multiple ways in which net artists and curators have negotiated with traditional modes of exhibition and distribution. Beyond notions of authenticity and simulation, digital reproduction allows a concept to exist variably and transferably. When a web-based version may not necessarily last forever as technologies obsolesce, the conversion of a digital into an analogue object allows it to enter the dialogue of mainstream contemporary art.

In my survey of past and present practices of Net art exhibitions and sales, it appears there are no standard practices for the commodification of Net art. Some net artists have exhibited physical analogues of web-based work in order to enter the gallery system and to leverage their personal branding. Meanwhile, certificates of authenticity and artist contracts for exhibitions adhere to more traditional modes of art dealership. Self-organized, DIY practices in both online and physical spaces allow emerging artists to experiment with alternative exhibition formats. However, curators and artists need to be wary of the conditions of production and presentation. Inevitably even the most ad-hoc of projects (such as *BYOB*) become institutions when appropriated to gallery systems.

Ultimately in its move from screen to gallery (and back), web-based art takes on multiple dimensions of social and cultural value. Peer-validation and node-to-node sharing of media continually determines vernacular approaches to its spatialisation and monetisation. In 1988 Bill Nichols predicted: “The consequence of systems without aura, systems that replace direct encounter [...] is a fetishism of such systems and processes of control themselves.” (632) In the shift from physical to digital processes of producing art, the process of engagement has become both product and fetish for the cybernetic subject. It is the potential for mediated belonging and participation which determines the consumptive appeal of websites like *GIF MARKET* as a platform of monetising and also critiquing economies of visual consumption. While there shouldn't be an absolute open-source policy²⁹ for distributing web-based art, artists who are aware of the operations and constraints of Internet services might benefit the most from acknowledging it in their work.

From the screen to the gallery, media objects become objects and installations and then documentation. It is likely that a greater potential for the viewing and consumption of Net art occurs during a private surfing experience, but the spatialisation of Net art inspires new ways of looking at art beyond the confines of a screen. Perhaps aura and authenticity are even outdated ideas which evaluate the exhibition and sales of ubiquitous and reproducible media objects. As Michael Betancourt observed, the notion of aura is a socially-constructed concept. While the circulation of art on media-sharing platforms³⁰ reinforces its exhibition value, and community reaction on social networks enhances its cult value, artists and curators should consider all possible contexts of distribution and exhibition before versioning or selling a web-based artwork.

29 #mm: Universal access with free licence. Also a “software for which the original source code is made freely available and may be redistributed and modified” (Kholeif 243).

30 #mm: As Facebook, Delicious, G+, Tumblr etc.

It may be possible to make an argument for the monetisation of Net art by comparing it to the social capital and the monetary value of the social networks it is shared within. *The Million Dollar Homepage* wasn't made with artistic intentions, but the combination of context (advertising) and form (website) attracted many businesses to buy advertising space on the website. Likewise, Michael Betancourt observed: "...digital works with the 'aura of information' imply a transformation of objects to information [...] understanding the specific structure of digital art makes the form of the 'digital aura' much more explicit."

The integration of monetisation into the process of art production allows viewers to contemplate the significance of exhibiting and owning a piece of Net art. Without planning a context-appropriate translation of media in physical space, web-based media run the risk of losing their "digital aura," or their reference to web culture and its conflicted subtexts of agency and control. In other words, Net art that no longer looks like Net art in a gallery would be literally Post-Internet—when web-based art looks ahistorical of the digital era.

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Notes on Post-Internet

Jennifer Chan | 2014

1. The “Post-Internet” condition

I first heard of the term Post-Internet in 2009 on Gene McHugh’s *Post Internet* blog on 12292009a.com.¹ The term was introduced in 2008 by Marisa Olson, to describe the invaluable nature of the Internet and its influence on everyday life and, subsequently, the practice of art. The term had already appeared in Lev Manovich’s definitions of post-media aesthetics in 2001.² The syntactic and semantic qualities of post- are interchangeable with postmodernism in the meaning of *in reaction to*, *after*, *in the style of*, or *an extension* of the Internet (Olson). Soon, emerging artists and writers from North America and Western Europe assiduously put forward theories on what Post-Internet art could look like.³ The term Post-Internet does not purport that the Internet is obsolescent. In fact, there are many overlapping interests between Internet art, Post-Internet, and the New Aesthetic—ideas that have developed conterminously due to the artistic use of the Internet as a mass medium, and the translation of its underpinning of ideas into physical spaces.

New media art is a larger genre and it encompasses art practices taking place at the intersection of technologies once considered new— radio and analogue video, and interactive installation and Internet art. Internet art (or Net art) employs the networked, decentralized structure of the Internet as both a medium and an environment. In the 1990s, its early practitioners commonly referred to it as *Net.art*. Post-Internet is a term often ascribed to contemporary art and web-based work that has appeared online since 2005—digital art that’s been “translated” into gallery spaces and informal exhibitions at bars, cafes, nightclubs, and other venues (Quaranta, “13. Lost in translation”). For art writers like McHugh, Post-Internet art involved a departure from the technological specificities of new media celebrated by new media art: “Dissolve the category of ‘new media’ into art in general by creating work that has one foot in the history of art and another foot in the experience of network culture [...] As the work mutates itself to become more like art world art, the work mutates art world art to become more like the Internet” (McHugh 15).

I was initially confused by McHugh’s blog and its attempt to synthesize the practices of artists whose works existed online or dealt with Internet culture, but had no aesthetic cohesion or conjoined politic. This post-media logic is

1 McHugh’s blog was a generic WordPress website located at <http://122909a.com/> but it is no longer active. A book that compiles all the blogposts he wrote has been published under the title *Post Internet*, see McHugh.

2 “Post-media aesthetics needs categories that can describe how a cultural object organizes data and structures user’s experience of this data [...] Post-media aesthetics *should adopt the new concepts, metaphors and operations of a computer and network era*, such as information, data, interface [...] rip, compress [...] We can use these concepts both when talking about our own post[-]digital, post-net culture, and [...] culture of the past.” See Manovich.

3 To name a few artists, writers and curators: Gene McHugh (US), Katja Novitskova (NL), Kari Altmann (US), Louis Doulas (US), Brad Troemel (US), Artie Vierkant (US), Harm Van Den Dorpel (DE).

better summed up by Artie Vierkant's treatise on the variable digital file as an idea with unfixed and multiple modes of presentation in *The Image Object Post-Internet*. A JPEG could exist as a PDF file, a print, or an image-object, such as a 3D print of the file's information.⁴ Although fascinating when viewed altogether in a series, I found the literal translation from digital and physical formats conceptually unsatisfying, since the viewer cannot see the artist's "hand," nor can they understand the artist's relationship to the technology at hand (Heidegger).

Thus, I want to explore the Post-Internet condition, which is as much about the existential and ethical dimension of art making online, and the creation of surplus value around its effects, as it is about the politics and anxieties that exist around so-called Post-Internet art practices.

2013 saw a reconsideration of what Post-Internet meant; this was primarily sparked, in some part, by the panel Post-Net Aesthetics organized by *Rhizome* at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London.⁵ As I watched three curators and one artist debate whether the term fit its ascribed relationship to the postmodern, I saw a certain disjunction between the theorisation and practice of Internet art. Curators and theorists seem to report on general patterns in the scene. While certain artists employ the web's distribution systems decisively for art distribution, others use the Internet as a sketch book with little intent to figure out their next moves. Some users only use their Facebook walls to share art news and for self-promotion; others fill their feeds with sarcastic and questionable status updates.

Using Tumblr [*Survival Tips 0-∞*] to archive an artist-blogged ecology of images with little or no verbal discourse, Katja Novitskova compiled the printed book, *Post Internet Survival Guide*, which considered all media as artefacts. Concerning the project, which also manifest as an installation-exhibition, she writes: "The collective practice of Internet-aware blogging and art has been evolving a new language to imagine [...] In this world—which is being tagged as Post[-]Internet—the Internet is an invisible given, like roads and trees [...] The notion of a survival guide arises as an answer to a basic human need to cope with increasing complexity. In the face of death, personal attachment and confusion, one has to feel, interpret and index this ocean of signs in order to survive" (Novitskova).

In contrast to personal homepage web rings of 1990s Net.art, which were also shared on e-mail listservs, the distribution of Post-Internet art heavily relies on social networking platforms: aleatory updates on Twitter, image aggregation on Tumblr, webcam videos on YouTube, GIFs on Google+. Everything culminates in a half-serious professional art persona on Facebook—for artists, professional and personal space has conflated more than ever before.

4 "Artists like Oliver Laric [...] present multiple variations of the same object [...] *Versions* exists as: 'a series of sculptures, airbrushed images of missiles, a talk, a PDF, a song, a novel, a recipe, a play, a dance routine, a feature film and merchandise,' [...] Even if an image or object is able to be traced back to a source, the substance (substance in the sense of both its materiality and its importance) of the source object can no longer be regarded as inherently greater than any of its copies" (Vierkant). See also Laric.

5 #mm: The panel "Post-Net Aesthetics" was held in London on October 17, 2013. Video recording available at <http://new.livestream.com/accounts/5745227/events/2464307>. Date of access Dec. 18 2014.

This particular cultural moment is defined by digital identity formation that vacillates between two extremes: careful self-curation and “indiscriminate over-sharing” (Easwar). The popularity and convenience of existing social media platforms has led to their use as an art medium and environment. Some practices that emerged from this have been performance for the webcam (Jeremy Bailey), satirical documentation of art as social practice (The Jogging), sculpture about documentation (Rachel de Joode), anonymous avatars (LaTurbo Avedon), aggregation of online images as art (Kari Altmann’s *r-u-ins.org*), GIFs as a performance medium (Jesse Darling), and files converted into sculptures (Artie Vierkant). Post-Internet art can ultimately be interpreted as a philosophical translation of online culture and practices into the physical world.

2. Post-Internet is the bastard child of Net.art and contemporary art

Post-Internet practices are characterized by hybridity and hyper-mediation of existing genres, platform-oriented activity, slippage between the formal output of digital and physical environments, and tactical web surfing (Cloninger). If social capital comes from the practice of taste-making (compiling images instead of making them), artists who have been called *post-Internet artists* can be considered alchemists. They take stock of the rubbish heap of net history. They turn shit into gold by compressing and decompressing digital artefacts, by rehashing them into something informative, intellectually abstract, and visually elegant.

Regressive is progressive. It’s easier to play the old game than revolt without the resources or reality that will allow you to resist. Commodification of art and everything surrounding it is the rule, not the exception. Initiative is both self-interested and ideological. Write or curate to leverage a new hierarchy in which you yourself can have a place, or something like that. Everything has been done; you can only do it better. Everything is a remix. “Hybridize or disappear,” warns Oliver Laric in *Versions* (2012), the third of a series of videos on the ubiquity of appropriation.

Spatialize the web as a large sculpture of a logo, or maybe a 3D print. Create a unique Internet-inspired experience—an installation or a livestream performance. Learn to do bad well. Appropriate rotating 3D objects, stock photography, transitional HTML, video essays, and fake watermarks to demonstrate self-reflexive awareness of the medium. Make ends meet by selling CafePress pillows of Photoshop paintings. Corporate aesthetics and sterile minimalism are suitable for docile public installations, design offices, and apartment lounges. Start a self-contained GIF store with PayPal buttons, or an ironic Etsy account—but sell the products for real, or you might not get anything for your considerable efforts.

Duchamp took a urinal and signed it off as his own; post-Internet artists ironise authorship using hokey watermarks and computer voiceovers in video essays—the rebellious gesture of *I can do this too* by artists who hold little reverence for their 1990s Net.art predecessors. And why should they? What does the formalist browser-based work of white men and women pecking at

their computers in 1996 have to do with me? Your canon was Dada, Warhol and Duchamp; mine is Cantopop, Pokémon and boys performing cover songs (Salvaggio). Why make art that looks like and responds to art that is over forty years old? Why not make art that responds to online things that matter to me now?

3. Bored together

Unlike 1990s Net.art, Post-Internet practices often exploited the web's decentralized, commercial properties to communicate with users and corporations. Many works were peer-responsive, profoundly cute and personal (for example, Parker Ito and Caitlin Denny's curatorial project, *JstChillin*, Ryder Ripps's *dump.fm*, Computers Club collective, and John Transue's *New Age Addiction.com*). What was most enjoyable to witness online was the informality and adventure, and the pleasure young artists took in creating contexts where their work could exist away from galleries and museums, in a naively utopian manner. These optimistic tendencies concerning Net art were not unlike their 1990s precedents, but possessed little, if any, critical backbone in relation to the political implications of existence on any network. Later, efforts were made by Louis Doulas' *Pool*—a platform for “expanding and improving the discourse between online and offline realities and their cultural, societal, and political impact on each other.” This platform was short-lived, only updated intermittently, and resembled a WordPress blog. But it provided a consolidated academic space for grad students, curators, emerging artists, and academic artists to promote writing about art and Internet culture after Web 2.0.

Net.art heavyweights were always more medium-specific about the use of the Internet and computer technologies. Artists like Jodi were concerned with fucking with the desktop and the browser, undercutting traditional art distribution systems, and creating new systems to share and make art (for example, Cornelia Solfrank's *Net Art Generator* and RTMark as a web-based corporate-sabotage collective). Instead, Post-Internet practice navigates within popular systems to produce experiences that celebrate and critique (or more so, laugh at) the role of the Internet in everyday life.

Soon, apartment gallery Net art exhibitions began taking place in Chicago, Amsterdam, New York, and Berlin. DIY spaces such as Reference Gallery (Virginia), Future Gallery (Berlin), 319 Scholes (New York), and later Transfer (New York), popped up as Post-Internet friendly venues. Galleries such as Future and Transfer became part-commercial in their distribution in order to find a market for contemporary cues in Post-Internet art. Their approach to exhibitions differed from long-standing new media galleries such as HTTP (London), InterAccess (Toronto), bitforms (New York), and festivals such as SIGGRAPH and Transmediale, which had a history of showing comparatively studio-based new media art practices; robotic sculptures, interactive installations, and browser-based projects—art concerned with the way technology works. Artists then started exhibitions as informal franchises: *Bring Your Own Beamer* consisted of multi-projector exhibitions that took place in large warehouses and gallery spaces; Internet-café *Speed Shows* became novel ways to exhibit work for a large

peer group.⁶ It appears that even if Net.art's original impetus was to create art outside institutional control, new media artists today are re-prioritising the role of physical exhibitions as career moves and meeting grounds.

4. Net art: the theory game

Internet art in media art histories, considering the broader struggle for Net art to be viewed as an autonomous, yet contemporary genre:

- The historian's approach: Net.art was never part of mainstream contemporary art. Net.art should retain its anti-institutional ethics and stop conforming to the mores of the contemporary, which are ultimately conservative and profit-driven.⁷
- The commercial gallerist's perspective: Net art is new and shiny. It's the next Pop art. (Holmes)
- The non-new media art critic: Net art (and new media art) are terms that should be retired in favour of newer, relevant terms like *web art* or *social media art*.⁸
- The net veteran's reprieve: real Net art (Net.art) is dead. Long live Net.art. (Lialina, "Net Art Is Not Dead")

If new media art has never been fully accepted into mainstream contemporary art, as Ed Shanken has observed, a confounding parallel is that new media art communities never wholly embraced Post-Internet art. Older generations of net.artists felt emerging net artists were wholly subsumed to Facebook's centralized mechanisms of socialisation. There are three kinds of bad art criticism that are usually applied to contemporary art. This is the same criticism that the notion of *Post-Internet* usually faces:

- "It's trendy" is a sceptic's retort—as Marisa Olson and Marc Garrett have observed, the art academy harbours conservative attitudes to the artists it selects for intellectual discourse.⁹ Academics are hesitant to critically invest in young, emerging practices; they recourse to pre-mainstream and A-list names as textbook examples—lest the artist quits in five years and their PhD thesis will be worthless.

6 *Bring Your Own Beamer* (<http://www.byobworldwide.com>) is a series of global multi-projector installation exhibitions with web-based works, and was initiated by Rafaël Rozendaal in 2010. *Speed Show* (<http://speedshow.net/>), an exhibition of web pages on multiple computers that often took place at Internet-café's, was initiated by Aram Bartholl in 2010.

7 "One of the key contributions NMA [new media art] can make to art [...] is in drawing attention to and contesting the status quo [...] challenging the museums and galleries [...] as the privileged sites of exhibition and reception. If NMA lies down and accepts assimilation on the terms of MCA [mainstream contemporary art], then much of its critical value will have been usurped" (Shanken).

8 Ben Davis considers new media art an erroneous term to apply to artwork that involves the specific use of social media and online platforms. See Davis.

9 "Scholars forbid or aggressively dissuade their pupils from writing about hitherto unknown (i.e. pre-canonized) artists, which halts progress, stunts egos, and flagellates the notion of original research, even as it traditionally purports to call for it" (Olson, 62). "...[theorists of media art culture] tend to rely on particular theoretical canons and the defaults of institutional hierarchies to validate their concepts. Also, most of the work they include in their research is either shown in established institutions and conferences [...]. It only serves to [...] enforces a hierarchy that will reinforce the same myopic syndromes of mainstream art culture" (Garrett).

- This “has been done” is a comment that comes mostly from new media art critics and historians.¹⁰ Everything’s been done, but with regards to the under-recognized and insular histories of Net art, a gallery-going public doesn’t know about what has currency on the Internet, let alone the history of Net art.

“It is lazy.” In regards to the abundance of amateur-looking work, kitsch is part and parcel of Internet culture, if not employed with new interest “nostalgically” by those who were not there to fully experience the early web—as Olia Lialina noted:

Amateur style [Geocities 1996]¹¹ was once the mainstream. Ridiculed and almost erased in the very late-1990s, it came back to the public’s attention during the Web 2.0 wave. Though the original amateur culture was very different from Web 2.0, many of its elements survived and in today’s web carry the meaning of a close, true relationship between users and their medium. The Vernacular Web is a recognized phenomenon (Laliana, “Prof. Dr. Style”).

Rejection of this is symptomatic of a colonial attachment to the ideas of “great art history,” of sterile minimalism, of heroic abstraction, and of conceptually oriented text-based work.

5. The anxiety of Internet art

The demographic most commonly declared “digital native” are in fact digital nomads. Overeducated and underpaid digital creatives work on laptops in coffee shops, public libraries, electronic art festivals, and airport lounges (Snead). In an era where working from home has become popular for web developers and pro-bloggers (even independent curators), the advent of the treadmill desk and ironic tracksuit-touting is symptomatic of the need to condition oneself as a multi-talented, charismatic digital creative—one that updates athletically (Troemel). This is the anxiety of Internet art: if you stop contributing, you will be forgotten. Participate to relieve the fear of missing out, and the loss of meaning and agency over self-representation. Participate for want of being discovered through reblogs and linkshares (but not LinkedIn). Post-Internet art is frivolous, fickle, and dandy, but even partying is hard work. You have to prepare yourself, look your best, have energy to dance, and make enough money to pay for cabs and coatchecks.

In America, mounting student debt, part-time contract jobs, lack of benefits, unaffordable health insurance, slow turnover of gallery jobs, and rarefied full-time teaching positions force new media artists to adapt to the demands of the traditional art world. In Canada and the Netherlands, budget cuts to state-funded art economies mean artist-run centres and publicly funded new media galleries have shut down. It’s not as if there is no market interest in Net art; Phillips and Tumblr’s joint initiative on the first ever digital art auction demonstrated that there is a burgeoning interest in work by net

¹⁰ “...early Net art history anticipated the socially interconnected ‘second lives’ of the new generation of [n]et artists for whom the digital is but an extension of their body’s functionality as it navigates the network culture” (Amerika).

¹¹ #mm: See the text „Introduction to the Past and Present of the Web” by Matěj Strnad in this publication.

artists who create editioned, physical versions of their work („Paddles On!“). Meanwhile, lesser-known artists have turned to perks-driven crowdsourcing to self-fund projects (Cushing). It’s a precarious time.

After four unpaid internships, one admin job, and two teaching assistant positions, I have accrued a network of over eight hundred transactional relationships, but probably only talk to twenty people regularly on Facebook. Those of us who have worked in the bottom rungs of art administration know that the curators and jury committees who deal with influxes of artwork from open calls flick effortlessly through JPEGs and online submissions without reading artist statements or CVs. Artists can no longer wait to be discovered. New media artists like myself are writing and curating to create cultures of work and exhibitions away from the ad agency and the museum. This is not because we object to the museumization of Net art (to help mostly unpaid artists to make money from their labour is a good thing). But the museum, nor the auction house, has yet to completely adapt to the informalities and ethics of new media culture.

6. Riding the wave: from prosumption to subsumption

As a contingency of online influence (likes, shares, and reblogs), initiatives to coolhunt and instrumentalise the newest wow-factor art projects and digital creatives into the machine of lifestyle branding were started by *The Creators Project* (a joint initiative by Vice and Intel) and the lesser-known *DIS Magazine*. The two websites offer artists an outreach to online publics and tweens outside their most immediate communities.

DIS Mag, how I love and loathe thee. You are the seamless integration of fashion and criticism with Net art in the form of a lifestyle website that offers hip fashion guides, mixtapes, and artist-commissioned photo series. I wish I started you, DIS Magazine.

Artist-as-brand and artist-as-user. I am a cannibalistic voyeur; I produce as fast as I consume. Deskilling is a stylized practice. Amateurism is no longer degenerate; amateur-looking art is “culturally aware,” or vernacular. Information and stylized experience has become the primary commodity; reskilling is necessary in order to fit in freelance work. The conflation of work and play time, through the predominant use of networked devices, goes hand-in-hand with Steven Shaviro’s ideas of intrinsic exploitation:

... everything in life must now be seen as a kind of labour: we are still working, even when we consume, and even when we are asleep. Affects [...] forms of know-how and of explicit knowledge, expressions of desire: all these are appropriated and turned into sources of surplus value. We have moved from a situation of extrinsic exploitation, in which capital subordinated labour and subjectivity to its purposes, to [...] intrinsic exploitation, in which capital directly incorporates labour and subjectivity *within* its own processes (Shaviro).

Digital labour exists in part due to the commodification of non-work tasks in the logic of experience-based social networking. Write, curate, blog, chat, comment. With every interaction, your playtime is the corporate network’s

goldmine (Marwick). Under Post-Internet conditions artists must capitalize on boredom, busyness, and procrastination, while working for free and undertaking relevant internships and community-building endeavours. For example, you are relevant if you speak the language of academic currency that fuels term wars over Net art, Net.art, Post-Internet, New Aesthetic, “expanded practices,” and all the rest. Ultimately, these terms all have overlapping goals: the artistic use of the Internet as a mass medium and the translation of its content into physical space.

New media artists play a multitude of roles in the cultural sphere: administrators, organizers, web developers, technicians, teachers, gallerists, and baristas. The most invisible and mundane is that of the user and prosumer (Lialina, “Turing Complete User”). Historically implicated as a stupid, function-oriented consumer, Olia Lialina describes the contemporary user as a universal agent who adapts existing technologies to fulfil specific, individualized needs. Digital labour insists that users are continuously functioning nodes, not humans. You exist to add to the stream, regardless of information value.

7. There was never a Post-Internet movement

Fearing ghettoisation, many emerging artists denied the label *Post-Internet* in favour of adhering to the category of *contemporary*. *Post-Internet is everyone else but me; I'm a special snowflake!* The most aggressive critics of Post-Internet art were artists who already operated from within and between specific platform-based online communities. Post-Internet is consequently more of a lens and a bad-ass attitude that became a bastardized aesthetic. In a critique of “How Post-Internet Got Lost,” writer and curator Ben Vickers referred to the term premature canonisation due to its popularity with art students and their valorisation of micro-blogging platforms. Their emulation of post-net tropes would produce a homogenous, abundant output of market-ready Net art.

With no unique goals and unified politics the term was co-opted by writers, curators, and gallerists as shorthand for contemporary art inspired by the Internet. Much of what appears in galleries makes little reference to the web as an environment, but more often resembles contemporary-looking art objects that cleverly recycle existing tropes from art history. Artie Vierkant’s *Image Objects* look like Cory Arcangel’s Photoshop gradient prints, which look like Rafaël Rozendaal’s colour field websites, which look like Piet Mondrian’s paintings. *Greek New Media Shit* and false documentation of art objects invoke satire about satire *ad infinitum*, producing an infinite parade of clever and conceptual art jokes (Sterling). Internet art has reached its peak irony, a navel-gazing void of peer-responsive artistic in-jokes and hopeless stabs at being earnest. It’s the newish term artists love to hate—something embarrassing and technologically dandy about Internet art in the late-2000s. Jaakko Pallasvuo demonstrates these ambivalent artistic tendencies in *How To / Internet*, the [fourth] in a series of instructional videos that employ a slideshow aesthetic to critique the social hierarchies that exist in online and contemporary art worlds:

HOW TO STAND OUT IN AN ENDLESS STREAM OF INFORMATION? [...] BINGE ON [1990s] POP CULTURE AND HTML5. PURGE COMPLEXITY, EMBARRASSMENT AND SADNESS [...] FIND YOUR POSITION BETWEEN LIGHT NIHILISM AND TECHNO-OPTIMISM. ALLUDE TO CRITICAL THEORIES BUT DON'T COMMIT TO THEM. DON'T ENGAGE POLITICALLY. APPROACH POST-EVERYTHING (Pallasvuo).

8. Life away from keyboard

"I'm a user, I'll improvise."

—Sam Flynn, *TRON: Legacy* (2010)

Just like white male *flâneurs*, captivated by the sights and sounds of urbanized cities and the now-banal train ride, my experiences in this world have been irreversibly changed by the transience of late-night Google searches, the effect and wonder of watching porn before I was ever of age to have sex, appreciating the best remixes of Taylor Swift songs, having self-educating chats with older artists, and partaking in comment threads that go nowhere. Post-Internet engulfs and transforms all kinds of wicked trends from high art to niche cultures. I am a computerized subject, a generic user with specific desires, trend surfing and making vague associations with everything I find and know. If "the Internet is people," as Ben Werdmuller says, I've become hopelessly addicted and exhausted with my need for validation from people I haven't met. Each like and re-tweet prompts a slight rise in dopamine, but soon online validation is not enough (Peck). Klout scores and Google Analytics have no bearing on how well art sells. Old-guard gatekeeping hasn't changed. Net-famous artists still wonder why they did not make that pavilion, that festival, that art fair.

9. Surviving Post-Internet

Given the conditions of accelerationist, networked capitalism, it's hard to be optimistic about making art online without feeling like a complete drone. The best thing to do is to demystify these insidious systems of distribution. No one wants to be a "noughties burnout." How to sell, or how-to-not-get-fucked-over-by- the-cultural-industry and the realities of artistic coolhunting has never been taught in art schools. As long as artists are in the race to adapt to the cult of the contemporary, we remain at the mercy of collectors, museums, the art press, and the academy. Post-Internet artists would benefit from shifting their practices beyond the communities surrounding social platforms to focus more on creating communities that exist in physical proximity. If one of Post-Internet's main principles is invoking the influence of the Internet on the physical world and its social relations, what we need is everything to be more IRL than the normal practices of galleries and museums. We could also be learning from other web-based creative communities.

We could look to the GL/.TCH festival. It is a movement of artists, educators and technologists who self-organize festivals and workshops on glitch art in Chicago, London, and Amsterdam.¹² We could curate GIF projections alongside bar parties and performances as Toronto-based *SHEROES* fanatic GIF parties have demonstrated.¹³ We could have more fun with making fun of art around each other, like global chapters of Art Hack Day and Dorkbot. We could teach people to make remix videos, as Elisa Kreisinger (popculturepirate.com) and Jonathan Macintosh (rebelliouspixels.com) from the political remix community do. We could have reading groups and potlucks, publish chapbooks, and enact live readings of each other's works as web-based, alt lit (alternative literature) groups have done.

As a lens, Post-Internet is not unflawed in its claims around the fluidities and variability of art production between online and offline contexts. The art world is a white frat house, and most Post-Internet discussion has been between the academically clustered Internet art communities in North America and Western Europe. With the emphasis on post-isms comes the idea of post-race and post-gender—equitable visions the Internet hasn't achieved just yet. A new profile does not equal new followers, Ben Werdmuller warns: "... you cannot install a social networking tool and assume that a network will grow around it. You must either have another purpose, or an existing network of people to plug into it. Either way, it's also going to take a lot of work: you need to lead by example, and participate heavily every day."

While early new media art communities were built on ethics of openness and collaboration, surf clubs and platform-based practices prosper on the nepotism and influence of online and regional friendships. In 2014, the Internet is not so democratic and neither is the art world. Privileges of access to the art world come through unlikely cross-platform friendships with critics, the academic blogger meritocracy, and follower-populism. Artists with higher follower counts become aesthetic opinion leaders, soft-capitalising on the attention of the right gallerists, art lovers, art students, and New Yorkers. To base your art practice around any one platform is to submit yourself to the social hierarchies created by impressions of influence and popularity with the communities you build and engage with.

Contemporary artists, curators, and critics today have a simultaneity of interests in the Internet's influence on art production, and this is evident in the multitude of vocabularies that have formed around Net art. As Gene McHugh observed, "What Seth Price called 'Dispersion.' What Oliver Laric called 'Versions'" (McHugh 6). What Hito Steyerl calls *circulationism*, which occurs as a contingency of decontextualized image ecology, Steven Shaviro calls *accelerationism*, which prompts a historical and post-critical viewership. Everything becomes focused on creating hype and momentum, a divergent nomenclature to describe the same condition, and on creating re-contextualized intensities of meaning where there are none within the attention-competitive nature of hyper-mediation.

¹² GLI.TC/H, 2010–present, see <http://gli.tc>.

¹³ Curated by Rea McNamara, *SHEROES* (<http://fuckyeahsheroes.tumblr.com/>) was a series of female pop-icon-inspired events with artist-made gifs and homage performances that happened monthly at bars in Toronto.

Politics is the pursuit of power, and within Post-Internet art this is no less evident in the migration of web-based practices to the ranks of the gallery and museum. I'm not calling on net artists to sell out—after all, you could only sell out if you sell every single one of your works. Since you are not dead, your work is already “contemporary.” So do something meaningful with your newfound art power. Stand for something.

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Gene McHugh | September 12, 2010

1.

Post-Internet is a term I heard Marisa Olson talk about somewhere between 2007 and 2009.

The Internet, of course, was not over. That wasn't the point. What we really mean to say is that the *Internet* changed and *Post-Internet* served as shorthand for this change.

So, what changed? What is it about our meaning when we say the Internet changed so drastically, that we can speak of Post-Internet with a straight face?

On a general level, the rise of social networking and the professionalisation of web design reduced the technical nature of network computing and shifted the Internet from a specialized world for nerds and the technologically-minded, to a mainstream world for nerds, the technologically-minded and grandmas and sports fans and business people and painters and everyone else. Here comes everybody.

Furthermore, any hope that the Internet would make things easier, *to reduce the anxiety of my existence*, was simply over—it had failed—and it was just another thing to deal with. What we mean when we say the Internet became not a thing in the world to escape into, but rather *the world one sought escape from...* sigh... It became the place where business was conducted, and bills were paid. It became the place where people tracked you down.

2.

Accompanying this change in what we mean when we say the Internet, there was a change in what we mean when we say *art on the Internet* and *Post-Internet art* served as shorthand for this change.

On a general level, the shift of the Internet to a mainstream world in which A LOT of people read the newspaper, play games, meet sexual partners, go to the bathroom, etc. necessitated a shift in what we mean when we say *art on the Internet* from a specialized world for nerds and the technologically-minded, to a mainstream world for nerds, the technologically-minded and painters and sculptors and conceptual artists and agitprop artists and everyone else. No matter what your deal was/is as an artist, you had/have to deal with the Internet—not necessarily as a medium in the sense of formal aesthetics (glitch art, GIFs, etc.), but as a distribution platform, a machine for altering and re-channelling work. What Seth Price called “Dispersion.” What Oliver Laric called “Versions.”

Even if the artist doesn't put the work on the Internet, the work will be cast into the Internet world; and at this point, contemporary art, as a category,

was/is forced, against its will, to deal with this new distribution context, or at least acknowledge it.

Acknowledge is key here. It's not that all contemporary artists must immediately start making hypertext poetry and cat memes, but somewhere in the basic conceptual framework of the work, an understanding of what the Internet is doing to their work—how it distributes the work, how it devalues the work and revalues it—must be acknowledged in a way that one, such as the market, would acknowledge. It is what Guthrie Lonergan called *Internet Aware*. To not do this would not be a sin (obviously most artists don't care about the Internet at all and won't start caring anytime soon; similarly, most artists probably don't want to consider the market), but that would be a shame. Somewhere, on a *realistic* level, there would be an avoidance of the context in which the work appears and, if the twentieth century did anything for artists, it made them care about context on a realistic level. Duchamp changed the game by acknowledging the context in which the game is played. The game is now played in the project spaces of Berlin, São Paulo and Los Angeles; it's played in the commercial galleries of New York, and the global network of biennial culture, and it's certainly played in museums and auction houses, but now it is *also* played through the distribution channels of the Internet. To avoid this last point is to risk losing the game.

NOTE: For alternative understandings of Post-Internet art, conducted in more depth, read *The Image Object Post-Internet* (2010) by Artie Vierkant and *Within Post-Internet* (2011) by Louis Doulas.

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5. Archiving

#404 Page Not Found

*# archiving #preservation #documentation #restoration #emulation
#internet_archives #databases #authenticity*

The creation, development and reception of Internet art are not only dependent on the context of contemporary art practice, but also on technological and sociocultural conditions. The relatively fast changes in technology and the development of hardware and software (and Internet protocols) are the primary inhibitors to the preservation, presentation and archiving of a digital Internet work in its original form.

In the middle of the 2010s, when Internet art has already been accepted as a full-blown area of art whose development and offshoots are systematically being mapped and whose works are becoming collectors' items, the question of its documentation, archiving and preservation is receiving more and more attention. The research project *Netpioneers 1.0* that took place between 2007 and 2009 in Linz, Austria is an example of the preservation efforts. The team led by German researchers Dieter Daniels (b. 1957) and Gunther Reisinger (b. 1971) attempted to restore and contextualize some of the earliest Net art works. The project included structured interviews with artists, who could be viewed online on the project website, a database of sources and the publication *Netpioneers 1.0—Contextualising Early Net-Based Art* whose introductory chapter has partly been republished in this book. In this text, the authors focus on the starting point of the project, the predecessors of Internet art and the need for archiving.¹

Many Internet works and online texts mentioned in the individual chapters of this *#mm Net Art* anthology can no longer be found on the Internet (similar to the website of the project *Netpioneers 1.0*). They have nevertheless been partially “preserved” through photo documentation and textual descriptions reprinted in catalogues and books, as well as in databases of Internet archives and the private archives of Internet users. Some digital art works were restored in emulated environments which corresponded to the era in which they were created in order to produce the feelings of an authentic experience.

The Internet constantly develops and changes; technology becomes outdated, giant corporations determine the look of interfaces of commonly used platforms and their functions, and sources for paying for one's own domain dry up. Not only Internet art works, but all content on the web has to confront its own inherent transiency, which is the topic of the last contribution in this publication “Introduction to the Past and Present of the Web” (2014) by Matěj Strnad (b. 1989), Czech media theorist who specializes in archiving.

#mm

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¹ See Daniels and Reisinger. The texts from this book used to be available for free on the project website <http://www.netpioneers.info/>. At the time of publication of *#mm Net Art* anthology, the website is no longer publicly accessible.

Dieter Daniels, Gunther Reisinger | 2010

[...]

Giving a potted history of net-based art may seem to present no difficulty: the hype around net-based art began in the early 1990s, before the Internet became a commodity. It developed in sceptical parallel to the rise and decline of the new economy. In 1997, *documenta X* featured Net art. Around the same time, major museums in the US started online art commissions and virtual showcases (Paul).² The first (and last) retrospective exhibition—*netcondition*—was held in 1999.³ Several books published in the first years of the new millennium gave overviews of the practice and theory of this art (Stallabrass; Greene; Baumgärtel). But since then, this particular chapter of art history appears to have closed. Perhaps the final indication that net-based art was not to become another genre in the contemporary art canon was when the Net Vision category in the Prix Ars Electronica 2007⁴ was discontinued.

But why does this chapter in art history appear to end so suddenly? Is it because the idea of net-based art (also known as Internet art, Net art, Net.art, and web-based art) which involved itself with a revolutionary spirit in a networked society failed? One might equally argue that it was far too successful to simply become another media-art genre. Looking back at the social, aesthetic, and conceptual approaches of the early 1990s,⁵ it is clear that most of them have come true, albeit in unintentional ways.

They materialized, but without the establishment of a new art genre, and they resisted the typical process of commodification which existed in art institutions. Instead, some of the initial ideas took shape in everyday socio-technological living conditions. The two major utopian visions of modernist avant-garde from the 1920s and the 1960s are that art anticipates the future and that art transforms, or is transformed, into life. The history of net-based art indicates that it fulfilled both these utopian visions and, as an artistic exercise confined to the art world, rendered itself obsolete.

Early net-based art, however, is most significant from the viewpoint of the history of ideas. For the most part, the figures and artworks of the time have been eclipsed. Current public awareness does not extend to the net pioneers themselves, who entered neither the narrative of an emerging network society, nor the canon of art history. It is not just fame that is at stake here, but also the material (and digital) evidence of one of the most exciting artistic

¹ #mm: The following text is a shortened introduction to the publication *Netpioneers 1.0—Contextualising Early Net-Based Art*, see Daniels and Reisinger 5–8.

² #mm: Paul's article "Context and Archive: Presenting and Preserving Net-based Art" is also available at http://intelligentagent.com/writing_samples/netpioneers.pdf. Date of access Aug. 29 2014.

³ The exhibition *net_condition* was a distributed exhibition in Graz, Barcelona, Tokyo, and Karlsruhe. See Weibel and Druckrey.

⁴ The definition-shifts in the Prix Ars Electronica category of net-based art are a short history in their own right. 1995–1996 World Wide Web, 1997–2000 .net, 2001–2003 Net Vision / Net Excellence, 2004–2006 Net Vision.

⁵ #mm: This issue is dealt with in greater details in Daniels and Reisinger.

phenomena from the final decade of the twentieth century. Even if future art historians change their minds and, as with Dada or Marcel Duchamp, decide to rediscover this art fifty years after the event, there will be little left. No museums, universities, libraries, or media archives consider themselves responsible for, or capable of, caring for this part of the cultural digital heritage, which would involve archiving, documenting, and maintaining net-based art and its contexts. Constantly changing online technology and socio-economic environments ensure that it is as difficult to develop a methodology of preservation for net-based art as it is for all digital art. The fact that these early instances of net-based art never entered the art market (and in fact successfully opposed it) is also partially responsible for the lack of research in the field: their apparent lack of monetary value does not argue for the necessity of these works' survival.

The historical importance of the early net-based artworks presented here as evidence of a pivotal moment in digital culture and of a paradigm shift in media society in general, goes far beyond art history. Yet the framework of art history alone can provide a basis for understanding the context, ideas, and concepts behind the works. They were created in response to a specific setting in the art world of the early 1990s. A historical view must therefore maintain this context, although the works are also significant in that they simultaneously testify to the development of the socio-technical media. The research approach developed at the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute Media.Art.Research. over a period of three years⁶ has focused on developing a documentary archive and contextualisation methodology, for which a range of case studies was selected. While this does not solve the problem of the survival of net-based art, it does aspire to set an example and to instil an awareness of the responsibility we owe these fragile and ephemeral monuments of our media society.

First published in English as the Introduction to Daniels, Dieter, and Gunther Reisinger, eds. *Netpioneers 1.0—Contextualising Early Net-Based Art*. Berlin: Sternberg Press 2010. (Abridged.)

6 #mm: 2007–2009.

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Netpioneers 1.0 (2007–2009) | <http://www.netpioneers.info/>⁷

⁷ #mm: In time of publication of this anthology, the website was no longer accessible publicly.

I.

It is necessary to change ones point of view. It has long been thought that we would be able to distinguish archival science from digital archiving, historiography from digital historiography and humanities from digital humanities. It has seemed that we would not only be able to distinguish these variants, decorated with such an appealing adjective from the traditional, non-digital disciplines, but also to develop them independently. However, there are no variants and we do not have a choice. Even though we have the chance to use non-digital tools, and we often happily do just that, our¹ present and recent past is only one and is neither digital nor exclusively non-digital. One of the most useful outcomes of the otherwise confusing discussions of the post-digital age is that they have clearly confirmed that what was not obvious only a while ago is now obvious: our paradigm has digitalized and we only keep digitalising the old world. Moreover, new media have got old.

Professor of Czech Studies Jiří Trávníček in his essay devoted to contemporary reading habits writes about an “information pandemic” and refutes the idea “that it is possible to live in this state without stability, the textual one included, and therefore without books as a semantically closed space such that it has greater stability.” He sees books as “islands in a sea of information boundlessness” (qtd. in Lukavec). Let us forget the fear of boundlessness for a while, as it is possibly a hidden criticism of Trávníček’s text and focus on the question of stability of what we call books.

For instance, Keefe in his preface to *The Cambridge Companion to Mozart* says: “The publisher has used its best endeavours to ensure that the URLs for external websites referred to in this book are correct and active at the time of going to press. However, the publisher has no responsibility for the websites and can make no guarantee that a site will remain live or that the content is or will remain appropriate” (246). By means of alternative formulations of the same message, a lot of English-speaking publishers correct the still pervasive belief in the stability of the world of non-electronic books—access dates of individual electronic sources included in the more scholarly publications only deepen our dread of the *information pandemic* in which one link transforms into another, changes its content or immediately dies. Even a book devoted to the digital abyss denounces this apparent limit at the very beginning as it mentions in its impressum, aside from the above-cited: “While the author has made every effort to provide accurate telephone numbers [sic!] and Internet addresses at the time of publication, neither the publisher nor the author assumes any responsibility for errors, or for changes that occur after publication. Further, the publisher does not have any control over and does not assume any responsibility for authors or third-party websites or their content” (Bauerlein).

1 Our in the sense of us who live on the same side of the digital abyss.

The abyss still exists, but it is an abyss of social conditions and access opportunities, not an abyss of stability and instability, of virtual and authentic reality. All books have long been more or less digitalized and at the same time, all things digital are not as immaterial as we would sometimes like them to be, whether because of the reality of electronic waste² or their specific forms of materiality.³

II. The web landscape

It is first necessary to point out that the following text will deal primarily with the web, that is, with only one of the possible manifestations of the Internet; more specifically the ways in which we use the Internet. Naturally, there are initiatives which pursue the preservation of many other of its more or less visible components—from diverse approaches to e-mail archiving⁴ to the effort to back up all (!) existing FTP servers.⁵ However, let us simplify this a little and say that for various reasons, contemporary Net art mainly concerns the web, that is the World Wide Web mediated by HTTP or HTTPS protocols, and simply that which users achieve through the address bar of their browser. This is why most attention will be directed towards the web. Such a restriction is as much necessary as it is forced. The genealogy of Net art naturally tampers with Mail art, it represents the art of communication and network, and it is possible to communicate and network in ways other than just the web. However, those manifestations commonly fall into the broader category of new media art and problems of their preservation are not my primary focus at the moment. Despite the incontestable historic significance of the pre-web and even pre-Internet phenomena (academic networks, USENET, BBS servers),⁶ and even despite the considerable similarity of possible approaches to their preservation and representation, the following article will focus on more contemporary and, admittedly, more popular, facts and artefacts.

If the web is the key to contemporary Net art, it is necessary to introduce the landscape of its preservation, museums and archives. To do otherwise would not be productive and sincere. The most successful project in this field is definitely the non-profit institution *Internet Archive*, the title of which can be understood in two ways: as an archive of the Internet (the preservation of the web was the first concern of the *Internet Archive*), and also as an Internet archive, in other words, an archive *on* the Internet (its collections encompass all kinds of digitalized and digital content). The relatively vital development of the project by Brewster Kahle brings another argument in support of my initial thesis: it evidently exceeded its digital/Internet dimension the moment it announced its plan to build a reserve of physical books—namely

2 Cf., for example, Gabrys (DOI: 10.3998/dcbooks.9380304.0001.001).

3 Compare “forensic” and “formal” materiality of digital artifacts in Kirschenbaum 9–17. For the applicability of digital forensic science in archiving and preservation also see Kirschenbaum, Ovenden, and Redwine; and Lee et al.

4 See Prom.

5 The first specification of the transfer protocol FTP comes from the early 1970s. However, its usage declines so dramatically that the Archive Team collective mentioned later in the text considers in principle all FTP servers to be endangered and strives for their rescue (i.e. backup). See “FTP.”

6 #mm: See the first thematic section of this book *Web 1.0—On the Internet, Nobody Knows You Are a Dog*.

to keep one copy of each book that has ever been printed.⁷ It has almost invisibly surpassed this dimension already the instant it acquired its very first hard disk for external data storage in order to have a place to store the “Internet.” Apparently, in terms of safeguarding the physical copies, it will never have the parameters of, for example, the Library of Congress. However, for our purpose, the need to preserve itself, accompanied by a fight against forgetfulness and for memory accessible to all (for safety’s sake also in a *physical* form), is telling.

Commonly institutionalized web archives almost exclusively have a cultural and public law focus and the vast majority were initiated and run by state or national libraries, as in the case of the Australian *Pandora*, considered the first archive of its type and established on January 1, 1996, and the relatively old Czech *WebArchiv*, founded on January 1, 2000 (*The Web-Archives Timeline*). Yet activists and non-profit organisations such as *Internet Archive* capably back them and in many areas even beat them.⁸

With respect to the initial hypothesis on perfect digitalisation, we must not ignore the fact that there is no objective reason why web archives should be qualitatively different from all other previous archives. So why should their agenda and technological developments not ultimately depend on their pragmatic concerns, on the endeavours of institutions and the state to establish order, and alternatively on businesses and business people to make a profit? In this way, some of the recent initiatives in the area of web archiving have already produced relevant results. For instance, the introduction to a remarkable article on the measurement of the quality of data harvested from the web convincingly summarizes the implicit purpose of the practice of preservation of the web when it calls it “a gold mine.”⁹ We can try to understand the effort and need of the scientific community to accommodate the demands of applied research, however, in comparison with the eschatological vigour of former self-appointed web archivists and activists and the activities of public institutions such as libraries, it is clear that a new area of commodification is being defined here. For example, the problem of archiving the social web is being energetically solved by the Archive Social company from Durham, which offers its services to state institutions and financial and investment counsellors. The award-winning start-up seized the opportunity provided by legislative acts regulating counselling (in which the regulatory authority explicitly mentions the need to archive activity on social networks) and by the attitude of some authorities towards activity on social networks seen as “public documents.”¹⁰

⁷ The aim is to collect several tens of millions of books from the total number of hundreds of millions of books ever published. See Kahle.

⁸ Let us recall the origin of two most widely used formats for archive aggregate files with web content (ARC and WARC) that owe their development above all to the *Internet Archive*. The aggregates serve both for saving individual web pages or collections and for their reconstruction by means of web applications such as Wayback Machine (again *Internet Archive*).

⁹ “Capturing the history of digitally born information and preserving the cultural and political zeitgeist of an era offers a potential gold mine for all kinds of media and business analysts, such as political scientists, sociologists, media psychologists, market analysts, and intellectual-property lawyers. For example, one could analyse the effectiveness of political campaigns, search websites for prior art that may be relevant in assessing patent applications, or test former versions of websites for compliance with country-specific legal rules for Internet media” (Spaniol et al. 19).

¹⁰ A comparison with the Czech Freedom of Information Law is possible here.

Thus the organized response (as stimulated by conferences, consortia and applied research) aimed at the preservation of the web evidently grows in intensity as routinely stored agenda¹¹ are transferred to the web. In spite of this, the web forgets and dies out, while its most ardent apostles fight for its rescue and continue to ring alarm bells. In fact, permanence is inconsistent with business plans based on improvement and novelty—which is precisely the story of GeoCities.

III. Home pages and user-generated content

GeoCities provided shelter to the masses of first Netizens from 1994; it offered space and an accessible and intelligible infrastructure for personally oriented and highly (to a point that HTML allowed) personalized „home pages.” Thanks to their handcrafted quality and hallmark of self-help enthusiasm, these gradually became a symbol of the internet DIY culture and the democratisation of the early web. At the peak of the Internet craze, Yahoo bought GeoCities for the enormous sum of 3,5 billion USD. Even more than a classic speculative bubble, GeoCities proved to be an unmanageable venture, the development of which no one in Yahoo fancied or wanted to envision. In fact, the website and more specifically its infrastructure, despite microscopic changes both technologically and conceptually, froze in the era of its greatest glory; sometime before the massive outbreak of blogs at the end of the 1990s, and social networks at the beginning of the millennium. Therefore, in 2009, being more helpless than mean, Yahoo “found the way to destroy the most massive amount of history in the shortest amount of time, with absolutely no recourse” (Fletcher). Users were only given a few months to transfer their existing web pages (primarily to a paid storage site offered by Yahoo), but the vast majority had not maintained their addresses (and did not even learn of their expiry) or were not especially interested in them, so it was a fraction of the Internet memory community that actively contributed to the rescue of the web pages.

The rescue of GeoCities was one of the first projects of the Archive Team; “a loose collective of rogue archivists, programmers, writers and loudmouths” who were successful in collecting “a great many” of the total number of about seven million web pages at risk. Their efforts to rescue GeoCities took place with vigour, as did those of others (Reocitis, Oocities and more), and the first result was, besides mirrored versions in different states of completion, a torrent of more than 600 GiB. Its description contains further explanation of the background to the whole enterprise: “The most likely candidates [...] are researchers, scientists, historians and developers who wish to work with a large collection of information hand-made by millions of free labour [...] Our job was not to find a use for it. Our job was to save it.”¹²

The eloquence of this and other proclamations (including the above-cited ironic compliment to Yahoo) reflects the language and ethos of the unofficial

¹¹ That is state, corporate and business agenda.

¹² While the text “Introduction to the Past and Present of the Web” was being written, a raid against Pirate Bay took place. Description of the original torrent can most easily be found through *Internet Archive*. See “Geocities—The Torrent.”

leader of the entire community, Jason Scott, who takes part in many projects with a focus mainly on historical software. He is possibly the most prominent Internet and computer archivist operating outside ordinary institutions.

Analysis of this self-proclamation and the self-confessed saviourhood of involuntary archivists would demand a different treatise; however, let us mention that apart from the fact that these endeavours have evidently yielded finite results, they are mainly interesting for the actual origin of their natural rescue tendencies, and for what they can tell us about the memory identity of a certain section of the expert public, predominantly expert in areas other than professional caretaking of social memory. An analogous comment uniformly holds for the iconic *Internet Archive* that shares a general rescue ethos and a primary concern for the accessibility of its archives with the Archive Team and similar initiatives. Their idea of rescue demands the widest and the most straightforward accessibility feasible. On the other hand, traditionally institutionalized web archives that are connected with the world of books reflect more carefully on their collecting activities; besides “comprehensive harvests,”¹³ they often create meaningful collections and the requirement of accessibility is not a primary concern—mainly because of their often insufficient and obsolete regulations (not to mention web archives located within regular archives that are traditionally much less accessible than libraries—delayed access is somewhat natural to archives). In general, library web archives are quite restrictive, as expressed, for example, in the still pertinent complaint of a librarian from the National Library of the Czech Republic:

Here a question arises whether it is really necessary that access to publications which the publisher originally made accessible on the Internet (realising the possibility of potential copyright abuse by the users of his website) be subsequently limited, in the form of web archive copies, to selected terminals in a single institution that has the right to download the data. (Celbová)

This state of affairs means that if the owner of the website did not have a contract with the National Library to make their website accessible, its archive cannot be made accessible online. Although *WebArchiv* has concluded over four thousand contracts, the *Internet Archive*, which restricts access to websites only on demand or court order, is still often a more stable and accessible source of information on the history of the Czech Internet.

Similar underground initiatives can naturally be observed within the Czech-speaking web. For instance, while building his *Internet Museum*, Jiří Peterka apparently quite intuitively took advantage of several methods at once for recording the web. Although his approach cannot be called perfectly comprehensible and transparent (for example he does not really detail the methods of migration of the so-called “archival copies of websites”),¹⁴

¹³ See “Comprehensive Harvest.”

¹⁴ “Efforts to preserve the original appearance of various websites are being made by a number of projects such as the familiar *Internet Archive* (located at www.archive.org). In the same way, copies of entire websites have been issued, adapted to offline browsing, for instance on CDs attached to printed magazines. Sometimes people downloaded a copy of a website for personal use and hence preserved its historical appearance. You can find several such websites downloaded in the period 1994–1999. You can browse them

he succeeded in aggregating a number of important sources that are introductory to the history and prehistory of the Czech Internet.

Let us return to the GeoCities project that serves as an example of a definite archival project, rather than the defensive reaction of a fraction of the Internet public to the amnesia characteristic of the majority of commercial web projects. In their “Philosophy,” the Archive Team states that they are going to devote their interest to “sites where user-generated content was solicited and then provided,” which is a category especially applicable to many of the (once) successful Internet projects (Friendster, Orkut, Xanga, Libimseti and Lide.cz; GeoCities is somewhat comparable to, for instance, the once popular hosting platform Webzdarma). Though many people say that the user-generated content which should lie at the heart of Web 2.0 has turned out to be a myth or a guise for advertising and industrial content,¹⁵ it has left undeniable traces, the value of which is recognized by the majority. Paradoxically, it can be said that while older websites such as GeoCities, directly based on user-generated content, seem to be relatively well archivable (they are static websites with very simple multimedia content), new projects such as social networks and video streaming servers based on much more commercial models not only play a dangerous game with the value of user-generated content, but their archiving is also conceptually much more difficult (owing to their aforementioned dynamic character).

However, do not fall prey to the illusion that GeoCities or any even more static websites are content alone and that the only thing you need to do is download them (early enough) and make them accessible (if courage and the law will allow). Let us move one step closer to Net art.

IV. What to do now and how?

GeoCities was relatively manageable compared to the present-day web, in relation to structure and volume. There was a certain challenge to searching for and downloading software (crawlers) in, for instance, the subdomain structure of GeoCities, initially based on the original idea of “neighbourhoods” and “suburbs” and which formed some form of file organizers¹⁶ of individual websites, which at the same time functioned as autonomous units in the hierarchy. In the same way, the rescue archivists’ job was impeded by both the uncontrolled access of individual users to the addressing hierarchy of their website, and by a number of problematic (or, if one is to be polite, improvised) solutions.

Thus despite being much simpler than most of today’s web, taking care of GeoCities experienced the same problems of any web archive. Firstly, “archiving” still has little to do with the long-term preservation of the web—it is necessary to bear in mind that it primarily concerns methods of

on your own and get acquainted with their original appearance. But bear in mind that the original download could not contain all the web pages. So a number of links refer to original locations that no longer exist. Likewise, some functions of the original websites (for example “interactive maps”) were lost when the copy was made and are also not available” (Peterka).

¹⁵ Cf., for example, Heidenreich.

¹⁶ Recall the logic of web catalogues such as the Czech portal Seznam.cz and others.

searching, capturing and saving the desired object of interest, which is most often a website of some cultural or political importance, possibly falling under the heading of “national” interest, or alternatively it could be all the generally accessible web.¹⁷ The latter nevertheless represents only a fraction of the possible content; a mere crust or edge of the “network,” which mainly consists of the *deep web*; primarily inaccessible or even hidden data, databases and sources. Yet the short-term perspective, more specifically minimal prospects and insufficient attention paid to long-term storage, poses a bigger problem. The above-mentioned containers for collected data—ARC/WARC—do not in fact tell us about their own content, which can significantly differ in its future relevance and vitality.¹⁸ Web archives thus share the same problem with many memory institutions; for the sake of actual digitalisation, which can in the end be very well assessed and reported, they often disregard the need for the long-term storage of digital and digitalized data and the building of sustainable repositories.¹⁹

The second difficulty that GeoCities shares with the general preservation of the web and specifically of Net art, is the problem of what is really interesting about them. When the Archive Team and other organisations set out to rescue and re-publish tens of thousands of individual websites (“we are going to rescue your shit”), they mainly focused on the informational value of the content they were saving (Scott). Yet Dragan Espenschied raised a question similar to that commonly asked in connection to the preservation of media art and of technically dependent cultural manifestations in general—how do we preserve and mediate an authentic presentation of a concrete artefact under present-day conditions? The problem with authenticity in the environment of digital preservation mainly lies in the ambiguity of the term: at one point it refers to a relatively strictly defined term from archival theory and diplomacy, yet at another it relates to a concept developed and often brought up by art conservators, restorers and the wider public. In the first case, it means “the degree to which a person (or system) may regard an object as what it is purported to be,”²⁰ in the second, it denotes a set of loosely defined, perceptive qualities (the “look” and the “feel”²¹). Apart from specialist archiving literature and norms (such as the reference model OAIS), when using the term, speakers usually prefer the latter meaning, which is not only the preservation of faithfulness at an informational (often strictly bit) level, but above all an intelligible and trust-worthy mediation.

17 Listing diverse approaches to collecting and saving the web is not the primary concern of this article. Let us nevertheless mention the methods practised by the National Library of the Czech Republic: *WebArchiv* carries out the comprehensive, selective and thematic accumulation of data. Uniform harvests have the ambition to collect all Czech Internet material, selective harvests are curated by *WebArchiv* and cover pre-selected and contracted sources with a certain periodicity (websites are classified according to their focus and areas of interest—for example Mathematics or Sociology) and thematic collections concern certain contemporary topics and events (such as the Olympic Games and the death of Václav Havel).

18 A well organized register of diverse file formats and their versions with respect to their lifetime (and pertinence as archive formats) is maintained by the British *National Archives*. See “The Technical Registry PRONOM.”

19 A description of the structure of Czech *WebArchiv* file formats reads: “Time and performance requirements hinder identification of formats even before the data are saved into the LTP [author’s note: long-term preservation] storage. [...] And it is possible that as early as today, we will not be able to read some of the files from the 2000 archive” (Kvasnica and Kreibich).

20 See Giaretta 15. Giaretta later implies a certain reconciliation of both concepts (cf. 214–221), because this purporting to be something can also contain the need to preserve significant properties of an object such as contextual information and similar. In other words, to give a typical example, a video installation from the 1960s presented on widescreen LCD displays should not purport to be a video installation from the 1960s.

21 Cf., for example, Brokerhof et al.

Dragan Espenschied thus examines GeoCities for variables such as different imaging devices or different web browsers and operating systems. Imaging devices obviously have an immediate effect on user experience (resolution, colourfulness).²² Old operating systems, among other things, did not use present-day algorithms to smooth the edges (“anti-aliasing”) in font rasterisation, which is why all textual elements look very different today (although the code is identical).²³ In the same way, user experience was also shaped by the browsers used (at that time dominated by Netscape) and their particular configurations and plugins. Finally, the manner in which audio data were reproduced (mainly in the form of the then very popular website audio backgrounds MIDI) differed substantially from modern practices.

In one post to the blog where Espenschied and the net artist Olia Lialina devote themselves to the phenomenon of GeoCities, he proposes a matrix formed by the axes of *authenticity*²⁴ and *ease of access*. According to him, the least authentic but most accessible means of mediation of the historical web are simple screenshots. His degree of authenticity and at the same time of complexity of implementation continues through the preservation of interactivity, the genuine nature of the data displayed and the fidelity of the original URL address to the aforementioned original acoustic impression. A solution proposed by Espenschied, more complex than the browsing of screenshots or mirrored (backup/archived) web pages, is to take advantage of proxy servers (to maintain the illusion of the original URL) and emulate²⁵ the environment of the original operating systems and web browsers. The most complicated and also the most authentic approach would then be to browse the archived web pages using historical hardware and software. It is of course arguable how old this hardware/software should be (for example, whether to date from the time the specific web page was created or when it was last updated).

Espenschied and Lialina partly implement their idea of authentic mediation, at least at a graphic level, with the project *One Terabyte of Kilobyte Age Photo Op*, consisting of the successive processing of individual archived web pages and the uploading of screenshots on a dedicated Tumblr blog. The web pages archived are automatically opened in an environment which emulates the operating system Windows 95 and the browser Netscape, while after each page loads, a screenshot is taken and subsequently placed on the above-mentioned Tumblr. Thanks to the use of a proxy server, this elegant and fully automated solution maintains the illusion of a correct URL address and

22 In Espenschied’s own words: “For example, when looking at historic web pages on a 800×600 pixel 14” CRT screen with a 60Hz refresh rate, it becomes clear why many people decided to use dark backgrounds and bright text for their designs instead of emulating paper with black text on a white background.” See Espenschied.

23 Let us remark for the sake of accuracy that text is often displayed differently today although it is still influenced primarily by the operating system and the specific browser or version used.

24 Authenticity here is understood in the above-mentioned looser sense of impression or feeling. It would possibly be more effective to interpret this concept both as a *measure* (which is what Espenschied does with his axes) and in relation to the means of presentation, framing and contextualisation. In other words, a web archive that would not suggest a vision of the past to the user (but would rather function as a mere document) could be, in my opinion, and in the popular sense of the word, considered authentic. In the same article, Espenschied explains authenticity elsewhere as “how realistically the harvested data can be presented.”

25 To emulate means to run programmes within a different architecture than they were originally created for, both in terms of the operating system and the hardware (it does not have to be a mere emulation of the historical configuration, but also of a totally different platform—e.g. various game consoles).

its emulation of the historical environment is more graphically faithful, at least in displaying the fonts. Of course one loses interactivity and rich media elements (animated images in the form of GIF or audio backgrounds); the static and always growing photo gallery of the history of GeoCities at <http://oneterabyteofkilobyteage.tumblr.com/> nevertheless functions relatively well and successfully.

V. Speed

Dragan Espenschied's method can be employed in a whole number of attempts to mediate web archives—although its principal message is that any solution is inevitably a compromise, it conveys, in an intelligible manner, the problematic nature of even the simplest methods through which we try to preserve the web for the future and understand the web of the past. But what should one do in cases when a simple download of the content and its transfer to an active domain are not even sufficient for a mere outline of the original? Recording and video documentation come to mind—for example Niels Brügger suggests recording the screen not in static images, but on video (screencasting); they are used as a tool for the preservation of net art by Constant Dullaart and Robert Sakrowski in their *Net.artdatabase.org*. Their aim is to “archive” (or document?—the terminology they use in the description of their project is unfortunately a little vague) Internet art by means of a simultaneous recording of the screen and user interaction with a specific device or a specific website. From a total number of eleven published (double) recordings there are only seven available at the time of writing this article; despite that the concept is worthy of attention.

Net.artdatabase.org is unique in its interest in the interaction and the physical condition of the consumption of the web—the camera records the user/archivist located in a certain environment, using a certain device, their behaviour and eventually the whole course of the encounter with a specific work of art. Similarly to Brügger's method, this represents a data and time-demanding procedure only applicable to selected websites and Net art works. Moreover, the screencasts are only stored on YouTube (which is not the most suitable platform for archiving purposes) and the method, which consists of interacting with or observing the art work, is not well defined. It thus oscillates between two extremes: a controlled, laboratory approach and a much looser, experience-focused attitude, which shows the user in a somewhat random interaction with the work, or an interaction clearly informed by previous encounters with the work. The principle of screencasting still brings a certain complication when it disregards the complexity of the whole system within which the art work exists—Dullaart and Sakrowski only recommend registering the hardware and software employed at a very basic level,²⁶ while in reality the behaviour of the website is influenced by countless distinct variables. Among these is the connection speed, more specifically the current workload of the actual device, which is even influenced by the screencasting itself.

²⁶ In their otherwise nicely elaborated instructions, they limit themselves to the “computer model,” more specifically the “operating system” and the “web browser.” Cf. “Instructions” of the *Net.artdatabase.org*.

Loading and response speed are generally hard dimensions to define—of course they can be emulated or produced directly while using historical hardware and software. However, it is fully relative and falls almost entirely into the category of mental and experience-based qualities. It is no accident that an article by Vivian Sobchack, mainly known for her phenomenological contributions to film theory, focuses on the topic. The article entitled “Nostalgia for a Digital Object: Regrets on the Quickening of QuickTime,” published in 1999 fittingly documents one of the many changes that the web underwent, while it is written at a quite palpable critical point—the moment a new version of multimedia software brought about a new era of web video. Sobchack compares QuickTime videos to Joseph Cornell’s collage boxes and discusses questions of memory and time-space framing. However, it is important to note that she talks about a different web than the one we live with today:

Both Cornell and QuickTime boxes mobilize memory and desire through the aesthetics of absence: a privileging of the poetically and philosophically charged gap between a present artefact and the past experience of which it is only a fragment. Call me retrograde but as the “gap” closes and QuickTime enlarges and quickens, I feel nostalgia at the impending loss of a unique historical experience and a rare and miniature digital object (Sobchack).

A possibly too demonstrative example of such early videos is Lev Manovich’s *Little Movies*, created especially for the web between 1994 and 1996 with the purpose of “employing the network limitations as a new aesthetic” (Manovich). Sobchack explicitly mentions them in her article and fortunately we have the opportunity to see them today, thanks to an archive maintained by the server *Rhizome*.²⁷ They retain a certain jerky character of movement (the frame rate is about sixteen fps) and the small dimensions and short lengths of individual videos connect to the current very small file size. However, any kind of delay or problems with loading and playing has been lost—a video that is several MB in size represents no problem for a present-day broadband connection. Sobchack’s “miniatures” have therefore disappeared. Alternatively, they are stored as examples of Internet-specific art, and in terms of genre, the GIF format has replaced them (although mute, along with the older version of QuickTime it is closer to *animation* than to *live action*).

In contrast to today’s peeks into the past and future predictions, Sobchack’s article, written for *Millennium Film Journal*, is a conscious treatise on a specific historical situation, basically caused by a need (a need coming from disappearance, nostalgia and a certain realisation of the relentless development of technology). Writing is eventually the last strategy that is worth exploring. One reason is that it generally represents the least mentioned and at the same time the most frequently adopted strategy—despite all the previously described possibilities of reference, the web and Net art are most of all read and written about.

²⁷ Since January 2014, *Rhizome*’s conservation programme has been directed by Dragan Espenschied, mentioned above.

VI. Description and vocabulary

In order to write about the web and its art, we need vocabulary—we often resort to vocabulary, notions and terms that are also the supporting principle of any navigable (and therefore organized) archive or database. Everything we gain using methods described in the previous text has to end up *somewhere*. Nevertheless, controlled vocabularies intended for the cataloguing of media art have been—at least up to now—fragmented and always rather characteristic of a particular project. Unfortunately the bigger and theoretically more vital ones usually have a limited lifetime as given by the specific programming/subsidy terms. Up to now the dynamic character of the development of media art has not allowed the vocabulary to stabilize and it cannot be guaranteed any stability comparable to those such as the vocabulary developed by the Getty Institute.²⁸

Several years ago, Nina Wenhart applied herself to five databases of media art (*V2_*, *Daniel Langlois Foundation*, *Rhizome ArtBase*, *Database of Virtual Art* and *netzspannung.org*) and observed that catalogue vocabularies only share around ten identical expressions, the majority of which seemed to be not specific enough or not to focus on particular institutions and their practices (Animation, Performance, Television, Collaboration and Archive, Database, History). The only three relevant shared terms relating to art works featured in these databases were Artificial Life, Surveillance and Virtual Reality (83). Yet Wenhart does not see this diversity as primarily wrong, but she believes the most interesting terms characteristic of several institutions or of a single one “offered to identify certain interpretations.” Such instability also facilitates an escape from the power structure of database archives. According to her, at a semantic level this structure “excludes interpretations (i.e., disambiguation and chaos) to create order. As a result, it ‘de-riches’ knowledge and asserts power. Structurally, it prescribes a very limited number of possible relations and only one location for one thing” (84).

Although it is difficult to justify such an anarchic approach in a situation where standardisation and development of robust preservative strategies are a necessity, it appears to be adequate when considering websites as “never finished, only abandoned” (or forgotten), and placing many Net art works in the category of processual and open works of art. This allows Jill Sterett, the director of conservation at The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), to say, in a discussion on the future of native digital art: “In the last seventeen years, it’s fair to say that the greatest danger the museum has faced was the imposition of some sort of false lockdown on the work, thwarting the open-endedness [...]” (Dekker 59)—even given the importance of her position, she does not see it as strange, although immobilisation lies at the very heart of museumization, that is the removal of things from their natural cycle of creation and destruction. Nevertheless, even such a stable and static discipline as heritage conservation²⁹ is getting used to instability and inherent performativity, and one cannot be surprised by similar tendencies in an area as dynamic as the web.

²⁸ Getty Art & Architecture Thesaurus naturally does not represent the only controlled vocabulary of art and history terms, but given the importance of its domestic institution it is among the most widely used. See “Art & Architecture Thesaurus.”

²⁹ Compare the concept of immaterial cultural heritage and e.g. the so-called Nara Document on Authenticity that acknowledges even physically unoriginal buildings and monument sites such as the historical centre of Warsaw or similar as “authentic.”

The final perspective can paradoxically be provided by literature and literary science as mentioned in the introduction to this article, more specifically by the section that has reconciled itself with the digitalisation of the production, spread and consumption of literary artefacts that has taken place. Let us recall briefly that even the Czech-speaking environment pays certain attention to electronic and Internet writing; Karel Piorecký focuses on related topics. In his research into digital textuality he criticizes the excessive emphasis placed on the role of the reader and, in contrast, the neglect of the “secondary influence of the author on the existence and form of the text after it has been published.” He also directs our attention to the act of publishing: “[...] digital publication is a newer phase than the final stage of the genesis of the text. The act of publishing maintains its action-like character, it generates a literary work of action, a literary happening” (22).

Furthermore, he compares the “textual trace“ of an art work to photo-documentation of visual or traditionally performative happenings. Although the focus here is primarily on Internet-specific literature,³⁰ Piorecký’s approach—his acceptance of the processual quality of digital text, his awareness of its emergent character and the dynamic character of its publication—appears suitable for the whole web, especially given its present-day dynamisation. If Piorecký recalls photo-documentation, let us not forget that every single picture requires a minimum amount of textual support: no photo-documentation (whether we talk about screenshots or performance documentation) can exist by itself. It requires description.

VII. Description and ekphrasis

Even when skimming writing ready for the publication in which this article is about to appear, the question of description seems to be the most urgent. How many authors in this book include links to archive versions of websites, recordings and records in their citations? How many use the best practice of DOI citation?³¹ They cite the web, the books, the date of access, and most of all, they *describe* what they are citing. Description as a genre or stylistic function is a long-neglected phenomenon, chiefly due to the dominance of narratology and the concept of narration-focused literature in general.³² Let alone the ekphrasis itself, which is an originally poetic or general literary description of an encounter with a work of art. Its importance for the writing of the history of art had to be explicitly pointed out by Jaś Elsner, whose text could be summarized by the following quote: “The enormity of the descriptive act cannot be exaggerated or overstated” (12).

³⁰ Recalling the statements of publishers quoted in the introduction who deny responsibility for the “dynamic” elements inside their printed books, it is possible to extrapolate Piorecký’s theses (including emphasis placed on the act of publishing) onto the whole contemporary literary production.

³¹ The so-called permanent identifier (Digital Object Identifier) is assigned to an electronic or digital network source by one of the registration agencies and further administered by the International DOI Foundation. The permanent identifier should, thanks to focus on the actual objects (mainly texts), allow more persistent and trustworthy citations than in the case of citing a mere URL. DOI is quite often used in academic environments (the CrossRef system) and by a number of publishers. It is also employed for document identification by the Publications Office of the European Union.

³² Cf. “The theory of narration has its share in the underestimation of description, as it often serves as a means for a negative definition: description is what is not narration, description stops or hinders narration” (Fedrová and Jedličková 29).

It is not clear how much of what we know about the world is communicated to us based on already communicated descriptions—some of these indicate they were at least inspired or transmitted mimetically from a given³³ and already communicated state. It would be necessary to first examine the basis of the conclusions and hypotheses made by those of us who write about art and culture and how conscientiously, for what purpose and whether at all, we use the preserved relics of the past. Similarly, it would be necessary to focus on the issue of description not as a documentation or archival strategy,³⁴ but as the zero point of all our thinking. It would be necessary to refute the argument that technical media has made literary and textual description redundant, because the reality indicates the contrary. Finally, it would be necessary to acknowledge the fact that the endeavours to archive Internet art are useless to the point that you do not need the Internet to understand the articles in this book.

33 The parallel between <http://www.jodi.org/> and a computer virus is a private interest of mine. Cf. the following description: “This project is a kind of collage of text and graphic elements that seem to be a mishmash of rubbish stuff. To understand, however, it is necessary to know quite a lot about computers and computer networks, otherwise website visitors are likely to believe that their computer has been infected or has stopped reacting in the right way. Jodi also works with the source code, in which they place e.g. graphical animations created by means of textual signs (ASCII art), that nevertheless usually stay hidden from the uninformed user” (Marešová 259).

34 Even though research into the spectator experience using oral history techniques or the techniques themselves come closest to this conception. Cf. Muller.

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- V2_ (Institute for the Unstable Media) (1987) | <http://v2.nl/>
- Wayback Machine* (1996) | <http://archive.org/web/>

WebArchiv (2000) | <http://webarchiv.cz/>
Webzdarma (2002) | <https://www.webzdarma.cz/>
Xanga (1999–2013) | **x**

Afterword

*#omnipresence #condition #speculation #circulation #acceleration
#technology #consciousness*

The Omnipresent Condition of Speculation

Lumír Nykl | December 2014

“It’s not just an Operating System. It’s a consciousness.”

—Her (2010)

The framework of this anthology resonates with involved texts of taxonomy and rhetoric. Simultaneously, *Net art* is a “legend” handed down from generation to generation, as well as a legend set in a blurred map of a cultural field once marked by a consciousness excited by technologies (Quaranta, “The Legend”). From the 1990s the field’s content grew, went wild and was consequently re-cultivated in the name of “the most hierarchical and conservative medium the art world has to offer.”¹

In accordance with the artistic practices described, the anthology may serve as a “survival guide” (Novitskova) or it may act as a “speculation on anonymous material.”² The material is represented by the art. The starting point and its environment is the Internet, as part of human consciousness as well as an independent “ecosystem.” The text’s schedule and the approach to the historicisation of theoretical objects balance between an extended “throwback Thursday” and a proposition for the future in the manner of an advertising selection of recommended products on the basis of users tracking them on the web.³ Modelled on search engines acting in the interest of commercial subjects, let us try to trace the algorithm leading up to a list (and a count) of key words and give several examples. In the same way as Facebook’s interface enables us to recognize human faces and offers a link to the virtual profile of its bearer, the texts in *#mm Net Art* enable their reader to recognize and “tag.”

What is meant by this? Tracing a time-changing #condition of the contemporary Internet #state, rather than following the theological line of visual #style. Concentration on a general #state of mind rather than on a limited community. Composing digital image as a #system and its successive decomposition on basis of key words, in the same way as it works in the case of Internet photo banks (King). In recent years the “Post-Internet condition” has been the topic of conversation in critical discussions, artistic practice, exhibition management and the art trade. In the monitored segment we may tick such frequently used terms as #omnipresence, #acceleration, #circulation and #speculation and then “click” on these hashtags.

1 As Constant Dullaart notes: “The attention economy on the web, as commodified extensively by these networks, has become an influence on contemporary artists, to the point where the web’s abundance has been confused for ubiquity, ‘after’ confused with ‘post-’. Most of the artists mentioned by Novitskova have ignored the idealist tendencies of the web, aiming to break with age-old social hierarchies. But they have started to translate the (culturally local) commercialisation of the web into art works fit to be shown in the most hierarchical and conservative medium the art world has to offer: the gallery white cube.” See Dullaart.

2 *Speculations on Anonymous Materials* was the title of an exhibition held in Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany. See “Speculations on Anonymous Materials” at Fridericianum.

3 Author’s note: “Throwback Thursday” is the expression used for a social networks habit consisting of sharing commemorative photos and videos, usually referring to the 1990s. See “Throwback Thursday.”

If the “Post-Internet condition” is translated as “Post-Internet age” which, as I see it, does not capture Jennifer Chan’s critical idea, a problem occurs. The established term Post-Internet condition refers to changes in the conditions of image production and distribution in the networked socio-economic situation of global capitalism. The required condition of “awareness” of the Internet has already been compared to the necessity to cope with the pervasive logic of the market in Gene McHugh’s initiation essay reprinted here. Conversely, the word “age” undesirably distracts attention towards temporality and forces the existence of a kind of transcendental consciousness articulated by consecutive epochs connected by their inner logic.

Artie Vierkant’s frequently discussed project *Brand Innovations for Ubiquitous Authorship* may serve as an eloquent illustration.⁴ The exhibition concept was based on ordering individual works from ever-accessible custom services and their capture, in compliance with a meme visual code of fetishistic “unboxing” videos. This genre offers a spectacle within which the unified product is subjectivised in the customer’s hands through a goods “delivery” from a box which is captured on video. By means of questioning the status of the uniqueness of artistic creation and authorship, the project reflected on the connections between branded culture and working conditions in the world which abused the so-called term “outsourcing.” The essence of corporate brand visibility and product accessibility is based on invisibility. Invisibility as a naturalisation of sophisticated forms, disadvantages the corporate employees and perpetuates modern forms of slavery. The marginalisation of work and the inaccessibility of laws inside the declared legal system is the reverse side of easily accessible “network” technologies and related services.⁵

The sustainability of the term Post-Internet has been supported over a long period by completely different people, such as the critic Domenico Quaranta and the art dealer Stefan Simchowit, both of whom are supporters of the artist, performer and activist Amalia Ulman. A photograph, capturing her stay in a hospital after a car accident, shows two aspects of *uncanny valley*.⁶ On one hand there is a surreal impression of connecting prosthetic corporality and technological devices, which Ulman uses for her online self-presentation.⁷ It is important to note that these photos would not exist without “grant,” the capital injection provided by Stefan Simchowit, Post-Internet art speculator (Glazek). He also stimulated the expansion of photo banks in the 2000s when he sold his *MediaVast* project to the Getty Company. The visual code of photo banks is processed by many artists whose works of art are speculated by Simchowit, thus accelerating their value.

4 The whole exhibition was consequently “stolen,” in fact it was rigorously “versioned,” or more precisely “translated.” See *Brand Innovations for Ubiquitous Authorship* at <http://bifua.tumblr.com/>.

5 Andrew Norman Wilson’s *ScanOps*, which deals with errors in book scanning for Googleplex portal—work performed by the lowest level of Googleplex workers, may serve as an example. E.g. *The Rainbow Girl-9* (Andrew Norman Wilson, 2013). Documentation available at: <http://bifua.tumblr.com/post/50174800895/andrew-norman-wilson-the-rainbow-girl-9-2013>, date of access Dec. 23 2014.

6 The term “Uncanny Valley” describes people’s refusal reaction when confronted with robots and 3D models that are accurately suggestive of human beings. In discussion on Post-Internet art, it is figuratively used for descriptions of project visualization, such as *DISimages* <http://disimages.com/>. It is also the title of Domenico Quaranta’s blog on Tumblr, see Quaranta.

7 Amalia Ulman’s photos are accessible on the website *Purple Fashion Magazine* (see Manetas).

The art of Ben Schumacher, who is well-known in the Czech Republic, is composed of the above mentioned hashtags. The text material represented in his works comes from common online communications and does not keep its own referential quality. The meaning makes most of the accumulation of data for the purpose of more or less spontaneous “speculation” (Schumacher himself compares it to stock machinations, e.g. calculation of so-called high-frequency trading), when the data synchronized in the network make a result unwittingly. It can be compared to stopping on a random JPEG when scrolling through an endless flood of images on Tumblr, 4chan and reddit servers (Schumacher and Madere).

“The philosophical translation of online culture and practices into the physical world” (Chan, “Notes on Post-Internet,” 110) and “giving material expression to technology’s seemingly immaterial effects,” (Chamberlain) not only follows the path, as Chan puts it, “from a browser to a gallery,” but results in an advertising slogan from the soft-cyberpunk film *Her*.

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- The Rainbow Girl-9* (Andrew Normal Wilson, 2013)
- Her* (Spike Jonze, 2013)

Biographies

NATALIE BOOKCHIN (b. 1962) began working with the Internet as a platform for producing art in the mid-1990s. Her work has been widely written about and exhibited worldwide in major institutions, and she has received numerous grants and awards. Since 1998 she has taught at the faculty of Photography & Media Program in the Art School of CalArts in Los Angeles, and she currently lives in Brooklyn and teaches media art at the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University.
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PIOTR CZERSKI (b. 1981) is polish poet and prosaist who graduated in computer science and philosophy. He is the author of two books, recipient of the Homines Urbani scholarship (2005) and finalist of the Grand Press award in the category of press reportage (2007). Czerski is most famous for his “We, the Web Kids” manifesto that was translated into a variety of languages and reprinted worldwide.
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DIETER DANIELS (b. 1957) is Professor of Art History and Media Theory at the Academy of Visual Arts in Leipzig. He co-founded the Videonale Bonn (1984), was the head of the Mediatheque at the Karlsruhe Centre for Art and Media Technology (1991–93), co-editor of *MediaArtNet* (2001–05), Director of the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute Media.Art.Research. in Linz, Austria (2005–09). Since 2010 Daniels is the speaker for the advisory board of Transmediale Berlin. In 2007–09 he was the editor of the *Netpioneers 1.0* research project (with Gunther Reisinger).

JENNIFER CHAN (b. 1988) is video and new media artist who works in Toronto and Chicago. She has an HBA in Communications, Culture, Information Technology from the University of Toronto and an MFA in Art Video from Syracuse University. Her research on the histories and trends of Internet art has appeared on *Rhizome*, *West Space Journal*, *Art F City*, and *Junk Jet*. She currently teaches Media Arts Practices at the School of Art Institute Chicago and makes remix videos that comment on art and gender after the Internet.
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MARIE MEIXNEROVÁ (b. 1986) graduated in English Philology, Film Studies and Communication Studies from UPOL, Czech Republic, where she study for her PhD at the Department of Arts Education. She co-curates ScreenSaverGallery, is editor of the Experimental cinema section at the film and new media magazine *25fps*, and curator at PAF—Festival of Film Animation and Contemporary Art in Olomouc. As (c) merry she is also an active artist.
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GENE McHUGH (b. 1981) is an art writer and curator based in Los Angeles. His writing has appeared in *Artforum* and *Rhizome*, and he was the recipient of the Creative Capital | Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant for his blog, *Post Internet*. McHugh is currently the Head of Digital Media at the Fowler Museum at UCLA and was previously a Kress Fellow in Interpretive Technology at the Whitney Museum of American Art.

LUMÍR NYKL (b. 1991) studies Aesthetics at the Faculty of Philosophy & Arts, Charles University, Prague, and is an occasional curator and writer. His interests are focused on contemporary visual arts, music and the intersection of music and fine arts. His texts have been published in the magazines *A2* and *Full Moon*. Nykl cooperates with the musical label RedForColourBlind and in 2014, with Martina Poliačková and KIV Gallery, organized the debate “Those Post-Internets of yours shall be prohibited” where the term Post-Internet was discussed in regards to the Czech context.

DOMENICO QUARANTA (b. 1978) is a contemporary art critic and curator. His work focuses on the impact of the current means of production and dissemination of art. He is the author of *Beyond New Media Art* (2013) and the Artistic Director of the Link Center for the Arts of the Information Age.

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GUNTHER REISINGER (b. 1971) was Head of Research of *Netpioneers 1.0* at the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute Media.Art.Research. Linz (2007–2009). He is Visiting Lecturer at Private University Linz, was Assistant Professor at Karl-Franzens-University Graz, Lecturer at Humboldt-University Berlin, Academy of Visual Arts Leipzig, Stuttgart State Academy of Art and Visiting Professor for Theory of Art at Burg Giebichenstein University of Art and Design Halle (2014). He is the author of numerous publications in the field of restoring and archiving net-based art.

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Editor's Note

The *#mm Net Art* publication is the first concise anthology on Internet art released in the Czech Republic. Its English version (customized for the international reader) was preceded by the Czech edition *#mm net art – internetové umění ve virtuálním a fyzickém prostoru prezentace*. This explains the special care taken of Czech Internet art, which is otherwise little covered abroad. Although primarily concerned with gathering key texts by distinguished international authors, the anthology also contains original studies by Czech experts and chapters or footnotes dealing with the Czech context.

The selection of texts for *##mm Net Art* was led by the endeavour to illustrate a transition in contemporary thinking, the plurality of approaches towards Net art, as well as their various forms of articulation—including manifestos, authentic texts, period reflections, mailing lists submissions, diagrams-as-visual-shortcuts and serious journals alongside rather provocative articles. The varied quality of the texts is justified by their historic value, and clarified in the editorial notes signed #mm. For the sake of authenticity and in order to evoke the original context of the texts, in several cases their original layout was maintained.

The anthology brought together a number of contributions ranging from 1994 to 2014, originally taken from various publication platforms, and translated texts from various cultural milieus. It can be assumed that the original spelling and capitalisations were, more likely than not, not only the decision of the text's author or its translator, but also of the initial editor and proof-reader who followed the editorial rules of a given magazine, or that the translated texts had mechanically adopted the norms of their first language. Therefore it seemed inappropriate to follow the strategy popular in a number of recent publications on the subject, that is, to fully respect the initial spelling present in the texts.

The publication should meet required academic standards, so to maintain consistency all contributions, whether republished or newly written, were unified according to the MLA style and where necessary, supplemented with the #mm editor's notes on the original spelling. The terms and expressions that have not yet been codified or allow multiple spelling variants were also unified. However, even the unification following the MLA style required some difficult decisions, such as the way Internet and Web 2.0 are spelt, and the capitalization of movements and lowercasing their artists. Certain compromises had to be made to the stylistically, grammatically and historically varied texts to ensure that they would "fit together". One such compromise was the exception that was made in the capitalization of Bookchin-Shulgin's text "Introduction to net.art (1994–1999)." Since it is not only a reprintable written text, but also the most important manifesto later chiselled into marble, and a seminal artwork, its title is deep-rooted in art history and therefore was left unchanged. To be consistent with the title, the original lowercasing of net.art was respected throughout the text.

Throughout the publication, long quotations are marked by paragraph indentation and reduced font size. Indented text of standard font size

is, however, a graphical element already present in the original text. An alphabetical list of artworks and projects mentioned can be found after each text. The artworks are cited as follows: title, author, year of origin; in the case of online works the URL is also provided. If the online work is no longer online, the URL is replaced by a bold cross. In the list Artists' Websites, the listing of artists' names was replaced by the abbreviation "col." with art groups of more than four members or with variable/unknown members.

After the release of the Czech edition, the most frequent question raised by this publication appeared to be about its materiality. Is a printed book on digital subject matter not unnecessarily anachronistic or fetishistic in the digital age? It certainly has the power to inform readers regardless of whether they are able to use or are accustomed to using the Internet. It can be approached offline and independently of electricity. Once printed, its content is permanent, with all the positive and negative consequences. It documents the state of things at a certain point in time. And last but not least—the printed book is an authoritative physical object that stands out not only thanks to its visual qualities, but also thanks to its content (for many people still, the fact that a book has been printed is a guarantee of a certain quality). Being seen on the bookshelf, it constantly communicates with its holder, re-negotiating its right to exist. I believe this dialogue is important.

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#mm

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