

Inclusiva-net:

net.art (second epoch).

The evolution of artistic creation
in the net-system

3rd Inclusiva-net Meeting

Directed by Juan Martín Prada

From March 2nd to 6th, 2009

Centro Cultural de España en Buenos Aires

Organized by Medialab-Prado
in collaboration with the Centro Cultural
de España in Buenos Aires

www.medialab-prado.es

www.cceba.org.ar



Inclusiva-net:

Inclusiva-net is a platform dedicated to the research, documentation, and circulation of network culture theory. Its main study and documentation areas are the processes of social and cultural inclusion of telecommunication networks and their effects in the development of new artistic practices and critical knowledge production.

Published by

Medialab Prado
Área de Las Artes del Ayuntamiento de Madrid

Agencia Española de Cooperación
Internacional para el Desarrollo
Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores
y Cooperación

The 3rd Inclusiva-net meeting: *net.art*
(second epoch). *The evolution of artistic
creation in the net-system* took place
in Buenos Aires (Argentina) from March
2nd to 6th, 2009, organized by Medialab Prado
in collaboration with the Cultural Center
of Spain in Buenos Aires

Directed by

Juan Martín Prada

Paper Selection Committee

Juan Martín Prada
Gustavo Romano

Texts

Juan Martín Prada
Guadalupe Aguiar Masuelli
Lila Pagola
Curt Cloninger
Sabine Hochrieser, Michael Kargl,
Franz Thalmair / CONT3XT.NET
Patrícia Gouveia

Text translations

Karen Neller (spanish to english)
Pilar Oliva Pastor (english to spanish)
Marta Lorca Moreno-Luque (english to spanish)

Graphic design and navigation

Pixel

Proofreading and corrections

Nuria Martínez Deaño

© of this edition, AECID

Medialab-Prado

The 3rd Inclusiva-net meeting has been
sponsored by the AECID (08-CAP2-1071)

Under Creative Commons License:

Attribution - Share Alike (by-sa): This license
permit commercial use of this work and any
possible derivative works, the distribution of which
must be done under the same license
that governs the original work

Except where otherwise noted, content on this book
is licensed under a Creative Commons License:

Attribution - Share Alike (by-sa): This license permit
commercial use of this work and any possible
derivative works, the distribution of which must be
done under the same license that governs the original
work

index

p. 05

Juan Martín Prada
Introduction

p. 09

Guadalupe Aguiar Masuelli
*From renga to the video blog:
The user as producer
and collective experience*

p. 21

Lila Pagola
dospuntocero (twodotzero)
or my blogroll (some of my favourite
blogs are by artists)
metablog: <<http://doscer0.wordpress.com>>
version 3*

p. 34

Curt Cloninger
*Commodify Your Consumption:
Tactical Surfing / Wakes of Resistance*

p. 47

Sabine Hochrieser, Michael Kargl,
Franz Thalmair / CONT3XT.NET
*Trans.form.work—Net art
in the real space*

p. 62

Patricia Gouveia
*Action! Playable media
and persistent games
for the creation of online
alternative realities and cross narratives
(Cooperation versus Competition)*

Juan Martín Prada
Introduction

Director of the Inclusiva-net platform

Net.art started in the mid-1990s as a form of creative exploration and critical experimentation on the Internet. It is one of the contemporary artistic creation fields that have contributed most to redefining forms of production and the artistic experience.

Its contributions include research on the aesthetic, linguistic, and interactive possibilities of network technologies and what they permit in terms of redefining what we understand as art. However, considering that the Internet is a new public space for critical participation, net.art's most interesting contributions throughout this decade have been in-depth explorations of the prevailing uses of telematic networks, the processes of producing meaning and subjectivity at work in those networks, and their policies and exclusions.

Today, the 'social' evolution of the Web, with its emphasis on social networks and the establishment of a business model based on collective, open participation, constitutes a new framework within which we must continue to reflect upon the social and critical role of thought inherent to art. In fact, net.art's most recent proposals appropriate the new social networks, platforms for participation, and metaverses as new contexts of reference and performance, once again testing their critical and subjectivizing potentials that are demanding of a dimension that is always interpretive and has multiple meanings.

Thus, far from attempting a historiographical analysis of network art practices dating from their first appearances, our proposal was for the 3rd international meeting of the Inclusiva-net platform to centre specifically on what has happened over the last five years, a period that has witnessed the consolidation and proliferation of the new social and participation dynamics characteristic of the Web 2.0 model (also called the 'social Web' or 'participatory Web'). A 'second era' of the Internet is characterised by new forms of participation based on a myriad of digital social networks (Facebook, Myspace, etc.) and means for users to generate content through blogs and large collective repositories of shared files, used and expanded on daily by millions (YouTube, Flickr, etc.).

Continuing to speak of art or using this term in the context of a new network-system is here based on a certain conviction: that operations of symbolic production as well as allegorical, subjectivizing, interpretive, and critical elements characteristic of 'artistic' behaviour possess a powerful capacity to develop alternative forms of reflexive experience about predominant habits and forms of collaboration, participation, and linguistic exchange which take place in the networks. In other words, by means of artistic practices, it may be possible to carry out a certain poetic reconfiguration of communicative interactions that occur in the network field and rescue (though it be momentary or even purely testimonial) communication and the media experience from permanent colonisation by the economic interests of large Internet corporations.

Furthermore, the most relevant artistic proposals in the network sphere can be identified as foreshadowing the 'constituent power' of the connected multitude. That is to say, a glimpse of the world that those

masses could build in a moment of 'liberated liberty', of liberty not leeches onto by corporate interests, can be seen in the world evoked by the best artistic proposals. They are always declarations of the demand for interpretive thought, and free, critical and meaningful communication. And let's not forget that there is no genuine freedom that does not lead to solidarity.

Therefore, perhaps, we could term new network art practices as a whole as 'dissent technologies', or, at least, as the most creative dimension of dissent in the network-society context. They are, of course, in the most interesting cases, practices committed to designing new pathways to transform the model of profoundly reflexive thought, inherent to what we understand as 'artistic behaviours', into a model of social and communicative interaction. And given that, in the network context, it is increasingly difficult to distinguish between sociability and economics, between corporate interest and social interest, it is easy for us to imagine why revealing this distinction is one of the most recurring goals of many on-line artistic practices.

Thus, the exercise of a certain opposition is to be expected of a second era of network arts from the fields with multiple meanings that are open to interpretation characteristic of artistic practices: opposition to the generating strategies of the new structures that uphold the most hegemonic on-line business models, to the dynamics of value and meaning operating in networks, and to the procedures of economic exploitation of communicative and affective interactions that are inherent to the 'social Web'.

Hence, it is logical that the most interesting proposals of the new 'network arts' do not centre simply on the creation of works about the social conditions of what occurs and is managed in the network field. Above all, they aim to present the networks as a spectacle in and of themselves, and attempt to participate in the actual organisation of their systems of meaning production and circulation and working processes, thereby unveiling how the new forms of power operate within them.

Throughout the five days of the 3rd meeting of the Inclusiva-net platform, not only were these problems dealt with and debated, but so were many, many others of maximum interest. In reality, we proposed a collection of core themes for communications that included a wide variety of aspects, some of which have found exceptionally notable contributions in the texts following this introduction. Those core themes aimed to point to the lines we considered most decisive in the recent development of network artistic practices. They include: the paths of net.art evolution towards other hybrid forms of 'networked art'; the artistic proposals around the semantic Web; 'amateur' audiovisual creativity in the social Web; artistic thought on the experimental appropriation of the digital log and 'blog-art'; metaverses and 3-D social networks as new spaces for artistic intervention; the developments of 'software art' in Web 2.0; reviews, curatorship and new orientations in the relationship between managing institutions in the art world and online artistic practices; and the creative dimension of new behaviours of

social organisation through networks. We also wish to highlight the interest of some aspects that we found to be contextually important for this meeting, such as the study on net.art in the Iberian-American context, the subject of various presentations and a central theme of many of the debates.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Inclusiva-net platform's entire coordination team, I would like to thank all the participants in this meeting most sincerely for their contributions, and especially the authors of the texts which comprise this book. Their work is a true reflection of the current state of research on this set of artistic practices as well as the intentions that drive artists today to continue exploring the complex and fascinating world of networks.

Guadalupe Aguiar Masuelli
*From renga to the video blog.
The user as producer
and collective experience*

Fellowship recipient from the Fundación Carolina
Phd candidate in Visual Arts and Intermedia
Universidad Politécnica de Valencia

This text was written based on the observation of several experiences of audiovisual production on the Internet characterized by working as a group, co-authorship, and other forms of collaborative participation. *Renga* (connected poetry of Japanese origin) is used as an example of a historical precedent in which group creation resources are found, in the form of poetic dialogue. The video blog phenomenon was selected for its prominence in the circulation of homemade productions on the collaborative creation circuit. The Benjaminian proposal of the author as producer, immaterial work and migrants as historical subjects, Knorr Cetina's 'epistemological objects', tactics according to De Certeau, and the incidence of the idea of 'post-production' are several of the themes and theoretical veins that run through the text.

1—See: <www.youtube.com/watch?v=UxqNsUbWlHc> (Accessed on 10 June, 2007). Its author's account is currently deactivated, so it is not possible to gain access to his videos from there. However, some of his fans keep the material 'in circulation', through other video sharing sites.

2—Within YouTube terminology, the word 'response' refers to videos that users publish linked to others, as a form of audiovisual response.

3—These first three lines with a 5/7/5 syllable pattern became separate over time, and are now known as *Haiku*, written by a sole author with nature as the theme, and are popular among poets the world over.



+ F1—Screenshot of 'One World'.



+ F2—Screenshot showing some of the responses.

Introduction: The 'One World' Phenomenon

+F1

A little over a year ago, by chance I came upon a real jewel on YouTube: 'One World' (1), a 40 second video that won the award for 'Most Responded' (2) in the history of the popular site. In black and white with melodramatic music and a masked character with an invitation to "be part of something" written on his hand, in just over six months this video clip got 2,275 video responses. Almost 2,300 people (from children and adults from different parts of the world to YouTube employees) recorded, edited and published their video message, their contribution to this call for common cause with humanitarian intentions.

+F2

At present, it is not possible to access the video responses because, as explained by MadV—the masked magician and author 'One World'—, somebody cracked his user account and eliminated them. Currently MadV has dropped out of YouTube. As legend has it, a TV channel hired him given the popularity he attained through his magic tricks. However, the video can still be seen on certain sites and some of the responses are on YouTube. I will not address matters related to its style, message, or the medium on which it was published, not because they are insignificant but because I prefer to concentrate on it as an exemplary phenomenon of mass participation, through which a significant number of people took part in audiovisual production, generating a dialogue with the original and the other collaborations.

Using this example as a starting point and reviewing a type of traditional Japanese poetry based on collective poetry, I will touch on some aspects that I consider essential in understanding current practices of video blogging and its possibilities as an experience of collaborative audiovisual production.

From *renga* to videoblogging.

Thousand-year-old *renga*. Japanese connected poetry

Renga—from the Japanese *ren*, which means 'connect, sequence', and *fa*, which means 'poem'—is a traditional Japanese poetic form made up of a series of *tanka* written by two or more authors. Each *tanka* is composed of five lines with a set number of syllables, in the following syllabic pattern: 5 / 7 / 5 / 7 / 7. *Hokku* (the first lines of the *Tanka*) (3) is written by the first author, and the next two lines are a response from the subsequent author. This style of poetry, with shared authorship and a poetic dialogue, has varied in length at different times, reaching up to a thousand verses.

Its origins lie in the 10th century, and with the passage of time it split into two branches: *ushin renga* ('*renga* of the heart'), based on courtesan traditions, which is serious in style and elevated in its diction and tone, with literary pretensions and religious connections; and *mushin renga* ('*renga* without heart'), which, unlike *ushin renga*, is humorous and all subjects and words are allowed. It is usually written at relaxed times following serious *tanka* competitions.

4—Eiko Yachimoto, *October Rain*, the first Rokku Renku translated into English in *Simply Haiku* vol. 6, no. 3, 2008. See: <http://simplyhaiku.com/SHv6n3/renku/tomegaki_october_rain.htm> (Accessed on 3 November, 2008).

5—See: <www.alecfinlay.com/yai/renga_project.html>

6—Guy Debord, *La sociedad del espectáculo*, Pretextos, Valencia, 2000, p. 50.

7—Walter Benjamin, *El autor como productor*, Itaca, México, 2004, p. 5.

This game played by aristocrats turned over time into *haikai no renga*, the literary past-time of merchants, quickly changing from comic to vulgar connected poetry. Matsuo Bashô (the mid-17th century Japanese poet) reintroduced *haikai no renga*, turning it into a style that was refined though still humorous and amusing, working on making more subtle and profound connections, less closely related to the word associations and literary knowledge that formed the basis for traditional *Renga*.

The method for writing *haikai no renga* is as follows: the first poet composes the first poem with a 5-7-5 syllable pattern and then the second responds with a new poem in a 7-7 syllable pattern. The third repeats the initial syllable pattern, and so on, thus obtaining hundreds of connected poems in accordance with the structure of poem-response-poem-response. This new variation (initially called ‘Bashô-style’) began to be known as *renku*. One of the major differences between classic *renga* and *renku* is that the former is much more regulated and strict in form, requiring a vast knowledge of literature in addition to esoteric knowledge of aristocratic origin. In contrast, the latter is more democratic in origin, adding to traditional themes current events, stories, and everyday scenes from the life of the middle class. Although to a limited extent, this type of poetry continued developing in Japan and other countries as an exercise in collective writing. The most modern format is called *rokku* (*aka on za rokku*) and was created by Haku Asanuma in 2000 (4). Swedish artist and poet Alec Finlay has been working with *Renga* for nine years and one of his projects is *Senku* (5), a poem with 1,000 verses written by 500 poets via the Internet. *Senku* began in 2005 and is still in the process of being written.

Renga has developed over a thousand years as a collective poetic form. Its structure as a dialogue based on proposal-response-proposal-response means its authors play both roles: at different times, they make both proposals and responses. Thus, a chain is generated, a link in which each part is strongly connected to the preceding and subsequent parts.

The author as producer

A man separated from his product produces, with increasing strength, all the details of his world, and thus is he increasingly separated from his world. The more he produces his own life today, the more separated he is from it. (6)

[Guy DEBORD]

In his text “The author as producer”, written in 1934, Walter Benjamin takes from Bertolt Brecht the concept of *re-functionalization*. Brecht applied it to certain tasks that “no longer aim to be primarily individual experiences (creative in nature), but rather tend toward the use (remodelling) of certain institutes and institutions.” (7) In contrast, Benjamin uses the term ‘routine-er’ for persons who refuse to introduce innovations into the production apparatus, thus highlighting the importance of being competent in the processes of intellectual production to re-functionalize them and make them politically efficient.

He stated that every worker is a potential ‘re-functionalizer’, an agent capable of modifying the state of things and then putting that modification

8—Idem, p. 8.

9—Zygmunt Bauman, *Comunidad. En busca de seguridad en un mundo hostil*, Siglo XXI, Madrid, 2003.

10—The Italian Wu Ming group defines itself on its web site as follows: “In 1994 hundreds of European artists, activists and jokers adopted and shared the same identity. They called themselves ‘Luther Blissett’ and they arose to cause an uproar among the cultural industry with a five year plan. They worked together to tell the world a big story, create a legend and bring a new kind of popular hero to life. In January 2000, some of the members regrouped as ‘Wu Ming’, a collective of novelists. The new project, though more focused on literature and narrative in the strict sense, is as radical as the previous one.” Wu Ming Foundation, See: <www.wumingfoundation.com> (Accessed on 16 October, 2008).

11—Wu Ming 4, “Entrevista con Wu Ming 4: mitopoiesis y acción política”, *El viejo topo*, Barcelona, no. 180, July 2003. Published on the website of the Wu Ming Foundation. See: <www.wumingfoundation.com/italiano/out-takes/viejotopo_es.html> (Accessed on 16 October, 2008).

12—*Ibid.*

into words. He says, “A person who reads is ready at all times to become a person who writes, that is, who describes or prescribes. His nature as an expert—although it may not be in the subject but rather just in his job—gives him access to being an author.” Benjamin states that the product of an author should have not only features of creation, but mainly an organizing function and the character of a production model able to “move consumers toward production, turning readers or spectators into collaborators.” (8)

Immaterial workers and migrants. New historical subjects

The shift from community life to a social structure based on the state has modified the everyday environment and organization of work, exchanging the system of honours that were transmitted generationally for a system of adoption of a labour commitment which does not make the worker’s symbolic function as a member of society very clear. Dignity and honour, which used to form the basis for work within a community, disappear, transformed by industrialization into the worker’s sensation of futile effort. The true purpose and function of work within the world the subject lives in become dissolved in a repetitive task, disconnected from the specific effects that the task has on its environment. (9)

For several decades now, this work structure based on manufacture, characteristic of industrialization models from the early 20th century, has also been undergoing modifications. This is clear in certain specific ways, such as:

- The change in market systems, which tend to abandon the productive model of national industries in favour of multinational corporations.
- Breakthroughs in production chains (with the tercerization of productive processes and the automation of jobs previously performed manually).
- The product’s tendency towards immateriality (information and services become a product, and are among those most highly valued).
- The relationship with the consumer, who now defines common designs and questions and evaluates the products offered on the market, blending his or her role with that of the producer.

These factors radically modify the function of a worker and the idea of work.

According to Wu Ming 4, one of the members of the Wu Ming Foundation (10), at present there are “two historical, fragmentary subjects that cannot be reduced to rigid categories, who are quite disconcerting, as they move around the world, directly experiencing the most radical transformations.” (11) One is the immaterial worker,

This person is a protagonist, both active and passive, of the dissolution of the old social agreement and the increasingly precarious nature of life. He is active, to the extent that he promotes his own instability, choosing freedom from the Fordist bond which assigned work a unit of time, place and action. Passive, to the extent that he suffers being put to work in all circles and moments of life and sees how capital is a parasite of his own creativity, inventiveness, and ability to undertake projects. (12)

13—*Ibid.*

14—Wu Ming 4, *op. cit.*

15—Wong Kar Wai, *Chungking Express* (Video-DVD), Barcelona, Cameo Media, 2005.

16—Knorr Cetina, Karin and Brugger, Urs, *The market as an object of attachment: Exploring postsocial relations in financial markets*. Canada, Canadian Journal of Sociology 25, 2000. Quoted in Laddaga, Reinaldo, *Estética de la emergencia*, Buenos Aires, Adriana Hidalgo, 2006, p. 57.

17—*Ibid.*, pp. 57-58.

Thus arises a “new citizen of the world who moves, changes jobs, acquires and shares knowledge, and introduces his own individual abilities into the production process in a network of global connection.” (13) Of course, this type of subject tends to accompany the change processes of information and communication technologies which enable and, in many cases, force him to work with what is immaterial.

The second historical subject, according to Wu Ming 4, is the migrant. “No less than the immaterial worker, the migrant is the perfect example of a protagonist of globalization, carrying and connecting stories, knowledge, cultures, and ideas. No less than the immaterial worker, he is an object of globalized neo-liberal exploitation. His work and his life, transported around the whole world, become destabilizing factors in the former legal order based on concepts of nationality, status, and belonging, as well as the migrant’s cultural context of origin.” (14)

The migrant, far from his homeland and what he most cherishes, is increasingly also subject to the media, given that they are the medium for connection between his two worlds: an incomplete object, an empty space.

“I lost my (external) memory.” Epistemological objects

I didn't know if I hadn't shut off the tap or if the house was becoming sentimental. I always thought that it would be strong — I never thought it would cry so much. When someone cries, you give them a handkerchief to dry the tears. But when a house cries, you really have a lot of work (15)

[Wong KAR WAI]

In the film *Chungking Express*, there are several scenes in which objects take on a presence that is like a ‘subject’, quasi-human. Things in the everyday surroundings of the character appear as actors who are accomplices that suffer from this situation. These objects that are like ‘subjects’, without objectivity, would enter into the category of ‘epistemological objects’ (16), developed by sociologist Karin Knorr Cetina and explained this way by Reinaldo Laddaga:

The author uses the term ‘epistemological objects’ for those ambiguous entities that manifest in disenchanted worlds, but to whom the humans who interact with them cannot not attribute—albeit only temporarily, and incompletely—the capacities of sensibility and reflexivity, of experience and memory that are normal attributes of living beings, but which the modern world considers outside the field of objects (...) Epistemological objects indeed ‘seem to have the capacity to unfold indefinitely’, and should be compared to ‘open drawers full of files that expand indefinitely in the darkness of a closet’ (...) Therefore ‘they can never be completely reached; because they are never themselves’; they are characterized by ‘a lack of objectivity and completeness in their being’ that means that they must be conceived at the same time as ‘material events’ and as ‘structures of absences that unfold’ and continually ‘explode’ and ‘mutate’ into something else, and that are defined as much by what they are not (but what they must have turned into at some time) as by what they are. (17)

18—Karin Knorr Cetina, “Objectual practice”, in Karin Knorr Cetina, Theodore R. Schatzki, Eike von Savigny (Eds.), *The practice turns in contemporary theory*, Routledge, New York, 2001. p. 181.

19—Michael Hardt, *Trabajo afectivo*, essay for *Vínculo-a*, Medialab Madrid, 2006. See: <www.vinculo-a.net/texto_hardt.html> (Accessed on 15 October, 2008).

20—“In systems theory and physics, the term black box refers to elements studied from the perspective of the entries it receives and the emissions or responses it produces, not taking into account its internal operations. In other words, we are interested in the way a black box interacts with the medium surrounding it (on occasions, with other items that may also be black boxes), understanding what it does but without attaching significance to how it does it. Therefore, a black box should have very clearly defined input and output, that is, its interface; in contrast, it is not necessary to define or know the inner details of how it functions.” (Wikipedia, URL: <[http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caja_negra_\(sistemas\)](http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caja_negra_(sistemas))>) Noam Chomsky has used the metaphor of a black box to refer to “a device for the acquisition of language” that humans possess innately.

21—A statement developed by McLuhan, years later, with an almost salvational view on the technological communication media, and which became popular through the phrase “The medium is the message”.

22—Michel De Certeau, “De las prácticas cotidianas de oposición”, in Paloma Blanco, Jesús Carrillo, Jordi Claramonte and Marcelo Expósito (Eds.), *Modos de hacer. Arte crítico, esfera pública y acción directa*, Universidad de Salamanca, Salamanca, 2001, p. 402.

23—*Ibid.*, p. 401.

24—*Ibid.*

25—This term means ‘wig’ in French and is used to refer to when workers, during working hours, use time, materials, or resources for personal or unproductive purposes. Michel de Certeau, *op. cit.*, p. 392.

26—“The way Google tries to flow is called ‘The 70-20-10 rule’. It defines how employees distribute their working hours: 70% of them should be spent on the company’s main business—namely searches, as its ads still comprise 99% of Google’s sales. Engineers can spend 20% of their time on the search for new products Google can supply to the market (...) The remaining 10% of time can be used to develop any idea, no matter how flamboyant or absurd it seems (...) The employees do not like to mention how much they earn, although they confess they are well-paid, nor do they want to talk about the pool tables, massages, giant balls, Lego toys, skateboards or lava lamps. The Company is like a big house, with sofas everywhere, food and drink on all the desks, dogs and parties. There are no established working hours and employees can dress however they want. On Fridays they celebrate TGIF (Thank God It’s Friday),

With information and communication technologies, we find ourselves faced with objects that are strongly ‘de-objectified’. These “partial objects,” as Knorr Cetina calls them, “are not an anticipation or presentation of the ‘real thing’. The ‘real thing’ itself has a changing ontology that the partial object unfolds.” (18)

The contemporary object that fits this category best is the computer. Michael Hardt says, “An innovation contributed by the computer is that its function is in a state of constant transformation through its use,” (19) but from that point of view, it is not only its function but rather its very ontology that mutates constantly. For the immaterial worker, and especially since a permanent Internet connection has been available, this ‘partial object’ is alternatively a workplace, tool, communication medium, leisure time space, learning tool... but basically it is a black box (20), a black hole whose density is informational, and that is constituted as an axis of gravitation that is both intellectual and emotional.

Tactics and the *perruque* (and how Google licks its fingertips)

Benjamin’s view that I mentioned a moment ago is based on the idea that technology predefines content (21), which is why it is necessary to modify production systems and to appropriate techniques, since these are the tools used by the dominant powers to control. In 1980, Michel de Certeau—probably as a response to the dark Debordian impression of a spectacle as an inevitable lens between man and the world—described a different way of action, moving through small fissures in the system, that works tactically: ‘the art of the weak’. (22)

Strategy is defined as a specific type of knowledge “that sustains and determines the power of giving oneself a place of one’s own.” (23) It is essentially spatial, visible, and can be isolated. It is a form of organization of power. Tactics, in contrast, is time-bound, without its own space—“its only space is that of the other”—(24) and it moves within the field of vision of the enemy, making use of occasional faults, discovered via astuteness and caution. Tactics are liquid and invisible.

This form of action is used by those who, lacking strategic power over the environment, move while exposed to the public eye, looking for excesses of light and shadows to act on it. The *perruque* (25) is the tactical action which has always existed in workplaces in relation to dependency, and which at present is strongly linked to the use of computers, the Internet, and other technological communication systems.

In various ways, companies have tried to eliminate this type of practices from the work place. The most noticeable and successful is that of the Google company, which uses organizational strategies that clearly aim to absorb the *perruque*. The creative leisure time that employees ‘steal’ from their hours of service for personal or non-work related projects is included and accounted for (10% of work hours), and managed in terms of space and time by Google, thus re-directing those moments of creative independence toward the company, turning them into strength at work. (26)

and they all get together to sing or eat.”
Patricia Fernández de Lis, “Viaje al interior de Google. La contraseña del siglo XXI” (online). *Diario* Página 12, no. 28/01/2007. See: <www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/suplementos/espectaculos/2-5213-2007-01-28.html> (Accessed on 10 June, 2007).

27—Dominique González-Foerster, *Pierre Huyghe, Philippe Parreno*, Museum of Modern Art, Paris, 1999, p. 82. Quoted in Nicolas Bourriaud, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

28—The quotes emphasize the use of this word. We will address subsequently.

29—José Luis Brea, *op. cit.*

30—The term *copyleft*, usually translated as “permitted copy” or “author’s lefts”, came into use in the 1970s, in relation to software programs that left their code open to the public domain, so it could be improved due to contributions from users and programmers. Currently, there are many licences that are alternatives to Copyright, which are already being implemented in various countries and by quite a variety of cultural producers. Some are: Creative Commons, ColorLuris, GPL, Licencia Arte Libre, etc. Richard Stallman, a pioneer in generating and disseminating this type of debate, continues to do so not only in the field of software but also in increasingly broad contexts, focusing most recently on the significance of education in the freedom from dependence on proprietary programmes. See: <www.nierox.com/2008/09/24/richard-stallman-el-software-libre-en-las-escuelas/> (Accessed on 8 August, 2008).

31—Brea, José Luis, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

These are new ways of conceiving a system of surveillance, turning the employee into the perfect accomplice: his work is like his home... No. It’s even better, given that the private ways of encouraging creativity are not only permitted but are applauded and well remunerated... (what would Foucault make of all this?).

(Post) production once again

Even if it is a Utopian dream, the important thing is to introduce a type of equality, to suppose between me—at the origin of the device, of the system- and the other, that the same capacities, the possibility of an identical relationship exist, which allows for one to organize one’s own story in response to what has just been seen, with one’s own references (27)

[Nicolas BOURRIAUD]

The mutations of the Web as an access system to the Internet into a space with more interaction, accompanying the aforementioned transformation process of work, have favoured the emergence of tools that are free and simple to use, made for a user with growing needs to appropriate the medium and manage his or her own contents.

What is called ‘Web 2.0’ has been announced since 2004 as the second generation in the use of the Web, and it is oriented toward interaction among users, the management of ‘communities’ (28) and an offer of services based on collaboration, the exchange of information, and the reuse or remix of data.

According to José Luis Brea’s analysis in *El Tercer Umbral* [The Third Threshold], a new type of capitalism is emerging: *cultural capitalism*. (29) This means among other things that we are experiencing the beginning of a transformation in the market economy model that prevailed throughout the 20th century. One of the clearest symptoms of this paradigm shift is the emergence—in the 1970s—and the strengthening—in recent years—of alternative policies related to data distribution. These policies reflect a radical shift in attitude regarding knowledge and access to information and are usually identified, despite the different approaches, with the same newly coined term: *copyleft*. (30) Brea offers a look at immaterial circulation in the economy of knowledge,

Quite probably, the keystone for this change lies in the immaterial nature of digital products and their subsequent inscription in an order of inter-subjective circulations with no loss or gain, in which transmission and social commerce do not produce any type of lack or dispossession. It is therefore sustainable in terms of an economy of distribution; its reception and appropriation by the receiver are not produced subject to the provider losing any part of his property. Therefore, a system of circulation in the form of goods -in which ‘the transfer’ requires compensation for the effective loss suffered by the giver of the goods-, is naturally and obligatorily suspended. The condition of unique unrepeatability is subverted by the inherent reproducible feature of the medium but at the same time, and this is even more important and will bear more consequences, the possibility of founding its social circulation in a post mercantile economy is constituted as a perfect and naturally viable possibility. And as such, obligatorily on its way. (31)

32—Explained in the terms of use on Jumpcut. See: <<http://jumpcut.com/company/terms>> (Accessed on 14 October, 2008).

33—David de Ugarte, “De la Web 2.0 al fabbing, o el salto que haremos desde la creación comunitaria al bricolage individual en red”, a seminar given at Inclusiva-net and published by Medialab Prado, Madrid, July 2007. See: <http://medialab-prado.es/articulo/de_la_web_20_al_fabbing_o_el_salto_que_haremos_desde_la_creacion_comunitaria_al_bricolage_individual_en_red> (Accessed on 14 October, 2008).

34—Nicolás Bourriaud, *Postproducción*, Adriana Hidalgo (Ed.), Buenos Aires, 2007.

35—Derrida’s concept of deconstruction is related: the analysis of a “dismantled” concept shows the complex network of historical processes, metaphorical meanings, and rhetorical uses that compose it. Likewise, in traditional scientific methods, the hypothesis and refutation require existing knowledge that supports, confronts or overcomes prior knowledge.

36—Lev Manovich, *El lenguaje de los nuevos medios de comunicación. La imagen en la era digital*, Paidós, Buenos Aires, 2006, p. 103.

In recent years, many innovations, distribution, and cheaper prices with relation to the consumption of digital communications technologies, from mobile telephones with video cameras to the proliferation of free, easy-to-use tools offered on Web 2.0, have been generating a series of collective experiences that maintain the debate and manage to approach that pretension of González-Foerster, causing mobility in the concept of consumers as such.

Jumpcut, for example, represents a noteworthy collaborative production model. It is an online publishing service for editing and storing videos, that keeps an archive of stored material available for the community of subscribers. Each video contributed by the users can be re-mixed, re-edited, reproduced and manipulated in any way by the others. It is an ambiguous model of the use of public domain, given that the owner of the service (*Yahoo*, since 2006) can use the material stored there for advertising, for example, automatically acquiring the rights to economic, advertising, distributive, and other types of exploitation. (32)

In any case, the Jumpcut model serves to detect the relation between two different uses of what is collective: distribution and production. Jumpcut makes it possible to share collectively to produce individually. David de Ugarte sees it as a first step toward a “society of distributed creativity (...)” It is not the same as sharing distribution —what is truly revolutionary is sharing production: the old dream of a society of *bricoleurs* (do-it-yourselfers) where all creativity is recycled.” (33)

More than production we should speak of post-production. (34) That is, taking into account the paradigm shift we mentioned from a mercantile economy to an economy of knowledge, it is essential to take knowledge as a process permanently in postproduction, given that we cannot consider previous knowledge as “raw material” with which to build new knowledge. It is never as basic or as primitive as to be considered pure origin; and what is built with it will possibly be the prior step to another future construction. (35)

Participation. The dream of a community of media producers

‘Interactivity’ is a concept that has been used to excess in art for about the last forty years. Lev Manovich refers to the mystification the term has suffered based on its many meanings and the literal interpretation made of it. (36) Setting aside a debate that has been excessively addressed in the world of art, especially in the world of new technologies, I would like to focus directly on the type of participation in which the viewer is encouraged to carry out a process similar to that of producer.

Brea, in his article “Online Communities”, considers that an online community is nothing other than a territory of presence and participation. He wonders where the limits to the territory are, and answers,

Without a doubt: that community of means imagined by Brecht. A domain or a means for the public circulation of information, of discourse and of the

37—José Luis Brea, *Online communities: comunidades experimentales de comunicación en la diáspora virtual*, Chapter included in *OVER HERE* (pdf), The New Contemporary Museum, MIT Press, 2001. See: <<http://www.joseluisbrea.net/articulos/onlinerecommunities.pdf>> (Accessed on 22 June, 2007).

38—José Luis Brea. *op. cit.*

39—Michel De Certeau, *op. cit.*, p. 422.



+ F3—Screenshot of the *DO IT* instruction manual



+ F4—Screenshot of one of the works on *DO IT - TV version*, at e-flux.org.



+ F5—Screen shot of videoblog *Vlog-Internacional*.

practices of symbolic information, in which all participants have to same right to intervene. That is: in which—instead of two sides (the broadcasters and the receivers)—there is a reciprocal displacement, an eccentric, non-hierarchical dispersion (a rhizome) in which all receivers are also, and at the same time, broadcasters—at least potentially. (37)

As attempts at approximating this ideal model of democracy pointed out by Brea quoting Brecht, I will discuss some projects and the interaction framework in which they are developed.

+F3

DO IT. Complicity between the artist and the public

DO IT is a touring exhibition curated by Austrian writer and curator Hans Ulrich Obrist. An attempt is made to unite two strategies that were used in conceptualism: the generation of works as a series of written instructions to be carried out by other people (in Figure 4, the instruction manual), and the use of the occasion as a factor influencing their execution. According to the curator, *DO IT* is less about the copies, images or reproductions of art works than about human interpretations. The exhibit travelled to various countries from 1994 until 2002, and then an adaptation was made for the Web, posted at e-flux.org. This version is called *DO IT (home version)* and is still active as a container and distributor of a large collection of works in the form of instructions, and photographic or video documents of how they were carried out, which the public continues to submit. In addition to the written format, Obrist launched a similar proposal: *DO IT - TV version*, a series of video clips carried out by eleven well-known artists in the style of ‘art tutorials’, (see Figure 5) that were broadcast on Austrian television in 1995 and 1996, and which are also located currently on e-flux.

+F4

The very well-known statement “Without an audience, there is no work” (38) is carried to an extreme in this case. But the coordinates of the occasion also take on a special significance. Following Michel de Certeau, it could be said that works like this aim to function as tactical resources, actions without a place of their own that depend on a time more than a place: “One grabs the opportunity; it is not created.” (39)

In any case, the aura of a signature does not disappear and the artist designates the artistic act as such, leaving a written trace in a sort of “Messianic gesture”.

+F5

Shared authorship and community

Vlog Internacional is a space constituted by a group of Spanish speakers who live in different parts of the world. Based on subjects that are renewed every 15 days, the purpose of the video blog is to generate small videos that show the everyday lives of the participants, the place where they live, etc. With rather rough design and campy editing aesthetics, the group’s aims are limited to maintaining a sort of audiovisual dialogue

among the participants, exploring common themes in their lives and publishing everyone's material on one or two video compilations.

One of the conditions for carrying out the recording is that each participant should appear on screen and/or explain what they are showing, making it clear that the material is seen from their own perspective. Another condition is that the posting be carried out by a different member each time, which makes the choice of material and editing more democratic, in addition to generating a diversity of styles.

This experience of collective authorship on the Web, and of a micro community generated based on a particular interest (sharing landscapes, customs and different ways of life, many marked by migration), gives rise to a different standpoint, in an ambiguous space that fluctuates among three attraction points: the social necessity of generating collectivity, the personal search to leave a mark or some record of one's life, and a small creative game made possible by widely accessible image and communication technologies.

Cienojos.tv is another example of a collaborative video blog in Spanish, which has been on the Web for approximately one year. It is comprised of videobloggers with a fair amount of experience in this type of practice, as evidenced by its habitual technical quality, the way they have set up the space, and the tools that they use to work. The vlog is defined as follows,

What is *CienOjos.tv*?

CienOjos.tv is the site of videobloggers in Spanish. A community site for video posts related to videoblogging. It is an open and permanent festival. Sign up and that's it. This initiative is by the videobloggers in the *Grupo Vlog Español (Spanish Vlog Group)*.

How to participate?

To participate in *CienOjos.tv* you just have to sign up as an author and you can publish a video post on any subject you choose or you can use those already posted for inspiration. Newcomers will learn from the others, taking part in video commentaries. And you will be one of the CienOjos (Hundred Eyes). (40)

The regular participants are eleven videobloggers, but there is a fairly large flow of occasional collaborators. Their projects include *Lumiere* (one minute videos, still camera, unedited and without audio), *Semanal* (each participant agrees to post one video per week) and *Definido* (one participant chooses a word each month and presents it with a video, and then the others take it and make their own personal definition based on their own material).

Some of the participants (including Pepa García and Héctor Milla) not only have their own personal video blogs but are also founding members of the Yahoo discussion list "Vlogs en Español".

From education to action

The contemporary custom of learning via tutorials (many are for sale but

41—Discussion group via e-mail (See: <<http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/vlogspanol/>>) It has a database with tutorials, projects, directories and other information. See: <<http://vlogspanol.pbwiki.com>> (Accessed on 21 June, 2007).

42—Fundación CopyLeft. See: <www.fundacioncopyleft.org>

43—Creative Commons España. See: <<http://es.creativecommons.org/>>

44—Diccionario de la lengua española. Vigésima segunda edición (online). Real Academia Española. See: <<http://rae.es>> (Accessed on 20 June, 2007).

some are offered simply as a way to share knowledge) is an increasingly popular way to acquire skills in the use of tools and software.

This method is used, developed and shared by videobloggers as another way of generating community based on the exchange of information. Combined with discussion forums via e-mail, chats and occasional meetings (in real life or online) among subscribers, a dynamic bank is generated which generally has free access for the transmission of knowledge, interests, proposals and calls for projects. Vlogs en español (41) is a currently active example from which various proposals have arisen. The project *VIMOS*, for example, is one of them, which generated simultaneous events for disseminating the practice of videoblogging in several places around the world.

One of the features that usually serves as a link for these work groups is the active discussion of the scope of copyright, ownership of knowledge and cultural constructions, and the dissemination of legal alternatives such as *Copyleft* (42) and *Creative Commons* (43).

The user as producer

User: adj. Law. Said of a person: who has the right to use something owned by a third party with some limitations. (44)

The term *user* is the most common to describe persons who use information technologies. But the definition above, from the Real Academia Española (Spanish Royal Academy of Language) adds a significant nuance, emphasizing that the use is “with some limitations” and of “something owned by a third party”. Where does the limitation lie? For example, in the use of proprietary software that does not allow for modifications, corrections, or adaptations of its source code; in the monetary cost involved in Internet access in almost all countries; and in surveillance carried out via the Web.

Web 2.0 is, among other things, an attempt to overcome or, at times, solely to simulate that “limitation in the use of what is owned by a third party”, offering the user free access to tools that simplify the process of obtaining and manipulating images and video (with no need of photographers, camera operators, designers and editors). It also offers the set-up and management of blogs and Web sites (without using designers, programmers or webmasters), the “personalization” of toolbars so one “feels comfortable” with them and to save time, and the possibility of sharing all this and much more with users around the world. The strategy Google applies to its employees logically reflects this policy: make yourself comfortable and do what you like—we’ll find a way to make use of it.

Even so, the need for creative dialogue with others, the skill to move through the interstices of what is possible, the search for company and complicity in a common project, and the pressing desire of all social beings to feel a part of something, are still reflected in some uses of the Web, that bring users close to the production of meaning, knowledge and community. People who are physically far away from their family and friends feel strong emotional ties to them that drive them to quickly absorb and

incorporate advances in communication technologies. The need to maintain and increase the feeling of closeness beyond geography leads people of all ages, social levels, and economic circumstances on a large part of the planet to use ICTs. This channel between migrants and their families and friends is permanently producing data, moving information and generating knowledge in both directions.

That is where the involvement of two historical subjects identified by Wu Ming 4 is very clear: the immaterial worker and the migrant produce, manage, and transmit information. The connection between being uprooted and cultural fertility is nothing new. What distinguishes migrant movements today from those of the past is the way this fertility is produced. Today’s migrants are builders of epistemological objects. They are, in a sense, emotional workers.

Emotional work has served the 20th century capitalist system’s operating style, becoming an efficient strategy as far as improving workers’ productivity and results. In any case, that does not mean that emotions have lost strength as a powerful weapon for creating other models: quite the contrary. As Michael Hardt said: “Given the significant role of emotional work as one of the major links in capitalist post modernization, its subversive potential and autonomy are constantly growing.” (45)

Like *renga* writing in Japan a thousand years ago (to offer only one of the many examples offered by the history of humanity), the collective construction of knowledge and views of the world are finding various ways of taking shape. At present, and perhaps for a brief period of time until its operations weaken, videoblogging is one of them.

Dialogue is still one of the richest means of transmission and construction of knowledge. Mutating based on the codes, measurements, and tools that make it possible, it always finds a crack through which to insert a whisper in the great wall of noise that surrounds us.

Lila Pagola

*dospuntocero** (twodotzero)
or my blogroll (some of my favourite
blogs are by artists)

metablog: <<http://doscer0.wordpress.com>>
3rd Version

Visual artist, university professor and free cultural activist

This text is under a *Creative Commons Argentina Atribución-No Comercial-Compartir Obras Derivadas Igual 2.5* licence. It can be copied or modified provided that this licence is maintained and it is not used for commercial purposes.

Notes to version 3: The first version of this selection of productions by artists with Web 2.0 tools was created for *Digital Event* (Toronto, Canada), in August 2007. The second version was expanded by adding some new projects that were found and suggested, based on the first experience, for the publication of the *Frontera Incierta* blog (writing from Montevideo, Uruguay) in November 2007. This third version—with five new projects—has been prepared for the ‘Third *Inclusiva-net* meeting: net.art (second epoch). The evolution of artistic creation in the network-system’, held in Buenos Aires from March, 2 to March, 6, 2009. I would specially like to thank all the artists participating in this selection, in all its versions, for their comments on their experiences, which have proved highly useful in this exploration.

1—Here we go back to that old argument about net.art exhibits, when some technical problem would make it impossible for the Internet connection to function during the exhibit: the intention of experiencing something of the Web when one is not online is simply absurd. Blogs are proof of this impossibility given that they are dynamic sites whose existence is based on change and option of feedback from the 'receiver' is a *structural* component of their proposals. In fact, fifteen months after the previous version (November, 2007), the authors had closed down some of the blogs, stopped posting, or forked into other platforms, of which Facebook is noteworthy in the local artistic medium, since approximately August 2008.

Introduction

Perhaps this introduction—anchored with precision in time and space—seems paradoxical for an analysis of a selection of blogs and collaborative Web productions. As far as 'objects' to be studied, they are not limited to a physical location or an exact stage (of completion, I mean), in contrast to other cultural productions, although their phases can generally be seen in archive file format.

This analysis acknowledges that limitation: a fleeting cut in the stage of completion of these works in progress, to look at their origins, their similarities, and their dynamics inside and outside the Web. This is a way of contributing to the discussion about a phenomenon in creation and distribution that has been accepted by society to an unprecedented degree, including new artistic practices on the Web—or net.art 2.0—where the key question is: What do they contribute? What are their aspirations? From the start, we recognize that to remove them from their medium—although our intention is to understand them—means to weaken them (1), given that in those practices, invariability is a contradictory synonym of attachment and certainty, since chronicles and experiments are what drive them. I must also admit that, upon reviewing them, more than one instantaneous X of flows of broadcast/reception awakened a small 'monumentalizing' urge in me, a desire to make their 'fleeting' effectiveness last.

In order to give it structure, and discourage any interpretation that might associate this selection with pointing to 'artistic' procedures per se, I have added new links to the original ones, in a dynamic that could expand indefinitely, like any other investigation on the Web.

net.artists 2.0? New generation, new situation

The modifications of reality that ICTs bring to everyday life on a daily basis have accelerated our relationship with information and knowledge, meaning that appropriation has become more important than access. We are living in *exponential times* in all fields related to information: it is produced, circulated and updated at a pace that is impossible to keep up with on a human time-scale, even in clearly demarcated areas of study. To significantly 'appropriate' information—which now 'is there, for everyone who surfs the Internet'—has clearly replaced access in importance. Having access to data is not valuable unless one also knows how to turn that information into knowledge, and at the right time. What role do contemporary artists play in this social re-ordering related to knowledge? Contemporary artists are affected by a crisis in their social role and a disperse expansion of their own tradition, not exempt from its own contradictions. They have taken quite different positions with respect to possible connections with the universe of ICTs. First of all, in terms of instrumental approaches, they wondered if the nature of those tools corresponded to their world, or if so, under what conditions, so as not to collide with project-focused disciplines, the media, or advertising. Later on, other artists, observing the transformative dimension of the social world enabled by ICTs and shaped daily by communities, have become interested in enhancing the interstices they find in the prevailing

2—Compression exerted by the exhibit space and its indicator resources, the word of the curator, the artist, etc. who surround the ‘thing’ and turn it into a workforce of the viewers, under the pressure of the authority the viewers grant them.

discourse on technology, synthesized in the following paradigm: useful-inevitable-convenient. To do so, they have mainly recurred to parasitic or satellite uses.

With regard to the former position—the instrumental focus translatable to the question, ‘Is the computer just another tool for the artist?’—there is little more that one can argue in relation to its initial function of creation in the face of the threat of the critical potential of technology in terms of art, modified with increasingly less categorical nuances, from the invention of photography to the present.

The second approach, explored as early as 1994, is the terrain that is being redefined as of the advent of Web 2.0. In it, artists had reserved a place in representations of quite different imaginary realms. Some are pseudo-technophobic. They see technological development as bringing about the gradual dehumanization of persons (a situation where art can provide an alternative that ‘redeems’ new media). At the same time, they see it from strictly political standpoints that radically differentiate creative practices from their institutional mediation—in what is called contemporary art—as technically equipped possible routes, for thought and the exercise of *real* communication—decolonized of interests not related to its speakers—which is significant.

Net.art arose from a portion of this second approach, interested in a medium with great critical *potential* in relation to the art-institution, and its mechanisms of legitimization. At the same time, many difficulties arise to reproduce the logic of the ‘real’ world in terms of property (due to the intangibility of its ‘objects’), as well as its great capacity to be confused with other symbolic productions without ‘artistic’ pretensions, which would reduce the ‘effect of external compression’ (2) that turns mere things into contemporary art works.

Network artists’ tools and materials

With respect to the tools and materials of the net.artist, the situation has changed, from the net.artist of Web 1.0 experimenting with HTML code and the limitations of connectivity, to the artist who works on social networks built on Web 2.0 resources.

The tools of the net.artist 1.0 were mainly electronic mail and the early publishers of HTML WYSIWYG, which later proceeded to ‘touch the code’ or learn to program in some compatible language. In the first experiments in 1995, net.artists aimed to explore the technical limits of the new resource, their own limits as creators and artisans, as well as those of their field: whether it would expand, resist or transform itself. Within the technological optimism of that first stage, the Internet was especially attractive to artists concerned with the old subject of the social function of art. The network in the first stage was seen as potentially critical, transformative, or at least communicative. In contrast to digital graphics and, to a lesser extent, the artists’ interactive CD, that network was aesthetically reticent, though very promising politically to refine the field of art—even its social function.

3—See: <<http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lurker>>. The comparison is graphic, but not completely exact, given that in a list or forum, users are expected to participate, whereas on a static website, one is limited to surfing it.

4—See: <www.postal.free.fr> by Gabriela Golder, <www.distopia.com/sanctu> by Celso Reeks, or <www.khm.de/~marcello/html/Net-Art/A.html> by Marcello Mercado, among others that are now offline.

5—See: <www.the.Internet.com.uy/vibri/artefactos/betatesters.htm>

6—The perspective of neo-formalism in net.art responds to this interest in the code itself, as a ‘subject’ to master. Software-art, among other approaches, is an example. It clearly continues a tradition that points to the artist as a person with special abilities, and no vested interest.

7—See: <www.cateaters.org.ar>

8—CSS: cascading style sheets. Its addition to Web programming contributed the possibility of defining the complete appearance of an html, from the outside, so that if the style sheet is changed, the contents immediately look different. Moreover, if it is properly structured, it can be associated to the semantic Web. An audiovisual explanation is available at <www.youtube.com/watch?v=PL-ywltLjzk>

net.art 1.0: anti-form and the ‘lurker’ (3) user

In the context of pioneers and definitions, with isolated speakers who were still creating their communicative capacities as ‘network beings’, many sites were constituted as expositive messages of *experiments* with HTML (4): disorienting, exploratory, many of them in English (to reach more recipients). In other cases, they gathered participation experiences (e.g., by mail) (5), but with no possibilities of directly intervening in the recipients’ websites. It was a medium with one broadcaster and many potential recipients, who had a certain degree of freedom in constructing the message, depending on the interactivity of the project.

Exchanges, when they were proposed or occurred spontaneously, were held by private mail or lists and in some cases, they were returned to the Web in the form of documentation, generated by the site’s author.

anti-form

The emphasis in these productions seems to be placed on form, not in an aesthetic or even design sense—that was explored in parallel mainly by graphic designers—but rather as far as what the form can counter-communicate when the creation tool is given ‘satellite’ or parasitic uses. That is, residual, unforeseen uses, which in some cases were undesirable or omitted by ‘standard’ uses. A type of anti-form that strains communication and demands patient surfers, explorers, willing to play and search: a much more common type of user that was at that time (quite eager to experience the Internet) than at present, where information overload and the speed of interactions lead us to jump from one source to the next.

Clearly, net.authors 1.0 were not overly concerned with communicating contents. Instead, they turned their explorations with language into contents, making an effort to stay away from the emerging conventions suggested by usability. Within the diverse set of productions from that time, this interest in *anti-form* prevails, as a provocation, a distinctive brand of language, or purely as a display of artisanal skill with no purpose (6), which, despite its ‘classical’ echo, contained the contained criticism of the author who, using a tool with great market demand, resisted by producing ‘art’.

The myth of the origin of net.art from the heroic period sums up that spirit of approaching the Web: form was an excuse to produce links. Later, in the transition to Web 2.0, many creators went through the ‘flash generation’, whose experiments no longer seem to interest net.artists as much as designers and VJs. Probably that strong aesthetic and spectacular emphasis—a feature of the resource—makes it unsuitable for critical purposes, except those that turn to irony or simulation. (7)

net.art 2.0: CSS (8) and involved users

The tools of the net.artist 2.0 are social networks: photo logs, blogs, shared bookmarks, wikis, and affinity networks. The tools have changed, because

the Web and its social customs have also changed: artists' interests do not seem to include unconventional uses of the code (ranging widely, from the aesthetic to the political), but lies with producing relations among other nodes on the Web: among artists in many cases, or people who surf the Web.

Their tools are complex and they share them, sometimes with no modification, with many other users with completely different intentions. This situation renews—in a moderate but powerful way—the 'utopian promises' that the Web made to artists concerned about the isolation of the contemporary art field. While in net.art 1.0, an attempt was made to avoid functional 'aesthetization' (more of a concern to graphic designers) by exploring anti-form, in net.art 2.0, the focus on content aims to reveal pre-established relations (the Web 2.0 convention assigns us a role in the networks and shapes it with software), and try out other new ones.

Returning to an analysis of tools, Web 2.0 arose to make it possible for non-expert users to publish contents, with the possibility of personalizing them and a growing convergence of Web 2.0 services. The possibility of personalizing is structured on several levels (the server's criteria, contributions from the community, technical possibilities) but in any case, to use these 'tuning features', a user needs an understanding of the language that is equivalent or superior (if the user wants to add functions) to that of the net.artist1.0.

The emphasis is on experimenting with contents and their communicational effects on the community of followers, who construct it more or less actively. What was anti-form in net.art 1.0 has become 'post-experiment' [*post-experimento*], where the textual and/or visual medium predominates.

Interested users

On the other hand, Web 2.0 projects assume that their contents are private, and in the majority of cases have a dynamic of constant coming and going between the real experience of the author and his or her readers—which usually are quite localized and full of references to a shared culture (starting with a shared language, which must be natural, with its expressions and ways of relating). Its principal motivation is that of a chronicle of what is communicated. In sum: it is of interest to very few, in an increasingly diverse online community, where the number of people involved is inversely proportional to the degree of emotional involvement and participation.

Once upon a time artists discovered the Internet: From Web 1.0 to Web 2.0

The majority of artists came to blogs and other systems of self-publishing perhaps a bit later than other users: they were not close to technology due to a distance caused by their field, prejudices and other variables. Even for 'digital artists', who started with graphics and CD-ROM art, using tools was one of the barriers (and also a space for experimentation and discovery) to

9—See: <www.fedaro.info/mapacone/mapagene.html>, Connectivity in Latin America from 1995 to 2003.

10—See: <www.rebeccablood.net/essays/weblog_history.html>. “Weblogs: A History and Perspective”, by Rebecca Blood; and also <www.blogger.com/about>.

11—Self-publishing Web applications are a clear example of the dynamic that characterizes open source software: the lucidity not to reinvent the wheel time and again, and a thousand eyes see more than just two as far as correcting errors.

12—It would not be the only way to access these resources, given that they were could also be cases of collaboration and over hiring the services of third parties.

However, that option is not common among artists in Argentina, where they seem to prefer any other time he of a supplier instead of the dependency of a collaborator where there is some lack of understanding. That case is different in Brazil, where they collaborate bilaterally with local and sometimes foreign computer experts.

going online. Another obvious and determining factor was the technical and social structuring of connectivity (9) that introduced a type of communication into the everyday lives of thousands of people.

Although some developments already existed that were used on frequently updated sites, the ‘social ‘ phenomenon of Web 2.0 started when a set of Web applications like accounts that can be used by signing up with a server (such as blogs) (10) became available for Internet users and readers: people who knew nothing about HTML, FTP or domains.

In Latin America, with the phenomenon of the *Así* blogs, some artists in this selection started their virtual life by blogging, and others found a way of redefining or reinventing their relationship with the Internet in the blogosphere.

Design, users, and brands in production

Technical experience in any highly specialized area with a dizzying rate of updated skills such as Web programming was a barrier that kept amateurs out of the Web game in the first phase, in a dynamic similar to that of professional photographers who were ‘safe ‘ from amateurs for the first 50 years after photography was invented.

The Web 2.0 as a concept and implementation eliminated that difference among users more radically than Kodak did in terms of photography: it generated such highly sophisticated tools to automate content publishing tasks that many professionals also adopted them, given that the collection of knowledge and efforts found in some of them are impossible to replicate (11) efficiently in time and cost.

Parasitic and satellite uses: On technical preparation

With regard to the ‘satellite ‘ uses (parasitic, unplanned, unbounded, subversive) of these developments in Web programming carried out by artists, relying on their auto didactic capacity to appropriate tools designed for other purposes, previous experience (whether they had used Web 1.0 or not) defined two large groups of types of users, separated by their level of technical access to Web 2.0: those who use accounts on a server within its domain (Blogger, Wordpress, etc.) and those who install a CMS in their own domain.

In many cases, the features of the service offered by the server determine to some extent the possible degree of appropriation. We have access to the experience provided by the service, but we are also limited by it, when a lack of understanding of the tasks that the blog, for example, is carrying out means that time must be spent using and assimilating them before we can fully use the options offered by the server (if they are available to users).

This separation of types of users means that the majority of those who have previous computer experience (12) use the second option, which is

13—The case of <www.sincita.wordpress.com> which migrated to <www.sincita.com.ar> using the same CMS (Wordpress) but with additional features (“tuning”, in the words of its creator).

14—See: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Killer_app>. Killer application: in computer jargon, a generally simple but ingeniously coded application that turns out to be unexpectedly useful and desired.

clearly more adaptable and powerful (13). But perhaps the most interesting examples in our selection are by people whose first access to a website was to a blog.

A shared sign, in any case, of this link is the desire for communication that is *highly circumstantial* (often in relation to physical space) and *immediate*, and the expectation of feedback in the form of almost anonymous, moderated dialogue.

A sample of the blogosphere

In this new selection under analysis, the criteria of inclusion—as in all selections—is necessarily partial and limited, based on the ‘representative’ potential of something unique, with respect to a way of doing things and certain effects on the community. Therefore, its significance should not be assessed outside of its own dynamics: highly circumstantial and pointing to identifications due to similarities with other communities, other contingencies.

Highly localized websites are placed along with others that speak from no particular place or that play at anonymity and multiple identities; websites that may seem ‘familiar though unknown’. They are familiar because all communities of artists have traveller through eternity [*Viajero de la Eternidad*] who decides to post actions carried out on the street online. It transcends the ephemeral nature of the work, overcoming strict locality and entering into dialogue with possible real and virtual observers. Or their passerby without an appointment [*Sincita*], who amalgamate the reality of the blogosphere with the path being taken. And they are also certain to have projects that use the blogosphere as a space for self-promotion to a greater or lesser degree of formality—where the artists’ redefinition of the ‘personal diary’ includes inserting posts-experiments [*Experimentos*]¹⁴—that would not be permitted in a formal promotion on another more ‘lasting’ or institutional medium. Or, within the same ‘self referential’ group of alter-egos, those who eschew labels or being limited to the main activity for which they are known (video artist, photographer, etc.) can try out other creative fields (mainly writing theory or literature).

Another group will have recognized Web 2.0 as the tool they needed to turn their political convictions—such as joys and pains, or decompressed anguish (*Duelos y Júbilos*, *Angustia Descomprimida*), to arouse questioning, generate controversy or stir someone’s conscience into accessible communication realities, on an individual and global level. And in other cases, the choice of simplified publishing systems allows for the efficient operation of decentralized networks of collaborators.

Blogs: The killer-app (14) of Web 2.0

Of the projects covered, there is no question that blogs predominate. It must be pointed out that for this selection, I did not consider the universe of photo blogs (although some blogs are fairly similar in their

15—See: <<http://Web.archive.org/Web/20031127133858/laferrier.tabira.org>>, one of the first experiments of migration to wikis in 2003, from Córdoba (for the portal <www.mearte.com.ar>, currently offline). Its presentation, in the context of the Quintas Jornadas (Fifth Conference) on art and digital media in Córdoba in 2003, generated amazement and incredulity among the receivers: about vandalism, authorship, the quality of the information, etc., problems that were all renewed around the star wiki, the online encyclopaedia. See: <www.wikipedia.org>

16—Technical note: blogs are also used as static Web sites, in Web 1.0 style. Those uses have been considered in this selection as beyond 'blog language', which arises out of the combination of certain technical possibilities and the social uses carried out with them.

17—See the noteworthy expression <www.findelmundo.com.ar/moblog>, an early project (May 2004) by Gustavo Romano, that explores the possibilities blogs offer as chronicles, posting photos of what he has in his pockets each day.

use of technical possibilities), because in the photo blogs I have come across, posting based on 'archives' predominates—this is work conceived outside the Web, where it is then posted for distribution; and there is a lack of both *post-experiments* and centralized concern for communication with the surfer-commentator (or it only occurs in a very banal manner); there is a strong emphasis on 'reproduced' work, and less interest in the community, or an almost private and highly conventionalized exercise (around the family album/portfolio model) of its possibilities.

In this sense, blogs are the star applications of Web 2.0. The exceptions are the wiki for the Nómade project, the Escaner Cultural platform, and the development of Post-Urbano on Google Maps. They also differ in their operational mode: they have many remote collaborators, and a long history of pioneering on the Web (Escaner, since 1999) and/or many experiences (Luciano Ferrer, who set up the wiki for Nómade, was one of the first artists to introduce the wiki format on the local scene) (15), or the collaboration with developers in the case of Post-Urbano. In these projects, the use of social Web tools arose from the need to technically equip collaborators or capitalize on sophisticated developments, which could be accessed no other way, in what we call 'collaborator mode'.

Author mode and collaborator mode

The artists whose work is explored in the project fall into two main groups: those who use blogs as a quick, first access to the Web, and those who use other tools (wikis or publication platforms). The latter group experienced Web 1.0 in the search for ways to simplify the participation of inexpert collaborators, in the decentralized generation of content. Based on these two backgrounds, there is a type of use in 'author mode' that prevails among those who come to the Web for the first time, and a different use in 'collaborator mode', where experiences migrate to Web 2.0 platforms to *enable others to participate* in creating content.

Author mode: Blog = every day

Blogs are generally perceived as a Web space with highly dynamic contents (although this is not always the case, nor is it necessary). (16) This high rate of content renewal means that the content of each post is generally circumstantial, and does not refer to certainties (fixed contents); from the beginning, it is a work in progress and is usually highly contextualized. In other words, in a very close relationship with reality outside the Web and at times outside of art; a direct insertion in 'cold, harsh' everyday life.

Reviewing the uses and perception of the phenomenon, the fact that Latin American net artists show little or no interest in blogs (17) is noteworthy. Probably this lack of interest by net.artists is due to simplicity of access, design and programming limitations, and/or its high mass availability—in contrast to the laborious procedures with HTML in its early stages. Perhaps the enthusiasm driving those who now gain access in 'author mode' was already experienced ten years ago in a different way, and

18—See: <http://aleph-arts.org/pens/net_realidades.html>. Utopian Promises - Net Realities. Critical Art Ensemble. Published in *Aleph*. Spanish translation: Teresa Arozena Bonnet.

19—See: <<http://technorati.com/blogging/state-of-the-blogosphere/the-what-and-why-of-blogging>>

‘Utopian promises’ have turned into ‘net-realities’. (18) In spite of the possible similarity of the interests involved, the possibilities for reception for the two groups are historically determined in radically different ways, due to the evolution of social practices on the Web.

It’s just a blog

For other artists, although it is their first virtual public presence, the simplified use and access that fosters its proliferation in non-artistic circles leads them to offer the excuse of: ‘It’s just a blog, nothing more’. ‘Nothing more’, because it wasn’t very hard for me to post it online, and I’m experimenting with it. This interpretation, which is playful and has less personal implication than other ways of reaching the public, is perhaps the most interesting attribute of ‘author mode’: it avoids the clichés and canons of a Web presence and allows for a certain degree of exploration in communication, and lets risk flow in the contents posted.

In the practice of having a blog and maintaining it, many people have admitted that each new interest or idea has led them to divide themselves into multiple identities, with varying amounts of efforts to dissolve the affiliation among them.

There are many examples of artists who divide their Web presence into: a static, formal, institutional one with their own domain; and at least one more with their experiments on blogs and other social networks. In other cases, they maintain several blogs with different dynamics or types of contents. Many of these bifurcations are created with the intention of experimenting with another identity, based on an interest, fictional character, or *avatar*, that constitute hyper-textual aesthetic practices in and of themselves.

Collaborator mode: Facilitating access

The other profile we mentioned is ‘collaborator mode’, as exemplified by projects such as Escaner and Post-Urbano, where use is made of an online publishing interface that is a feature of Web 2.0 systems. These interfaces make it unnecessary to have a Web publisher (or the knowledge needed to use it), or an FTP client to post contents. These functions are included in an online publisher one accesses as a user, with a graphic interface that mainly shares conventions with Web mail.

It also intensifies the sensation of belonging to a community, from the name of the user who grants us access to building the content with the assistance of the publisher—no longer a human manager, who nonetheless may continue in the background, moderating, correcting, and banning.

On dialogue and its channels

For the great majority of bloggers, their main motive in writing is based on ‘personal satisfaction’ (19), and for many artists, it is based on the opportunity to ‘try out’ a sort of ‘public test version’ where others do not

20—As an example, Leticia El Halli Obeid (nuevamelusina) says, “Some time ago, I added a counter and discovered that there were regular visitors to the blog, which encouraged me to carry on with it. Many come from other blogs, sort of on a stroll, and in general they don’t leave any comments but later they write to me and tell me that they read it regularly. I love that and I do the same thing with several other blogs.”

21—Although a lot of artists post their own chats and e-mails on their blogs. See, for instance, <www.escuchamecuando.tehablo.blogspot.com/>. Between the recent articulation in blogs and social networks, some post and comments show up “publishing” private exchanges in Facebook. See: <www.producirinconsciente.blogspot.com/2009/02/necesito-vida-propia-comentarios-sobre.html>

22—See: “Datos personales de Inne” at <www.comuncieloestrellado.blogspot.com> as well as Manuel Frascaroli, “El fenómeno de los Weblogs: sus implicancias para las ediciones digitales de los diarios” at <www.liminar.com.ar/pdf05/frascaroli.pdf>, p. 3.

always leave a trace of their reading and avoid exposing their ideas and comments. This point comprises one of the major paradoxes of the language of blogging: one writes in an almost autistic dynamic, and yet one is encouraged (20) by the signs of others who read what one writes, who identify themselves and offer ideas. This dynamic prevails especially in projects classified under ‘alter egos’, and in general in those that use the Web in ‘author mode’.

Blogger and others: identity and authorship

Blogging, as a process limited to the reading of others’ posts and comments, is based on a temporary connection similar to that of forums or the exchange of email and chats (when they are not used for specific purposes), although, unlike blogging, they are related to the private sphere. (21) However, blogging is a way of communicating that possesses the contradictions inherent to the Internet: in that the broadcaster originally takes refuge in the suspicion that no one will read the blog, (22) but secretly hopes that others will make comments and interact with the special dynamics of digital identities.

The emphasis on authorship in blogs seems to be inversely related to the degree of personal implication of the contents: the more anonymous they are—behind an avatar or several nicknames—the more intimate is the material published. On ‘alter ego’ blogs, one often finds references to the reactions of the community of readers of a blog, in contrast to the mood of a blogger reflected by his or her posts. This feature is a legacy of the origin of the personal diary, which is created, explained, or fictionalized by its authors when they present themselves with their real identities.

On the other hand, on blogs that serve for documentation or info-activism purposes, the author withdraws behind quality, a demystifying analysis, or the speed of the information posted, but does so from a real identity: a prerequisite for credibility.

For both types of authors, there is always the threat that ‘nobody cares about your blog’: a variation of the apathetic reaction of the public at contemporary art spaces, which many of these experiments seek to emulate and reinvent.

The majority of blogs in this selection make use of the inherent opportunity for revision (and doubt, or the question that elicits readers’ comments) and the provisional, dialogue-based quality of this tool. Posts about comments and comments about what was read on another blog go beyond the logic of a personal diary: a blog is meant to be an informal, provisional place, a place for a chronicle: information in flow, its path marked by others’ comments.

Ergo: ‘post or perish’

The underlying dynamics of Web 2.0 are the ones upon which it was built: a need for frequently updated contents. Therefore, what was once a

23—See: <comuncielosstrellado.blogspot.com/2007/02/postear-o-morir.html>

24—See: <www.agenciacritica.net/criticaeek/archivo/2005/11/chachara.php>

25—Walter Benjamin via Eduardo Navas at “El blogger como productor”, Colectivo Troyano (ed.), *Instalando. Arte y cultura digital*, Santiago de Chile, 2007.

26—It is besides the point of this article to point out that strictly technical nature of the software behind the Web 2.0 are either free software (WordPress may be the most poignant example), or they are cemented on the code created for other specific cases—two central operations proposed by the SL movement. Also, the copyright policy over the contents of a blog under a server’s name (blogspot.com) is another of the main themes outside this text’s discussion. In both cases, I’d merely like to point out the fact that a technical form determines, or at least it orientates, the user’s ways, especially because the main users of these services get to their blogs without any computer experience.

27—See: <www.rieoei.org/deloslectores/639Vila.PDF> Eduardo Vila Merino, *Globalización, educación democrática y participación comunitaria*.

28—See: <http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kodak> and <http://wwwes.kodak.com/ES/es/corp/histo_6.shtml>

29—As Nato Thompson said on “Contributions to a Resistant Glossary of Visual Culture”, “We shouldn’t have the right to a qualified beauty without necessarily falling prey to the vultures in power who make money and gain prestige from it. This problem continually reappears. It is particularly serious for a generation that grew up during the rise of the cultural industry with an abundance of seductive images while we lack proper tools to separate the wheat from the chaff. This crisis of seduction is serious and other media as well: the cinema, television and music. As any parent who beat generation we are constantly wondering: who is profiting from my pleasure?” See: <www.liminar.com.ar>.

necessity becomes a requirement: ‘constant posting’, for the blogger, can turn into something akin to ‘producing new work’ for the artist: an imperative in their small world of reference.

However, the frequency and quality of these ‘entries’ on the sites in this selection vary. Each of them seems to have taken a stand on the matter (‘post or perish’, (23) ‘distrust of the motto: the faster, the better the communication’). These blogs have different scopes and a variety of degrees of openness to comments and readers’ interventions, sensing the cautionary note Brea gave in Chachara(24): that ‘lowering the level’ of access to the issuance of contents does not imply a lowering of the level of the contents.

Kodak and Blogger

Will the Web 2.0 turn authors into producers? (25) It seems hard to believe that by merely existing, a tool could dismantle the economy of the production and circulation of meaning. Its appropriation in terms of criticism, techniques (26) and communication strategies becomes essential; the responsibility of the artist: to make use of the relentless self-criticism of contemporary art.

The Utopias that arose in relation to the impact of ICTs on the art world have once again dissolved into institutional absorptions or under the ‘new censorship’ of *infocination*. (27)

Nonetheless, the blog phenomenon has parallels to that of Kodak making amateur photography possible with their slogan: ‘You press the button, we’ll do the rest’ (28): it dissolves complex knowledge into a compilation that is easy to use, that focuses attention on the content and its distribution. Photography itself is not exempt from the way flogger practices question it, extending its critical capacity to the universe of images.

If creation is dissolving into amateur practices and systems are gradually equipping *everyone* to issue and exchange our views of the world, then what value can online artistic practices have? Let’s return to the question at the beginning of this text: What role do contemporary artists play in this re-ordering of the ways knowledge is created and distributed? At first glance, it is the task of the professionals of symbolic production to dismantle the programmed use of blogs or any other tool, reveal their corporate motives (29) and explore, extend, force and question their communicational limits and efficacy, always willing to abandon them when they become affirmative and easily digestible.

appendix: notes on my blogroll (some of my favourite blogs are by artists)

realidades a virtualidades a realidades (realities to virtualities to realities) gathers projects that began and continue in real space, in relation to a specific work (interventions, exhibits, trips, etc.) or with groups of artists managing things independently. On Web 1.0 they would be institutional

web sites, but the blog format transforms them, perhaps because the news is necessarily ephemeral. They find a different kind of feedback on blogs than in the ‘real world’, perhaps because virtual comments are different from comments made ‘live’, or because visitors come who do not know the real documented referent.

Blogs, especially for self-managed art spaces, grant visibility and an accessible documentary source (in some cases, that is their purpose [*Propósito*]), that could redefine the future writing of art criticism and art history (due to the archives generated, in the case of the journal *Escaner*), especially in these latitudes, which suffer from a systematic lack of documentation.

alter-egos

One artist, various digital identities. Those artists who did not initiate their link to the Web by blogging, came to Web 2.0 attracted by the social phenomenon of its use, its immediacy, simultaneous multiplicity, and the possibility of taking up not necessarily ‘artistic practices’, different from the discipline they were trained in or their regular practice outside the web (*visual* artists who write, or *compile music*).

In some entries, they barely move away from ratifying the myth of the artist (the character: a ‘free’ subjectivity). In others—it is especially moving with artists I know personally—they reveal multiple personalities, private (but timidly made public). Personalities we would never get to know without the blog interface. *Nomádes*, simultaneous, fragmented, artistic practices on 2.0 territory, open havens (“Daddy, I want to be an artist”) and also potential collective fictions.

Blogs have—for now—the virtue of keeping the artist from clinging to the most self-promoting and functional part of his or her subjectivity to the art world, given that “it’s just a blog”.

info-activism

Are artists concerned about taking part in reality, in some aspects of it?

Info-activist projects use Web 2.0 to communicate their reading of reality, in their artistic medium, as a critical text, or as a documentary repository for their DIY (do it yourself) actions.

The axis is the quality of information, or their particular reading of it, different from what is circulated massively. The majority of the authors involved are diffusely linked to the world of art, and generally avoid the resource of ‘post-experiment’ in favour of more inclusive communication. Some of them (El Colectivo, G2G and Nómade) are collective projects, where authorship of the contents is dissolved on the technical platform, focusing once again on the content and its communicational effects more than the performance of its issuer.

30—See a failed example of that migration at <http://nomade.liminar.com.ar/wakka.php?wakka=BetaTest>, and its former version.

virtual design

Web 2.0 is driven by the fact that it provides the technical support to those who know how to handle the contents but not Web publication tools. When artists' projects are concerned about authorship and how to enhance networks that work slowly or precariously, then they turn to tools such as wikis (30) or publication platforms for many collaborators. That is what happened over the evolution of Escaner Cultural, or the choice made by post-urbano (set up on Google Maps), Nómade or G2G, which are also projects focused on collaborative construction or the decentralized distribution of information. They become networks, where the original driving force is dissolved in the rhizomatic growth of its collaborators and readers-commentators.

Curt Cloninger

*Commodify Your Consumption:
Tactical Surfing / Wakes of Resistance*

University of North Carolina, Asheville

1—Some active surf clubs as of February 2009: <www.spiritsurfers.net> <www.loshadka.org/wp> <<http://doublehappiness.ilikenicethings.com>> <www.supercentral.org>

2—David Garcia and Geert Lovink popularized the term ‘tactical media’ in their 1997 article “The ABC of Tactical Media” (See: <http://subsol.c3.hu/subsol_2/contributors2/garcia-lovinktext.html>), in which they ‘poach’ their understanding of ‘tactics’ from De Certeau.

3—Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1984, p. 66.

4—*Ibid.*, p. 38.

Applying a theory to a practice not only illuminates the practice; it opens up new ways of understanding the theory. Here I want to apply Michel de Certeau’s seminal text *The Practice of Everyday Life* to the contemporary practice of ‘artistic surfing’ in the hopes of broadening an understanding of both. What I’m calling ‘artistic surfing’ (aka ‘surf clubbing,’ ‘spirit surfing’) takes its inspiration from group blogging, particularly anonymous group photoblogs like 4chan.org. Internet ‘surf clubs’ are basically invitation-only group photoblogs where artists surf the internet intuitively and obliquely, collect detritus (predominantly from commercial sites and social networking sites), recontextualize it via bricolage, titling, and Photoshop remixing, and post it at the surf club’s blog where it is often further recontextualized and reposted. (1)

The Practice of Everyday Life proves very useful in analyzing this mode of artistic surfing. Internet surfing is basically a hybrid of reading and walking, practices that *The Practice of Everyday Life* explores in detail. In order to properly apply de Certeau to artistic surfing, I will have to recoup him (or at least borrow him) from the cadre of ‘tactical media’ artists and theorists who have claimed him as their patron saint since 1997. (2) In the process of my analysis, I will propose a gradual continuum between production and consumption, discuss the differences between ‘deep’ net art and ‘surface’ net art, pragmatically redefine ‘resistance’, and explore some ways that tactical consumption might be intensified in order to efficaciously modulate the network and the world.

A Production / Consumption Continuum

In 1980, de Certeau observed that academics analyzed media either in terms of its content (‘information’) or in terms of its delivery mechanisms (‘television’ in his era, ‘networks’ in our era). What was lacking was a way to talk about the creative ‘reception/consumption/use’ happening at the consumer end of the line—how were the ‘users/consumers’ modulating institutional input in the practice of their lives? They weren’t merely passive receivers. In de Certeau’s words, “To assume that [the public is moulded by the products imposed on it] is to misunderstand the act of ‘consumption.’ This misunderstanding assumes that ‘assimilating’ necessarily means ‘becoming similar to’ what one absorbs, and not ‘making something similar’ to what one is, making it one’s own, appropriating or reappropriating it.” (3)

De Certeau described an implicit dichotomy between production and consumption. On the production side were strategic institutions that had power, financial resources, and an established physical base of operations. On the consumption side were tactical users/consumers who lacked power but were more mobile than institutions. “A tactic is determined by the *absence of power* just as a strategy is organized by the postulation of power.” (4)

Into the midst of this dichotomy, the Web introduces a problematic entity—the hobbyist user. The hobbyist user (aka *prosumer*, surfer, social networked netizen) doesn’t have the productive agency of an institutional corporation, but she has more productive agency than de Certeau’s

5—Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction: Culture As Screenplay. How Art Reprograms the World*, Lukas & Sternberg, New York, 2000, p. 4.

6—Nato Thompson, “Contributions to a Resistant Visual Culture Glossary”, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Protest* 1, no. 3 (2004). See: <<http://journalofaestheticsandprotest.org/3/thompson.htm>>

7—See Anne-Marie Schleiner, “Fluidities and Oppositions among Curators, Filter Feeders, and Future Artists”, *Intelligent Agent* 3, no. 1, Winter/Spring 2003. See: <www.intelligentagent.com/archive/Vol3_No1_curation_schleiner.html>

original television viewer. She can't produce Hollywood movies, but she can upload YouTube videos.

As early as 2000, Pierre Bourriaud wrote, “There is (fertile) static on the borders between consumption and production that can be perceived well beyond the borders of art.” (5) Four years later Nato Thompson argued, “The dependence on these two terms [strategies vs. tactics] seems to create a barren but much needed middle ground. Instead of a polarizing dichotomy, maybe it would be more useful to consider these terms as the two poles of resistant aesthetics. That is to say that a project vacillates in its relationship to power from tactics to strategies. While owning the dominant system may feel impossible, it feels more than a little slackerish to depend on defeat.” (6)

I here take up their challenge and pose a cursory continuum, ranging from strategic production to tactical consumption.

- 1. *Producer* (tied to ‘spatial or institutional location’, production of physical objects) [abstract expressionist artist as hero]
- 2. *Protester* (opposes corporate production, but in a way that produces its own form of spectacle) [overtly ‘political’ ‘70s art]
- 3. *‘Tactical Media’ Artist* (ephemeral actions, but still ends up in galleries and art history books) [Critical Art Ensemble]
- 4. *Remix Artist* (perpetually remixes media as a talisman against being commodified) [D.J. Spooky]
- 5. *Artistic Web Surfer* (reconstitutes found source material as the trace of a surfed path through the Web) [surf clubs, MySpace video remixers, 4chan users, ‘filter feeder’ link list curators] (7)
- 6. *Theorist* (poaches source material from language and remixes it in the form of ideas, attributes sources in order to give props and leave bread crumbs) [Talmudic commentators, scholarly researchers, Deleuze creating new ‘ideas’ from Spinozan and Nietzschean source material]
- 7. *Anarchist Drifter* (purposefully wanders in order to reconstitute space, often just for herself) [Hakim Bey’s “Temporary Autonomous Zone”, Debord’s derive, Baudelaire’s *flâneur*]
- 8. *de Certeauian User/Consumer* (watches television, reads books, walks around, and personally reconstitutes the meaning of the one-to-many streams of media broadcast at her) [all humans who watch, read, walk, cook, and live; the majority of whom are *not* artists]

Note that, according to this continuum, artistic surfers are actually operating closer to what de Certeau originally means by ‘tactical use’ than many ‘tactical media’ artists are. This is because ‘tactical media’ artists have never really been ‘consumers.’ By and large they use de Certeau’s analysis of writing and walking (and cooking and living) as a kind of metaphor for more overt forms of subversive action (denial of service attacks on hardware or genetic mutations of wetware). In conjunction with the art institutions that feature such ‘tactical media’ work, these actions can be considered (admittedly weak) forms of institutional strategic production. Whereas artistic Web surfers are actually reading and wandering (they let their fingers do the drifting, so to speak).

8—De Certeau, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

9—A cynical extreme of this position was expressed by Julian Stallabras in 2003: “It can hardly be expected that people crippled in other walks of life by mass-media trivialisation and the instrumentality of work will be able to slough off such ingrained influences and so realise rational discourse online.” (*Internet Art: The Online Clash of Culture and Commerce*, Tate Publishing, London, 2003, p. 67.) I’m not sure that “rational online discourse” is necessarily the ideal goal, but his point is duly noted. Spurse co-founder Iain Kerr says that every time he goes on a derive, he always winds up at a book store. His revolutionary epiphany: he has been conditioned to buy books.

10—“[Interaction] corresponds to a networked model of control... Many today say that new media technologies are ushering in a new era of enhanced freedom and that technologies of control are waning. We say, on the contrary, that *double the communication leads to double the control.*” (Alexander R. Galloway and Eugene Thacker, *The Exploit: A Theory of Networks*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2007, p. 124.) Put more acidically, “Since democracy means having more consumer choices, and information technology will vastly increase the power of our channel changers, hey, presto! More democracy!” (Thomas Frank, “The New Gilded Age”, *Commodify Your Dissent: Salvos from The Baffler*, Norton, New York, 1997, p. 28).

De Certeau’s analysis of reading fits naturally when applied to practices of artistic surfing: “[Consumers are] unrecognized producers, poets of their own affairs, trailblazers in the jungles of functionalist rationality... They trace ‘indeterminate trajectories’ that are apparently meaningless, since they do not cohere with the constructed, written, and prefabricated space through which they move.” (8) Replace ‘consumer’ with ‘artistic Web surfer’ and the sentence seems as if it were written in 2008.

This weaker tactical position is neither inherently better or inherently worse (it’s better in some ways and worse in others). My point is that the dichotomy between strategic production and tactical consumption is more fruitfully understood as a continuum with middle ground.

Institutional Production of the ‘Interactive Subject’

The problem is, not all forms of Web 2.0 ‘interactivity’ are inherently ‘tactical’. Put another way, mere ‘use’ does not automatically constitute ‘resistance’.

Is using off-the-shelf corporate software to create a ‘unique/personal’ MySpace page a way of subverting the institutions of mass media production, or is it simply one more example of these institutions using the myth of ‘originality’ to assimilate and amass a demographic market of ‘unique’ individuals? Artists who use these templates have to be particularly wily if they hope to keep from being assimilated and rendered ‘tactically’ impotent.

How do you hack/resist a platform that already allows (indeed, invites) you to customize it? Either we have arrived at an open source utopia and we simply need to keep using these social networking tools appreciatively in the ways that they afford; or the agency of our radical ‘resistance’ has been rendered irrelevant because the corporations have decided to let the people eat cake (provided we eat their particular brand of interactive cake).

The agency that de Certeau’s consumer enacted to tactically reassemble the one-to-many media broadcasted to her in 1980 is being increasingly usurped by institutionally recommended (and protocologically enforced) modes of interactive behavior. Once the consumer mistakes these institutional ‘suggestions’ for the exercises of her own tactical agency, she fails to exercise that actual agency. With so many ‘customizable options’ available, how can she ‘resist?’ (9)

In a fleeting moment of insight, Billy Joel sings, “I got remote control and a color TV / I don’t change channels so they must change me.” The corollary may actually be more accurate. (10) The more I change channels, the more they change me. I sacrifice my ‘resistant’ agency at the altar of trivial difference. The danger of MySpace and YouTube is not the threat that they may wind up archiving and owning all the ‘content’ I produce, or that they are currently getting rich off the content I produce, but that they control the parameters within which I produce ‘my original’ content.

11—"There is really no need in this day and age to create imagery anymore because you can find anything online." (Petra Cortright quoting Oliver Laric. Hear the mp3: <http://rhizome.org/events/net_aesthetics>

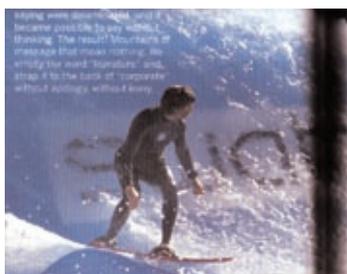
12—Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control", *OCTOBER* 59, Winter 1992, pp. 3-7. See: <www.n5m.org/n5m2/media/texts/deleuze.htm>

13—There are plenty of early net artists who have always worked at a surface level. Heath Bunting's "Own, Be Owned, or Remain Invisible" (See: <www.irational.org/heath/_readme.html>) is a classic example of early surface net art.

14—Although 'Web 2.0' tools facilitate current artistic surfing practices, I resist the label 'net.art 2.0' because it suggests a kind of planned obsolescence, as if it were time for a 'refreshing new trend' in net art. This is a convenient way to market new artists to old galleries, but not very historically accurate. If contemporary net art must be saddled with an 'x.0' moniker, we should at least be up to 3.0 by now.

15—See: <<http://potatoland.org/shredder>>

16—See: <<http://oliverlaric.com/5050.htm>>



+ F1—Surfing the branded surface. From Bruce Mau, *Life Style*, Phaidon, London, 2000, pp. 364-5.

'Production' turns out to be an amorphous term. It begs the question "production of what?" Now that 'consumers' have become 'content producers,' we should be asking ourselves, who are the meta-producers? Who produces the contexts surrounding 'creative' *prosumer* production? Who produces the tools that suggest the proper 'way' in which amateurs are to produce? These meta-producers are no longer producing 'content.' Or rather, their 'content' is the production of an 'interactive' human subject—a subject who feels autonomous, empowered, and creative; but who may have difficulty enacting any pragmatic agency. This transition from spectacularized consumption to spectacularized production is insidious.

The placebo effect of Web 2.0 'empowerment' is at least as problematic as the original one-to-many TV effect of disenfranchisement. At least in 1980 there was a suspicion that something needed to be resisted.

Deep Net Art and Surface Net Art

I want to propose another continuum that is related to the production/consumption continuum, but not an exact mirror of it. Deep net art is net art made by programmers/coders/hackers who attempt to modulate the network by opening up its hood and tweaking it down toward its protocological core. Surface net art is net art made by artistic net surfers who attempt to modulate the network by staying on the surface of the network and tweaking in amongst the images, animations, videos, human languages, and other readymade media that travel across its surface. (11)

+F1

In 1990, Gilles Deleuze wrote that "societies of control operate with... computers, whose passive danger is jamming and whose active one is piracy or the introduction of viruses." (12) According to this model, surface net art can be considered a kind of passive culture jamming that occurs at the level of uttered human language, and deep net art can be understood as the active viral piracy that occurs at a machine code level.

In general, early net artists were more concerned with code than contemporary net artists are (this is an oversimplification). (13) Contemporary net artists have a lot of online tools, templates, and content already developed for them, so they can afford to be less concerned with code and content production. YouTube and MySpace aren't radical in their underlying architecture; they are radical in their mass popularity and ease of use. (14)

Compare an earlier net art piece like Mark Napier's *Shredder* (15) with a contemporary net art piece like Oliver Laric's *50 50*. (16) Both pieces 'remix' online media, but Napier's remix happens at a deep level. He's under the hood of the browser itself (although not exactly at the level of TCP/IP network routers). Laric's piece happens at a surface level. It's really a video piece. It need not be viewed online. It qualifies as net art simply because it takes its content from YouTube and conceptually examines YouTube culture. It is art 'about' net culture.

17—Op. cit., p. 31.

18—I am admittedly hijacking and mangling Kevin Bewersdorf's strict definition of 'wake'. According Bewersdorf, a mere link list probably doesn't qualify as a wake, and a found animated gif posted on a group photoblog will more likely be a combination of 'boon' and 'frame'. See Bewersdorf, "Spirit Surfing," 2008. <www.maximumsorrow.com/writing/spiritsurfing.html>

19—See Curt Cloninger's 2002 "traffic-report" project (<<http://www.lab404.com/data/>>) which displays the browser histories and referrer logs of participating artists, designers, and writers within a twenty-four hour period.



+ F2—Screenshot of *Shredder*, 1998 (Mark Napier)



+ F3, F4—Stills from *50 50*, 2007 (Oliver Laric)



+ F5—Screenshot of *Victory Wreath*, 2009, animated gif (INFOpruner). See: <www.spiritsurfers.net/monastery/?p=903>

+F2, +F3, +F4

When I say 'deep' and 'surface,' I don't mean that one is better and the other worse. I'm just describing a level of technical engagement. Both of the above pieces are conceptual, and both pieces are formal. By engaging at a deep level, Napier's piece conceptually problematizes the myth of 'form vs. content.' By engaging at a surface level, Laric's piece conceptually problematizes the myth of 'unique identity via subculture participation.' The concepts are different, and the formal aesthetics are different; but that doesn't mean that one piece is completely conceptual and the other piece is completely formal. Different methods of artistic production lead to different conceptual and aesthetic outcomes.

The Wake: Strong Consumption as Weak Production

Once the images broadcast by television and the time spent in front of the TV set have been analyzed, it remains to be asked what the consumer makes of these images and during these hours. (17)

[Michel DE CERTEAU]

Unlike watching television, artistic surfing literally *makes* something out of time spent surfing (whether link lists, found object bricolage galleries, or surface modulated media). These traces or 'wakes' (18) are then turned back out onto the Web for others to see. In this sense, artistic Web surfing is like reading on steroids—it is a kind of reading that leaves a trace which can itself be read. Even prior to 'artistic surfing', a browser's history retained a wake of the surfer's movements through the Web. This wake could be exported as an HTML document and posted back onto the Web. (19) Delicious bookmarking simply makes such wake externalization easier, taxonomical, and more user-curated. Surf clubs like Spirit Surfers exercise an even stronger form of consumption. Surfers post not only their 'wakes' (bread crumbs and field notes from their surfing excursions in the form of relevant source material), but also their 'boons' (remixed and/or recontextualized 'booty'—found digital objects, conceptual tropes, and bricolaged nuggets that are the 'product' of such surfing excursions). This form of strong consumption (artistic Web surfing) results in forms of weak production (a surf club post, a YouTube remix, a delicious bookmark list).

+F5

This externalization of the artist's internal, subjective derive modulates the existing Web dataspace. The Web (or at least those microcosmic sections of the Web located at surf club URLs and delicious.com) is modulated from an undigested, pre-surfed commercial space into a newly modified, post-surfed, modulated space—a space that has been put to 'tactical use'. Technically, artistic Web surfing is hardly a radical practice. Anybody posting a link from their weblog is 'technically' doing almost the same thing. The 'art' of this practice is in qualitative meme modulation rather than deep level technical skills. As with academic research, success depends on the particular sources you choose and the ways in which you choose to contextualize them—creation via selection, compilation, and enframing.

20—This observation is a slight modulation of De Certeau's modulation of Kant's analogy of the tightrope walker. See *op. cit.*, pp. 73, 79.

21—*Ibid.*, p. 170.

22—Vannevar Bush, "As We May Think," *The Atlantic*, (July 1945). URL: <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/194507/bush>

23—See <http://www.shiftspace.org>

Enacting a Way, Not Producing an Object

The associative connections we make between the discrete pieces of media we receive every day exert a kind of 'in-between' agency. Internalized, these associative connections contextualize and thus control a large portion of our personal experience. Externalized and distributed (commodified), they may begin to exert a similar liminal agency, one less co-optable by institutions. These associative connections are not merely autonomous, idiosyncratic, and subjective. Instead, they negotiate an ongoing equilibrium between received media form and exerted consumer will. Like tightrope walking, these associative connections enact and maintain a perpetually negotiated balance of meaning within a system that includes the tightrope walker herself as part of the equation. (20) These thinking, reading, surfing, poaching, associative connections operate as de Certeauian tactics.

Ultimately, the 'products' of artistic surfing are not simply discrete pieces of media. Instead, any instantiated results are best understood as traces or wakes produced by the movement of the artist over the surface of the Web. These enacted wakes may then begin to resonate sympathetically with other surfers moving along the Web surface in similar ways. These externalized associative connections transmit tactics of becoming to those who have ears to hear, transmissions that are difficult to decipher by the corporate radar. These externalized wakes produce something not so much 'resistant' as simply ulterior. They enact and celebrate the joy of surfing itself, of making connections, of thinking at all.

Here again, de Certeau's description of the act of reading is readily applicable to the act of artistic surfing. He says that reading consists of all sorts of "detours, drifts across the page, metamorphoses and anamorphoses of the text produced by the travelling eye, imaginary or meditative flights taking off from a few words, overlapping of spaces on the military organized surfaces of the text, and ephemeral dances." (21)

In his watershed 1945 article "As We May Think", Vannevar Bush envisioned a personal computer capable of constructing 'memex paths'. (22) These paths were trails that a researcher took through data, with particular associative connections permanently archived and taxonomized by the researcher. Its contemporary equivalent might be a something like a wiki or ShiftSpace where the researcher can add her own hyperlinked associations between discrete pieces of data, meta-tag these associations, and then save the entire thread/derive/wake/path. (23) Bush prophetically envisioned that these paths could then be linked by the researcher to other related paths, and that these meta-webs of micro-paths could be shared with other researchers. I could link into your memex paths and you could link into mine. As Ted Nelson has lamented, thus far the Web has only realized a fraction of Bush's more robust vision for memex path functionality.

In the context of artistic surfing, Bush is important because he introduces the concept that a kind of knowledge can be transferred from one person to another (or from the same person to herself years later) not simply by aggregating discrete content, but by exteriorizing the paths that a person

takes through discrete content. Bush’s proposed memex paths are a kind of enacted, vectorial knowing—a knowing that modulates through and is modulated by ‘content’, but that is itself ‘contentless’ and not synonymous with content. Think of surf club threads as Dadaist memex paths on lo-res absinthe.

Rag & Bone

*Can’t you hear us yelling ‘rag and bone’?
Bring out your junk and we’ll give it a home
A broken trumpet or a telephone
C’mon and give it to me*

[The White Stripes]

Associative connections are impossible to make without some form of source content to connect, and the content of most artistic surfing is surface Web junk. This is not to say that artistic surfing is *about* junk, but that that it is enacted *on/in/through* junk. Artistic surfers begin with (apparently) banal visual content so that any clever visual pun or trope they make seems all the more clever, because the subject matter itself is so (apparently) crappy. This move (selecting and modulating junk) foregrounds ways of reading rather than what is being read.

Selecting corporate detritus (along with banal, *prosumer*/hobbyist detritus) foregrounds the spaces in between the content rather than the content itself, but it also has a particular embodied affect, since all matter (even a badly animated gif) matters. I will take a cue from Kevin Bewersdorf (24) and compare surf clubs to Joseph Cornell’s boxes, but in order to reveal differences rather than similarities. Cornell’s boxes are simultaneously melancholy and wondrous because they extract objects from their used, embodied, immanent, material, historical contexts and suspend them in an idiosyncratic, museological ether. Cornell’s boxes reveal and enshroud the historical project of the enlightenment gone melancholically awry. Whereas surf club posts expose a kind of modernist cultural amnesia—a perpetual, blanking reset where thing after thing after thing is endlessly culled from the churning corporate well of an eternal now[here]. Unlike Cornell’s boxes, the ‘objects’ bricolaged in surf club posts are immaterial, appropriated not from the corner antique store, but from the corporate ether. As a result, I find a lot of surf club ‘work’ not so much pathos-inducing as ‘pathetic’ (and not necessarily in a derogatory sense). It feels kind of like gleeful children making absurd sculptures out of strewn body parts in a land-mined field that they have always known, a field inherited from a war they can’t remember. All very post-Dada. If Cornell’s work enacts the slippages of memory; then artistic surfing enacts the manic, doomed attempt to manufacture any kind of memory at all in the fluorescent light of an eternally modern present.

This fetishistic fascination with junk has its promising aspects and its dangerous pitfalls. When done well, this kind of surfing plunges into the stream of corporate detritus, inflecting and modulating it from within (it tactically enacts and externalizes ways of connecting). When done poorly, this kind of surfing lapses into a kind of banal wallowing whose

25—Quoted by Gary Groth in “A Dream of Perfect Reception: The Movies of Quentin Tarantino”, *Commodify Your Dissent*, p. 183.

26—In de Certeau’s original context, “these practices” are “tales, stories, poems, and treatises”. *Op. cit.*, p. 80.

27—*Ibid.*, pp. 37-8.

28—Joshua Decter, “Haim Steinbach (interview, pt. 1)”, *Journal of Contemporary Art* 5, no. 2, 1992, p. 115. Quoted in Peter Schwenger, *The Tears of Things: Melancholy and Physical Objects*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2006, p. 135.

29—Quoted in Bruce Hainey, “Haim Steinbach: Sonnabend Gallery, New York”, *Artforum* 46, no. 4, December 2000, p. 339.



+ F6—*One Minute Managers V.2*, 1990. Two plastic laminated wooden shelves, aluminum alloy stock pots, leather medicine balls (Haim Steinbach)



+ F7—*Supremely black*, 1985. Wood formica, ceramic pitchers, cardboard detergent boxes (Haim Steinbach)

wakes are no more transformative than the original detritus through which they move (it simply becomes about a fetishistic love of junk). As George Santayana wryly observes, “Americans love junk; it’s not the junk that bothers me, it’s the love.” (25)

The ‘resistant political value’ of well-done artistic surfing is that it enacts, externalizes, and virally propagates a ‘tactical’ way of moving through corporate culture. As I read these externalized readings (surf club threads, YouTube remixes), I don’t just read ‘about’ their source content, or even ‘about’ how they operate; I am compelled (or at least invited) to ‘re-enact’ their operation—to read them in the same way they themselves have read. To poach de Certeau, “[These practices] say exactly what they do. They constitute an act which they intend to mean.” (26)

Things Speaking To Each Other

A tactic boldly juxtaposes diverse elements in order suddenly to produce a flash shedding a different light on the language of a place and to strike the hearer. (27)

[Michel DE CERTEAU]

Artistic surfing, like conceptual art and stand-up comedy, relies on placing just the right elements in just the right context with just the right inflection at just the right time. It is an art of economy. In this respect, the analog patron saint of artistic surfing may not be Duchamp in his readymade phase (since he was dealing with discrete singular objects in the context of institutional critique), or Joseph Cornell (since he was dealing with memory and the archive), but Haim Steinbach and his curious object ensembles.

+F6, +F7

Steinbach claims that objects “have functions for us that are not unlike language.” (28) Unlike the object ensembles of Fred Wilson or Mark Dion, Steinbach’s objects are not stand-in signifiers for abstract signifieds (colonialism, consumption, New England history, etc.). Instead, because of the strangely purposeful/purposefully strange way Steinbach selects, arranges, displays, and labels them, his objects begin to resonate with each other (to ‘speak to’ each other) in a way that implies a disontological syntax of embodied sympathies. This syntax has something to do with the physical characteristics of the objects (color, surface material, weight, reflectivity) and something to do with their cultural history (what they are actually used for, what era they connote), but it is not simply a composite of these two components. In some sense, their syntax happens in addition to them. This implicit disontological syntax is also governed by the way the objects are positionally in the world in relation to each other. Steinbach’s rigorously constructed shelves and their precise placement on the wall are as much a part of his work as the objects themselves. Fellow sculptor Lisa Lapinski argues, “The shelf works are fractions: the things in the world divided by the minimalist object.” (29)

All objects in the world are probably related to each other in a similar way, but we humans aren’t used to perceiving these irreducible relationships

30—*Ibid.*

31—De Certeau, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

32—Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control”, *October*, 59, Winter 1992, MIT Press, Cambridge (Massachusetts).

33—Jeffrey T. Nealon, *Foucault Beyond Foucault: Power and Its Intensifications Since 1984*, Stanford University Press, Stanford (California), 2008, p. 110.



+ F8—*Magic Cards and Butterflies* [screenshot, rotated counter-clockwise], 1985, (INFOpruner). URL: <http://www.spiritsurfers.net/monastery/?p=887>

(and the objects themselves feel no obligation to disclose them to our ontological ‘minds’). The genius of Steinbach’s installations is that they begin to hint at this mysterious embodied syntax that might exist amongst all objects. Whether and in what form this syntax of objects actually exists is ultimately unverifiable, but the mere suggestion of its existence is disontologically thrilling. Art critic Bruce Hailey succinctly and poetically summarizes Steinbach’s work: “Wittgenstein begins *Philosophical Investigations* by quoting Augustine’s *Confessions* on the naming of objects. Steinbach pulls his quotations directly from the world; his confessions deranged in glorious 3-D approach the unnameable.” (30)

Although ‘found’ online ‘objects’ are immaterial, their forms can be serialized and juxtaposed so that they take on a sculptural quality. Like Steinbach’s physical objects, these immaterial ‘things’ also begin speaking to each other. Such dialogue is not surprising. Language may be ‘immaterial’, but it is still an immanent force in the world (like electricity or gravity).

+F8

At its best, surf club bricolage is more than merely a series of inside jokes amongst a select group of net.junk aficionados, but something more akin to the minimal conceptualism (or conceptual minimalism) of Steinbach.

The ‘art’ of such ensembles is largely in their enframing. Here again, de Certeau is applicable: “This [tactical] response is *singular*. Within the ensemble in which it occurs, it is merely *one more detail*—an action, a word—so well-placed as to reverse the situation.” (31) The discrete ‘things’ themselves will never look like much. They are by definition unspectacular. This is why their enframing has to be particularly deft and clever.

Resistance is futile (or how I learned to stop kicking against the pricks)

There is no need to fear or hope, but only to look for new weapons. (32)

[Gilles DELEUZE]

Whenever anyone starts playfully remixing corporate junk, the ethical question inevitable arises, “How is such work *resistant*?” This question implicitly accuses the work of one or more cardinal sins: pragmatic impotence, ‘political’ disengagement, intellectual wankery, regressive formalism, ‘personal’ inauthenticity, and getting duped by the institutional strategies that all artwork is obliged to ‘resist’ (Jeffrey Nealon argues that “resistance implies or necessitates a kind of totalized, normative, repressive enemy and/or a kind of authenticity of subversive response.”) (33) The easy answer to this challenge is a familiar one: “This art is not political.” But if (following Bruno Latour) we define politics as matters of public concern that gather around ‘things’ (rivers, bridges, weather systems, laboratory equipment, buildings, food, networks, images, and yes, even pixels), then all art work is inherently political.

Rather than simply dodge the question, “How is artistic surfing *resistant*?”, I want to question the implicit assumption that *resistance* is always the best tool for the job.

34—*Ibid.*, p. 98.

35—Alexander R. Galloway and Eugene Thacker, *The Exploit: A Theory of Networks*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2007, p. 80.

36—At least as Jeffrey Nealon interprets Foucault. See Nealon, *Foucault Beyond Foucault*, p. 105.

37—*Ibid.*

38—Geert Lovink, “Isubmit, Youprofile, WeRank: Deconstructing the Web 2.0 Hype,” *New Art Dynamics in Web 2 Mode: First Inclusiva-net Meeting* (Madrid, July 2007), 29. See: <http://medialab-prado.es/article/documentacion_-_1_encuentro_inclusiva-net>

Resistance is Reactionary

By definition, one problem with resistance is that it is reactionary. As institutional strategies shift from the production of objects to the production of ‘interactive subjects’ resistance is forced to shift inversely. Eventually, institutions begin to anticipate these resistant reactions and incorporate them into their proactive strategies. Rather than playing this incessant game of cat and mouse with the corporations, why not choose a ‘proactive’ political goal not defined by negation?

Resistance is already everywhere

Power is nothing other than what it does (34)

[Jeffrey NEALON]

Life-resistance is nothing more than the act of living (35)

[Alex GALLOWAY and Eugene THACKER]

Another problem with the idea of ‘resistance’ in and of itself as a radical art move is that resistance is already everywhere. Domination and resistance are both forms of power, and power is always omnipresent. (36) Jeffrey Nealon asks, “Resistance to *what*... We can hardly position ourselves ‘against’ power, wealth, and truth itself in any kind of wholesale way insofar as any kind of effective critique will have to work toward redeploying those very resources of power, truth and/or wealth.” (37) Likewise, Geert Lovink asks, “Is it possible for tactical media makers, activists and artists... to take an amoral position and see control as an environment one can navigate through instead of merely condemn it as a tool in the hands of authorities?” (38)

By definition, anyone Web surfing (or reading, walking, cooking, living) is already ‘resisting’ (in some form, however weak) imposed institutional strategies of production. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau doesn’t radically call for resistant forms of tactical consumption to be invented from scratch. Instead, he radically illuminates how forms of tactical consumption have always existed.

Resistance is dead.

Long live the emergent virtual

Henri Bergson’s concept of ‘the virtual’ continues to supersede the concept of ‘political resistance’ as a contemporary ethical goal of artistic production (at least in those circles where artists still feel the need to maintain some sort of ethical goal). If the goal of ‘political resistance’ is to stick it to the man, then the goal of ‘the emergent virtual’ might be to modulate and inflect both ourselves and ‘the man’ until these binary dichotomies are tweaked into something heretofore unknown (beyond mere dialectical resolution or synthetic hybridization, since those two things are already known). This ‘heretofore unknown’ is what Bergson calls ‘the virtual.’ Will the virtual be better or worse than where we are now? We can’t know from here, since by definition, the virtual is heretofore unknown. The pursuit of the virtual thus involves a risk and a wager (as all art good art should).

39—McKenzie Wark, *A Hacker Manifesto*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Massachusetts), 2004.

40—Alexander R. Galloway and Eugene Thacker, *The Exploit*, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-4.

41—Eddo Stern paraphrased by Steve Dietz, “Why Have There Been No Great Net Artists,” 1999. See: <www.afsnip.dk/onoff/Texts/dietzwhyhavether.html>



+ F9—Screenshot from *My Favorite Things*, 1959/2009, Oscar Hammerstein + Google. (A series of separate Google Image searches constructed from the lyrics of the song “My Favorite Things”. This particular screenshot is from a search for “brown paper packages tied up with strings.”) Meta-URL: <http://rhizome.org/discuss/view/41769>

McKenzie Wark explains, “History is the virtual... made actual... The virtual is not just the potential latent in matter, it is the potential of potential.” (39) Galloway and Thacker observe, “The nonbeing of the present moment is by far the hardest thing to imagine... What is it... that hasn’t happened, and how could it ever be achieved?” (40)

Playing the Whole Network Surface as an Instrument

The net as a whole [is] more interesting than any individual art project (41)

[Eddo STERN]

I want to return to the practice of artistic surfing (now even more broadly imagined) and explore an additional tactic that might result in an actualization of the virtual. Instead of surfing the entire network and posting the results of your surfing sessions on a single, discrete, compartmentalized (albeit ‘socially networked’) platform; I propose the purposeful and systematic dispersion of your wake across multiple nodes of the network via multiple accounts on multiple social networking platforms (multiple private URLs, group photoblogs, Delicious, Flickr, Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Tumblr, etc). The goal is to make the scope of your wake wider than the scope of your personal surfing excursions.

Begin simply, by ‘playing’ Google Image Search (<http://images.google.com/>) as an improvisational instrument. Construct Boolean search queries that auto-bricolage revelatory results. Post these Boolean searches as links throughout the entire network and title them as if they were works of art. Every time someone clicks on your link, they will automatically ‘perform’ a Google search that you have ‘conducted’. The results will vary from week to week depending on Google’s image ranking algorithms and other network activity. This tactic produces a very shallow wake, but since these Google Image search ‘pieces’ are so low bandwidth (they are simply text links), they are easily dispersed. You could even write them on pieces of paper and hand them out at the mall. This type of work is similar to Cagean or Fluxus performance instructions. It is as much about language and utterance as it is about ‘found digital objects’.

+F9

If you are going to play the entire network as an instrument, you will eventually want to control the search results that people see when they type in targeted words that you choose to hijack. Select a word you want to hijack at Google Image Search and begin propagating your own selected images throughout the network, taxonomically associating them with the word you have chosen (via XML tags, meta-tags, URLs, descriptive body text, file and folder names, associative linking, etc.) Initially, you will need a small army of collaborators to help jump-start this dispersal. Offline performances, gallery installations, and promotional publicity stunts should also be enacted in order to generate more press for your meme. Press about these enacted historical events will be fed back into Google, further propagating your meme. Once your image/word meme reaches critical viral mass, you won’t be able to stop people from dispersing and modulating your images.

42—Alexander R. Galloway and Eugene Thacker, *The Exploit*, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

43—Paul Virilio, “Infowar,” *Ars Electronica*, Timothy Druckery (ed.), MIT Press, Cambridge (Massachusetts), 1999, p. 334.

In 1996, eToy’s Digital Hijack achieved something similar by hijacking searches for popular words at search engines, gaining high rankings for those words, and linking people who searched for those words to their own Digital Hijack website. But this was accomplished with bots and code at a deep level. Accomplish your hijack with the help of human participation. By the time you hijack the words you want, it won’t be a deep level software ‘hack’; it will be a surface level, natural language ‘hack’. Your chosen image results will appear not because of your coding skills, but because of your social networking (aka ‘Web 2.0 marketing’) skills. Google will merely be accurately reflecting the popularity of the image/word meme you have chosen to disperse. The goal is ultimately to ‘hack’ human language, history, and thought in order to force Google Images to auto-bricolage on your behalf. Your ‘work’ will be perpetually performed every time someone does an image search for the key word you have hijacked. Rather than artistically surf through a terrain seeded by corporations, you will be seeding your own emergent terrain through which others will artistically surf. These two practices (artistic surfing and massively distributed wake seeding) are not mutually exclusive.

Parables For The Hypertrophic

Saying that politics is an act of ‘resistance’ was never true, except for the most literal interpretation of conservatism. We must search-and-replace all occurrences of ‘resistance’ with ‘impulsion’ or perhaps ‘thrust.’ Thus the concept of resistance in politics should be superseded by the concept of hypertrophy. (42)

[Alex GALLOWAY and Eugene THACKER]

Hypertrophy is the unhealthy enlarging of an organ beyond its normal functional capacity. It is a form of modulation and rupture that may cause new uses to emerge. Paul Virilio famously compared the internet to the Titanic: “It is an instrument which performs extraordinarily well but which contains its own catastrophe.” (43) I posit that this catastrophe is contained not only at a deep technological level of computer code and hardware, but also at a surface level of uttered language, memes, and cheesy lo-res animations.

It seems unfortunate and unnecessary to segregate the promising moves and tactics of surface level play involved in contemporary artistic surfing practices from the deep level ethical aspirations of earlier net.art practices. And it is indeed a waste to apply de Certeau’s critical insights *only* to art work that identifies itself as ‘tactical media.’ Artistic surfing was tailor-made for de Certeauian critical analysis. This paper is a step toward fruitfully applying *The Practice of Everyday Life* to the practice of artistic surfing.

Sabine Hochrieser, Michael Kargl,
Franz Thalmer / CONT3XT.NET
*Trans.form.work—Net art
in the real space*

CONT3XT.NET is a Vienna-based organisation founded in 2006 as a collaborative platform for the discussion and presentation of issues related to Media Art. The collective was founded by Sabine Hochrieser, Michael Kargl and Franz Thalmer

Proofreading/corrections by Dörte Eliass

1—Trebor Scholz, “Curating New Media Art” - Part I, 2006, see: <<http://mailman.thing.net/pipermail/idc/2006-April/001439.html>>

2—Trebor Scholz (2006): “Curating New Media Art” - Part II, <<http://mailman.thing.net/pipermail/idc/2006-April/001444.html>>

3—Schulz, Pit (2006): “The Producer as Power User”, <<http://www.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-0606/msg00136.html>>

4—Schleiner, Anne-Marie (2003): “Fluidities and Oppositions among Curators, Filter Feeders and Future Artists”, <http://www.intelligentagent.com/archive/Vol3_No1_curation_schleiner.html>

5—Mutanen, Ulla Maaria (2006): “On Museums and Web 2.0”, <http://ullamaaria.typepad.com/hobbyprincess/2006/06/museums_and_web.html>

6—Dietz, Steve (1998): “Curating (on) the Web”, <http://www.archimuse.com/mw98/papers/dietz/dietz_curatingthe-web.html>

Translation is a mode.

[Walter BENJAMIN]

Why is it still easier to get an entire museum collection on the Internet than to get a single work of net art in a museum space? As with the nature of this question, both aspects have to be taken into account: the field of net art with its media-specifics, as well as the mechanisms which allow institutions to continue to filter what the public at large understands to be art. Within this balancing act between independent/anti-institutional and institutional/commercial work, a transfer of artworks created in and for the Internet into a setting which is normally dedicated to the presentation of highly valued forms of art, can only be developed from case to case and according to what the typology of the actual artwork requires. Net art is in a constant shift between the daily news and its own history, between commercial/political interests and the activism against it, between technological innovation and the cultural context, technology is embedded in and finally it oscillates between an expanded field of artistic practices and its well defined precursors—many reasons why it is stuck in a home-made ghetto between “the two cultures”. In this regard, the present essay reflects upon strategies of how artistic creation on the Internet and the translational processes of its re-formulation in the real space can be combined to develop appropriate presentational modes, suitable for both sides and finally dissolving the still existing dichotomies in favour of interdisciplinary discourse.

Internet Work

Provided that there is a computer with Internet access, net art can be viewed at any time and any location and therefore be left in its own medium of production—or, to put it bluntly, the medium equals the showroom. For over fifteen years, the curation of net art in a medium of its own developed into a multifaceted communication process on content, among users of all backgrounds and provenances. Just to name a few, artists, activists, programmers, scholars deriving from different disciplines, users/spectators of all kinds can be involved in the process of curating net art. Curators dealing with the Internet as an artistic space are deemed “cultural context providers”(1), “meta artists”(2), “power users”(3), “filter feeders”(4) or simply “proactive consumers”(5). “Curating (on) the Web”(6), as termed in 1998 already, not only creates a public space for the protagonists of net art, but also enables them to participate in creating their own public space, which often takes on the form of discursive contextualisation strategies and presentational models. Even more than the installation of an exhibition in a—virtual—exhibition room, by providing texts, images and links to the “original” artworks, the handling of technological developments and the knowledge about existing channels of communication are integral parts of Internet-based curating, as are providing resources, initiating collaborations and remaining in contact with internationally acting networks.

Expanding the curators’ field of action is closely linked to the media-specific characteristics of art produced on and for the Internet. It allows them to incorporate more than the supervision, contextualisation and

7—Scholz, Trebor (2006): “Curating New Media Art” - Part II, <<http://mailman.thing.net/pipermail/idc/2006-April/001444.html>>

8—Paul, Christiane (2006): “Flexible Contexts, Democratic Filtering and Computer-Aided Curating”, in: Krysa, Joasia (ed.) (2006): “Curating Immateriality: The Work of the Curator in the Age of Network Systems”, DATA Browser vol. 3, Autonomia, Brooklyn/New York, pp. 81-103.

exhibition of artworks in museums, galleries or off-spaces. Net art does not necessarily have to be presented in a customary exhibition space, because, as already mentioned before, as long as there is a computer with access to the Internet, it can be viewed and used anywhere any time. In many cases, net art emerges only through the participation of an audience with diverse approaches to the Internet, which comments on, transforms and disseminates artworks in multifaceted rhizomatic ways. In addition, the somewhat rather communicative mechanisms on which this art is based are simultaneously its subject, thus allowing it to function as a reciprocal feedback loop between the author and the spectator, or, in other words which are more suitable for the context net art is produced in, between a group of networked collaborators. In the 20th century, the numerous postulations on authorship and on the concept of work (*Werkbegriff*) as a definable entity with a definable set of limits gave way to a discourse, which is constitutive for the expanded artistic working methods and processes in the digital realm. In this vein, curators on the Internet can be understood as those “who set up contexts for artists who provide contexts”⁽⁷⁾ and even further as those who develop discourse about artists who create discourse.

Besides the still existing necessity to define the variable characteristics of net art and its many forms of realisation, the question which should be rendered in the focus of the curators’ interest in regard to traditional institutional work, is not primarily *what* it is, but the mediation of the fact that it is *art*. Additionally and in parallel to the way curators present and disseminate art on the Internet, the curatorial process of transferring it in the real space results in the question of *how* it can be integrated into the discourses of the system of art as it exists nowadays by entering into action with public and private collections, the art market and also with independent projects, yet based on a traditional understanding of art.

Institutional Work

Even if net art does not require to be exhibited in the traditional context of museums, galleries or off-spaces, for the cultural discourse and the reflections upon the mechanisms the contemporary society works, it is more than urgent to find appropriate ways to present the tactics artists use to deal with a medium which is omnipresent and effects our daily lives impetuously and more than any other medium. With the development of exhibition strategies in form of a “living information space that is open to interferences”⁽⁸⁾, the chance to be shown in museum-contexts, equally raises the importance of a whole art genre and a whole generation of artists constantly acting and reacting to new—sometimes obvious, sometimes less visible—commercial and political developments of the everyday.

In return, talking in terms of the mutual impact of systems on each other, and coming back to the initial question of why it is easier to get an entire museum collection on the Internet than to get a work of net art in a museum space, it has to be mentioned that the exhibition of traditional art collections nowadays “is not only accommodated by the spatial realisation of architectural spaces any longer. Increasingly influential is

9—Dziekan, Vince (2005): “Beyond the Museum Walls: Situating Art in Virtual Space (Polemic Overlay and Three Movements)”, <http://journal.fibre.culture.org/issue7/issue7_ver2_Beyond%20the%20Museum%20Walls.pdf>

10—Dietz, Steve (1998): “Curating (on) the Web”, <http://www.archimuse.com/mw98/papers/dietz/dietz_curatingthe-web.html>

11—Lichty, Patrick (2003): “Reconfiguring the Museum. Electronic Media and Emergent Curatorial Models”, <http://www.intelligentagent.com/archive/Vol3_No1.curration_lichty.html>

12—Schultz, Pit (2006): “The Producer as Power User”, in: Cox, Geoff / Krysa, Joasia (eds.) (2005): “Engineering Culture: On ‘The Author as (Digital) Producer’”, DATA Browser vol. 3, Autonomedia. Brooklyn/New York, pp. 111-127.

the way that the design of an extended typology of spaces, including the Internet, structures creative practices,”⁽⁹⁾ and raises the chance to get a broader audience and a more effective discourse, abstaining from conventional forms of display that the museum audience is used to. In other words, “like the best exhibition publications, extending an exhibition online means more than simply re-presenting it but also reformatting it for the best possible experience in the medium—in front of a computer screen, transmitted via the Internet.”⁽¹⁰⁾ Accordingly, the other way around, extending an online exhibition or showing a net artwork in the real space means more than simply re-presenting it but also reformatting it for the best possible experience—in a physical exhibition space with all the features and traits it can be specified with. One possible way to stress this two-way exchange between the virtual and the physical space might be a shift from a paradigmatic, technology-driven curating to a syntagmatic, context-oriented working process which abstains from the notion of exclusivity on both sides.

Traditional art institutions today continue to filter what the public at large understands to be art. The selected and thus privileged art genres of painting and sculpture, or even younger categories such as installations, performances, and video then enjoy the further attendance the institutions offer: exhibition, documentation, study, preservation, archiving, etc. By those means the art canon, the art history, and last but not least—to talk in economical terms—the material value of art on the art market are created. From the viewpoint of the reclamation of cultural value museums should take the question into account: how can a traditional institution—more or less characterised by strong hierarchies and centuries-old customs and habits—come to terms with the artworks the 21st century ‘networked society’ has developed during more than fifteen years and is still developing.

The concept of what is traditionally understood as curating is still bound to the institution of the museum and other equivalent exhibition spaces—and the same applies not only to the image of curating but also to its mode: “In its evolution since the 17th century, [curating] centers itself around the ‘expert’ opinion of the curator as educated connoisseur and archivist of various works. Thus, the curator determines the works’ cultural value, as well as, in the present day, their mass entertainment value, which is equally important in the era of ubiquitous free market democracy (at least in most of the Western world.)”⁽¹¹⁾ Contrary to the work of a curator on the Internet, it is frequently ignored by art institutions that “the global network itself became the educational environment for those without direct access to institutions.”⁽¹²⁾ Even if the early promises of the utopia of a critically engaged media-consumer/producer on the Internet, have only been fulfilled on a very limited level, the integration of alternative modes of representation and the acceleration of discourse as forced by some specialists might be taken into account for the re-presentation of net art in the physical environment of an institution.

In the context of net art, the metaphor of an archive can be referred to the tasks of museums and to other traditional art collections: “The discursivity of multimedia, and how it can be associated with dialectical

13—Dziekan, Vince (2005): “Beyond the Museum Walls: Situating Art in Virtual Space (Polemic Overlay and Three Movements)”, <http://journal.fibreculture.org/issue7/issue7_ver2_Beyond%20the%20Museum%20Walls.pdf>

14—Paul, Christiane (2006): “Flexible Contexts, Democratic Filtering and Computer-Aided Curating”, in: Krysa, Joasia (ed.) (2006): “Curating Immateriality: The Work of the Curator in the Age of Network Systems”, DATA Browser vol. 3, Autonomedia, Brooklyn/New York, pp. 81-103.

15—Paul, Christiane (2008): “Challenges for a Ubiquitous Museum. From the White Cube to the Black Box and Beyond.” in: Paul, Christiane (ed.): “New Media in the White Cube and Beyond.” Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, pp. 53-75.

16—Greene, Rachel (2004): “Internet Art”, London: Thames & Hudson, p. 55. According to Rachel Greene this first wave of people working during the 1990s is centered around the names Vuc Cosic, Alexej Shulgin, Jodi.org, Heath Bunting and Olia Lialina.

aesthetics, is characterised by the ways in which montage-like spatial juxtaposition—achieved through hyperlink structures and searchability—is drawn upon for narrative effect. The functionality of links and databases extends upon already existing tabular, classificatory forms, such as the collection archive, catalogue, and methods of spatial arrangement in galleries—all technologies intimately associated with the historical evolution of the museum. Adopting a museological aesthetics that understands, and is more effectively calibrated to digital communication technologies will see the museum emphasised as a machine for creating juxtaposition, a generator of conditions for dialogical encounters with the unforeseen (enabling, even privileging, the experience of surprise, the unexpected and perhaps the random.)”⁽¹³⁾ The ongoing neglect of those similarities leads to the fact that “a broader art audience may still place more trust in the selection, and therefore validation, undertaken by a prestigious museum, while in the online environment, the only signifier of validation may be the brand recognition carried by the museum’s name.” ⁽¹⁴⁾

Contextual Work

In parallel to the emergence of new challenges for museums and art institutions, the border between the work of a net artist and the work done by a curator who wants to show the work in a physical exhibition is shifting. Internet-based works can only be re-formatted to be shown in an exhibition space, since the original context of those artworks—the private surroundings of people consuming net art on their computers at home—is lost. The installation of computers in an exhibition room, as done in the early stages of exhibiting net art to simulate this context, as well as the curatorial decision to leave it open to the visitors to browse the artworks or not, is not suitable anymore (and in fact it never was). On the one hand it is the task of the curator to develop new models of display, on the other, it is the task of the artist too, who, much more than in a traditional sense, is involved in the process of transforming his artworks into—sometimes temporary, sometimes fixed—goods which are suitable to be presented in real settings without losing their ephemeral, immaterial, variable, networked, Internet-based characteristics. One possible way to escape from this dilemma might be to consider the contextual and the discursive environment art on the Internet is created in. Talking in terms of the mutual relations of curatorial and artistic practices and relying on the “the collaborative model [which] is also crucial to the artistic process itself,”⁽¹⁵⁾ this context can only be clarified by becoming more and more one and dissolving the strict distinctions between the working processes.

Cultural production and meta-discursive activities on the Internet have been expanded to use the online medium as an exhibition space, a distribution platform, and a social aggregator. Accordingly, its practitioners/performers have been characterised by many different terms to specify those various tasks of an online curator. Since the first generation of net.art⁽¹⁶⁾ in the early 1990s, the Internet, its use as a medium of mass-communication and finally the various forms of art engaged with it, has come a long way and as did the curatorial activities concerned with it. Many of the early enthusiastic ideas, developed to

17—Ault, Julie (2007): “Three Snapshots from the Eighties: On Group Material”, in: O’Neill, Paul (Ed.): “Curating Subjects”, Amsterdam: De Appel, Centre for Contemporary Art, p.34.

18—From Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_2.0>

19—Manovich, Lev (2008): “The Practice of Everyday Life”, in: Lovink, Geert / Niederer, Sabine (eds.): “Video Vortex Reader. Responses to YouTube.” Inc Reader #4, p.33-44, <http://networkcultures.org/wpmu/portal/files/2008/10/vv_reader_small.pdf>

20—Zittrain, Jonathan L. (2008): “The Future of the Internet—And How to Stop It”, Yale: Yale University Press. <<http://yup-net.org/zittrain/archives/6>>

21—Andreasen, Soren / Larsen, Lars Bang (2007): “The Middleman: Beginning to Think About Mediation”, in: O’Neill, Paul (Ed.): “Curating Subjects”, Amsterdam: De Appel, Centre for Contemporary Art, p.28.

22—O’Neill, Paul / Fletcher, Annie (2007): “Introduction: Paul O’Neill interviewed by Annie Fletcher”, in: O’Neill, Paul (Ed.): “Curating Subjects”, Amsterdam: De Appel, Centre for Contemporary Art, p.13.

draw multifaceted images of possible digital worlds, are still utopian, many of them are outdated, but some of them have successfully flourished and finally, one of the driving forces of the present web-culture seems to be the idea of social networking. The social component has been central to the debate around cultural activities in general and has re-enforced the idea of curating on the Internet within the context of “a community-based narrative of everyday life.”(17)

Nowadays—described by a perpetually utopian terminology already used in the early beginnings of artistic experimentation with the online medium—the commercial creators of Web 2.0 want their technologies to be seen as pushing “creativity, information sharing, and, most notably, collaboration among users.”(18) Theoretically, this means a shift from a more traditional, consumption-oriented content to a rather autonomous and socially driven system of production, even though, in practice, “according to 2007 statistics, only between 0,5 - 1,5 percent of the users of the most popular social media sites (...) contributed their own content.”(19) Furthermore, these platforms attributed with the token 2.0 “are not just products but also services, watched and updated according to the constant dictates of their makers and those who can pressure them.”(20) Despite the criticism against the ongoing commercialisation of those technological systems and bearing in mind that their users are frequently reduced to the role of consumers constrained by pre-designed templates, this form of broader social practice has made possible that “acts, ideas and products are authorised and made credible through processes of mediation and communicative exchange.”(21) As a consequence, within this ‘system of legitimisation’, the person of the curator dealing with the dissemination of net art on the various platforms is more than an expert of display, modelling the reception and interpretation of art; the tasks of a curator may thus be understood as those of a “global collaborator in art’s social relations” (22) who is not only responsible for the linkage of the protagonists of the art field but for the conjunction of different cultural and artistic disciplines in favor of an interdisciplinary and networked environment.

Translational Work

Within the framework of discursive strategies, the curation of net art, online as well as offline, can be specified as translational work. The transfer of structures, meaning and (personal) experiences into documentary, mediative and distributive formats is one of the core activities of the curator and often bound to the production of written documents: the mobilisation of participants via invitation mails, calls for papers, and the creation of temporary discursive and/or dialogical situations are only some aspects of the work of a curator, as are the visualisation of processes and workflows by means of online publishing systems, the collecting of contextual information about artworks, the inventing or re-using of taxonomies or even—on a more basic level—the writing of code for the display and visual representation of an online exhibition.

Unlike the working conditions of a traditional curator, the curator of net art is working in and within the same medium as the artist which inevitably results in the fact that curating can only be “an adaptive discipline, using

23—*Ibid.*

24—Arns, Inke (2008): “The Serpent’s Coil. Minoritarian Tactics in the Age of Transparency”, in: Kastner, Jens / Spörr, Bettina (Eds.): “cannot do everything. Civil and social disobedience at the interfaces between art, radical politics, and technology”, Münster: Unrast-Verlag, p. 133.

25—Benjamin, Walter (2004): “The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire’s *Tableaux Parisiens*”, in: Lawrence Venuti (ed.), “The Translation Studies Reader”, Second Edition, New York: Routledge, pp. 75-83.

26—Buden, Boris (2006): “Cultural Translation: Why it is important and where to start with it”, eicpcp - european institute for progressive cultural policies. <<http://translate.eicpcp.net/transversal/0606/buden/en>>

27—Paul, Christiane (2008): “Challenges for a Ubiquitous Museum. From the White Cube to the Black Box and Beyond.” in: Paul, Christiane (ed.): “New Media in the White Cube and Beyond.” Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, pp. 53-75.

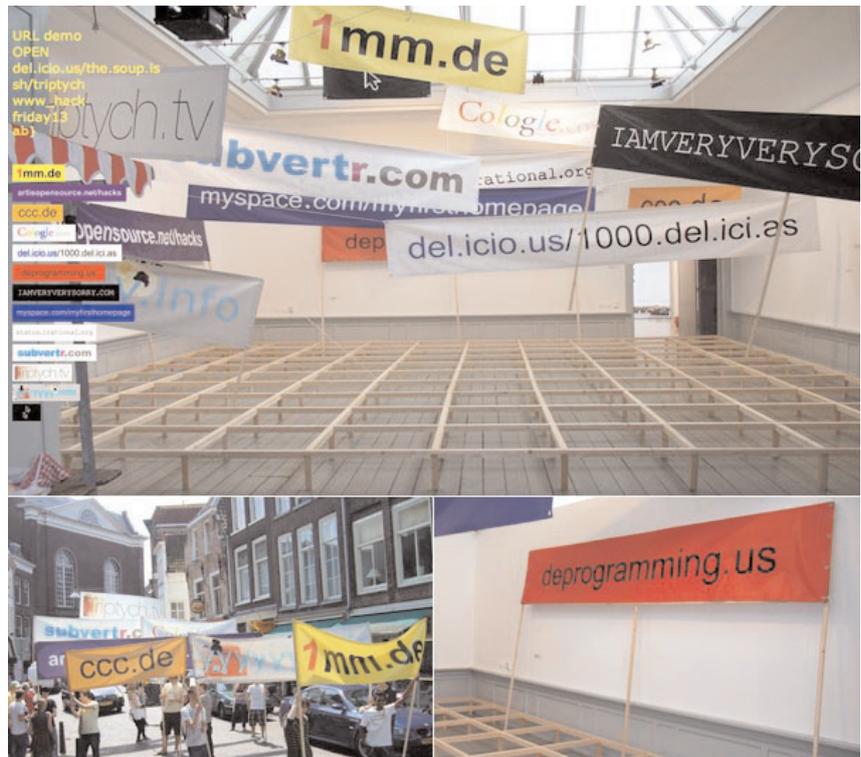
and adopting inherited codes and rules of behaviour.”(23) Those explanative, meditative and finally translational strategies of curatorial re-shaping are also meant to be forms of visualising power structures and the role of net art within the global processes of political and economical relevance. “The fact that the world around us is increasingly programmed means that rules, conventions and relationships, which are usually subject to change and negotiation, are translated into software, where they become fixed. (...) This withdrawal beyond the reach of vision and perception, [through which] the world is secretly and eerily made to vanish by means of software, also entails a dematerialisation of structures.”(24)

Translation, brought up on a global level by the proclamation of a “translational turn”, mainly within the field of Cultural Studies, is a useful metaphor to describe the task of the curator. The concept of cultural translation, as understood and widely used today for the description of trans-cultural communication and the effects of globalisation on our society, has arisen out of the criticism of linguistic/literary theory. Nevertheless, Walter Benjamin’s articulations in the essay “The task of the translator” can be applied to the field of net art and directly referred to the curator’s daily work. He describes the relation between the original text and its translation in the following way: “Just as a tangent touches a circle lightly and at but one point, with this touch rather than with the point setting the law according to which it is to continue on its straight path to infinity, a translation touches the original lightly and only at the infinitely small point of the sense, thereupon pursuing its own course according to the laws of fidelity in the freedom of linguistic flux.”(25) This inter-dependency between the original and its translation can be compared to the inter-dependency between an Internet-based work of art and the way it is exhibited in the real space. In this case “translation is like a tangent, which touches the circle (i.e. the original) in one single point only to follow thereafter its own way. Neither the original nor the translation, neither the language of the original nor the language of the translation are fixed and persisting categories. They don’t have essential quality and are constantly transformed in space and time.”(26)

Be it the simple documentation of an artwork by means of contextualising strategies, be it the focus on only one single component of an artwork relevant for the exhibition or be it the development of derivative works, if net art wants to become recognised as art and not as a “funny gadget industry” the display of those artworks in museum, gallery and off-space setting needs to be done carefully and also needs to vary from case to case, from artwork to artwork and from exhibition to exhibition. “The variability and modularity inherent to the medium, however, often mean that a work can be reconfigured for a space and shown in very different ways. Variability enables a fluent transition between the different manifestations a ‘virtual object’ can take.”(27) To follow the concept of variability in the virtual space on a more general level, the focus has to shift away from the notion of technology and lead to art and the processes bound to its production and reception on the Internet.

As today’s technology is more than old tomorrow, only the cultural context it emerges from, the aesthetic value it creates and the effects it has on our

society can be the translational tasks a curator has to deal with. One can argue that technology itself is a cultural context, and nowadays even one of the most powerful ones. Indeed, but it is not alone: technology is embedded in a framework of cultural, artistic, and philosophical developments that has existed for a much longer time and thus reaches much deeper into what is known as the perception of man. The variability of net art is as bound to the fluidity of technology, and likewise, the same applies the other way around. Therefore both of them can only be thought as the point of contact where the tangent touches the circle and thereupon pursues its own course, its own modes—which are modes of translation.



Webcra.sh/2800 (2008), curated by Jodi.org.

Images by the artists

Case Study I

“Webcra.sh/2800” is both the title and the Internet address of an exhibition shown in May 2008 at the Urban Explorers Festival in Dordrecht (Netherlands), which was mostly limited to the Link as representative feature of net.art work in real space. The show was curated by Joan Heemskerk and Dirk Paesmans, better known by the pseudonym Jodi, the name under which the Dutch-Belgian artist duo has been doing media art since the mid-1990s under the label “net.art.” The selection of net.art works was based on the strict connection of title, URL and content of the websites shown. The title of the exhibition does its part in explaining this endeavor: the top-level domain “.sh” echoes the name of the host in the first part of the URL. The hybrid word “webcra.sh” that results is supplemented with the sub-directory “/2800.” By mixing up the digits of the year 2008, hardly noticeable at first glance, the curators on the one hand reinforce the exhibition concept, which is rooted in the mutation of URLs and the corresponding websites.

What is special about the presentation of “Webcra.sh/2800” in real space is the reduction to a single presentation format: the display is made up of portable banners on which the URLs of the various artworks are printed. The link is thus understood here as a fundamental method for connecting two or more sets of Internet content with one another and consequently creating a network of references, associations and cross-listings. Jodi use the link to represent the artwork in real space, but at the same time maintain a conceptual connection to the Internet—despite object-like displays. With this deft curatorial twist, the artworks therefore stay

where they can be called up at any time, and yet are still given a re-presentation form in real space, which then pulls the visitors back into the Net and hence into their role as users.

On the formal level the banners quote the background color of the pages on the Web. In addition to designing the yellow-orange, red and blue banners, the typography of which also match the artworks in some cases, the exhibition also involved a demonstration that took place in Dordrecht with people carrying these banners. The performative and temporal occupation of the public space with Web addresses can be read as an allusion to the omnipresence of links in our everyday lives. Following the demonstration the banners were brought into the exhibition space and installed there as network nodes. In order to imitate the interaction with net.art works, visitors to the exhibition had to themselves go into action and could only cross the room by immersing themselves in this agglomeration of references via a wooden grid laid out on the floor. The exhibition [Webcra.sh/2800](http://webcra.sh/2800) deals mainly with activities on the Internet, which Jodi have been exploring as artists since the mid-1990s. But despite, or perhaps precisely because of its restrictive formal focus on art in the tradition of “net.art,” it is a successful example of the translation of these artworks into real space. The choice of a display form that takes its point of departure from the Internet allows for an adequate representation on both levels, i.e. online as well as offline, together with a reinterpretation of the individual works in a context as yet unknown at the time of the show.

[A longer version of this text was published by “springerin – Hefte für Gegenwartskunst”, Band XIV Heft 4, Herbst 2008. It was written by Franz Thalmair and translated by Jennifer Taylor-Gaida.]

Links

Jodi: <<http://jodi.org>>

Exhibition: <<http://webcra.sh/2800>>

Including the following links:

<<http://1mm.de>>

<<http://artisopensource.net/hacks>>

<<http://ccc.de>>

<<http://cologle.com>> (now forbidden)

<<http://delicious.com/1000.del.ici.as>>

< www.deprogramming.us>

< www.iamveryverysorry.com>

< www.myspace.com/myfirsthomepage>

< status.irational.org>

< subvertr.com>

< triptych.tv>

< yyyyyy.info>



nam shub web installation (2008), by Jörg Piringer
images by Franz Thalmer

Case Study II

According to Neal Stephenson's novel *Snow Crash*, the ancient sumerian nam shub of Enki was a neurolinguistic hack aimed against the standardisation and unification of society and human life through verbal rules and laws. As described by the Austrian text-/sound-artist Jörg Piringer the artwork "nam shub" can be seen as a computerlinguistic hack targeted against a global unified culture and empire. nam shub, however, is a website processor which takes the textual content of external websites and applies user defined rules to generate visual poetry. These rules consist of operations that change the text or modify its visual appearance. Each set of rules can be stored and published for others to view and alter, nevertheless, nam shub web does not store any actual content, it only records commands of how to alter the external websites. In case there is a dynamic website as the source the visual and textual results change with the dynamic content.

Common text processor programs (like *MS Word*, *Open Office* etc.) only offer a very limited range of real text processing tools like the spell-checker and function for substitution and summary. For the development of "nam shub" the artist took his inspiration from music and graphic design programs, which usually offer features like realtime interactivity, scriptable and chainable operations and many more different functions. Based on this he added functions to "nam shub" to remove vowels/consonants, change

the order of letters, split words into syllables, random operations on word and letter level, complex substitution and text synthesis etc.—all these functions can be combined and chained through a powerful scripting language. “nam shub” is strongly influenced by the works and ideas of literary modernist avant-garde movements like Dada, Surrealism, Lettrism, Oulipo, Wiener Gruppe and the Beat-poet’s use of the Cut-Up technique. These movements and groups tried to extend the field of literature through the introduction of randomness or in contrast through the implementation of strict rules for the generation of texts. Almost all of them were working with the mere materiality of (found) letters, words and printed characters some of them even creating early concepts for computerised poems. Although “nam shub” is inspired by these early attempts it focuses on computer specific aspects of electronic poetry: dynamic and real time generation and manipulation of text.

This artwork exists in four different versions: at first, “nam shub” from 2007 (with precursors from 2003), a program designed as a tool for both creators and performers of text and language oriented arts, which can be seen as a combination of a modular live performance system like Pure Data and a text processor; then “nam shub web” from 2007, a web-interface and text-processor which can be interacted with online by Internet-users; furthermore “nam shub mini” from 2008, which is a limited small branch of the original software; and finally “nam shub web installation” from 2008, which was shown in the exhibition *You Own Me Now until You Forget about Me*. in the Museum of Modern Art Ljubljana/Slovenia in spring 2008. In this installation created especially for the exhibition, a printer was installed at the ceiling of the gallery. During the whole exhibition period this installation endlessly reproduced hard copies and prints of the textual content of dynamic websites which have been stored online by users before. Over time, the floor of the gallery was covered with a high amount of single sheets of paper. In the exhibition neither the website nor the text processor were shown. The participatory part of the artwork was excluded, but, it was worked out in a way that focused on one of the main characteristics of this work: the overflow of information, the fluidity, and the text-based characteristics of net art and Literature.

Links:

Jörg Piringner: <<http://joerg.piringner.net>>

nam shub (2007): <<http://joerg.piringner.net/index.php?href=namshub/namshub.xml>>

nam shub mini (2008):

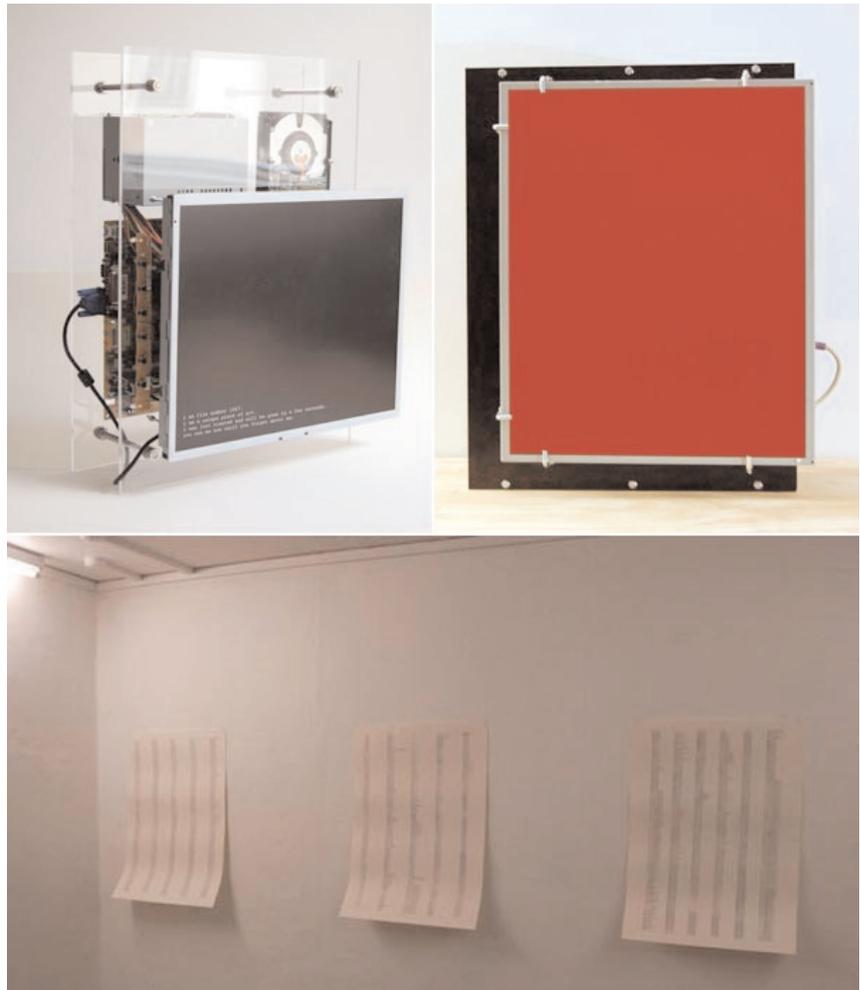
<<http://joerg.piringner.net/index.php?href=namshub/namshub.xml>>

nam shub web (2007):

<<http://joerg.piringner.net/index.php?href=namshubweb/namshubweb.xml>>

nam shub web (installation) (2008):

<<http://joerg.piringner.net/index.php?href=installation/namshubweb.xml&mttitle=installation>>



objects of desire (2005-2008), all you can see (2008), landscapes (2007),
by carlos katastrosky
images by the artist

Case Study III

carlos katastrosky does not utilize code and the principles of its calculability for the glorification of media structures, but for a visualization of processes that are not immediately intelligible for media consumers. His awareness of the material results from his past career as classical sculptor, while the purist aesthetics of his works are based on his conceptual background. He performs his institutional criticism of the ghettos of the media art business, of the artistic production- and distribution processes in and with the new media as well as of the role of contemporary media consumers in this circle, by abstaining from effective performances. With the tools of Minimalism, he creates a new language of form and content that takes its structure from continuous appearances of overlapping and becomes itself a process of transformation, thus an interference.

In short intervals, a text sequence appears on the screen of a transparent object with the promising title *Objects of Desire: white standard*

typography on black background, sentence by sentence, second by second, with each new beginning a new number and thus, a new piece of art, that is concluded by the words you own me now until you forget about me. With *Objects of Desire*, carlos katastrosky looks for the determining parameters for digital art, for their role in the art business and—even more general—for the authorship of artistic works: Is it necessary to touch it and own it at first, in order to define art as such, or is a consecutive number sufficient in order to speak of an original: 1101, 1102, 1103? *Objects of Desire* is the further development of the originally purely Internet-based work *The Original* for the exhibition space. The self-constructed computer—thus, the transparent object (of desire)—contributes on a formal level its share to the transfer of text-based and ephemeral characteristics of net-art into real space.

In order to guarantee the data transfer between two or more computers and to be able to identify the receivers explicitly, the network nodes of the Internet consist of IP-addresses. The seemingly accidental arrangement of this combination of numbers and the resulting—partly even extremely conflicting—virtual neighborhoods are examined by carlos katastrosky in *Landscapes*. In the course of this further development of the two Internet based works *Neighbourhood Research* and *Area Research*, IP-addresses were brought to paper by means of printing transfer, in order to provide the viewers with an extract of the virtual in real space. The artist works on the net as cartographic concept and copies the context, in which websites like Google, CNN or Wikipedia are anchored. Translated into the gallery space, the viewer eventually finds him- or herself vis-à-vis works on paper whose aesthetics remind of conceptual, text-based strategies of design. In this way, the context of the shown IP-addresses is also reflected formally: in a landscape open downwards and upwards, consisting of numbers, letters and signs.

With common video formats, almost 17 million different colours can theoretically be represented on the screen today. If these are shown all at once, a condensation in pure white is generated in the digital picture production. While carlos katastrosky with the Internet-based precursor to *All You Can See* entitled *Opus Magnum* was still concerned about the subject of mass production as one of the last taboos in the art market, he plays in this video with the time-based representation of structures of the digital art production, that are inherent in the system, and the processes attendant to it. The visitor gets to see all that is possible: Countless different colours are lined up linearly with a rate of 25 pictures per second in single frames and result in an 8-days-long changing process from black to white und thus from colourlessness to absolute condensation. The artist establishes through the extension of the material, perceptible for the viewer as monochrome representation, references to the colour field painting of Abstract Expressionism. In his video production, the artist dispenses with the subject and employs colour purely for its own sake. He continues in the digital medium reflections and theories that have been known for a long time from art history about the end of painting. His method: restriction, reduction and concentration in the form of extension.

Links:

carlos katastrosfsky: <<http://katastrosfsky.cont3xt.net>>

objects of desire (2005-2008): <<http://katastrosfsky.cont3xt.net/home/?p=104>>

the original (2005): <<http://katastrosfsky.cont3xt.net/original>>

landscapes (2007): <<http://katastrosfsky.cont3xt.net/home/?p=78>>

neighbourhood research (2004): <<http://katastrosfsky.cont3xt.net/neighbour>>

area research (2004): <<http://katastrosfsky.cont3xt.net/arearesearch>>

all you can see (2008): <<http://katastrosfsky.cont3xt.net/home/?p=186>>

opus magnum (2008): <<http://katastrosfsky.cont3xt.net/opusmagnum>>

Patricia Gouveia

Action! Playable media and persistent games for the creation of online alternative realities and cross narratives (Cooperation versus Competition)⁽¹⁾

Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias of Lisbon and researcher at CICANT, Centre for Applied Research, Culture and New Technologies

web interactions, playable media, digital fiction, game art;

This article explores the possibilities of ‘written’ cooperation in playable, persistent and cross media environments generated from the Web. It analyses the form in which dynamic systems are designed and *human-machine* interaction may be taken into consideration, balancing mechanisms that encourage both altruism and competition among opponents in digital spaces. Mixed strategies that associate individual trends of *zero-sum games*, or competition, *versus* cooperative *prisoner’s dilemma* type games. It is deemed important to stimulate active participation in the discussion and conception of narratives dependent upon different distribution processes (Web, mobile phones, print, etc.) and to present projects that help to contextualize contemporary digital tribes.

1—Article drafted within the scope of the PTDC/CCI/74114/2006 research project (INFOMEDIA, Information Acquisition in New Media) financed by the Portuguese Science and Technology Foundation.

2—Also see the author's text regarding this subject matter: "Paraisos artificiais: autoria partilhada na criação contemporânea e na era dos jogos em rede" (Artificial paradises: shared authorship in contemporary creation and in the era of online games), II Ibérico, Communication Sciences Acts of Congress. See: <www.labcom.ubi.pt/livros/labcom/pdfs/ACTAS%20VOL%201.pdf> (accessed in December, 2008), pp. 567-576, Covilhã, 2004.

3—*Cross Media* narratives are stories constructed to be "read" from different platforms. They jump from medium to medium and merely continue the routes generated from dispersed blocks of text so that the points of connection from these fragmented stories may be understood and followed.

4—For example, see the work of German artist Olaf Val and his *Mignon Game Kit*. This configurable console allows each player to create the design, program and build his or her own device. Some online workshops and instructions help players to conceive their own games. This do-it-yourself console style allows experiences to be created with microelectronics but also may be used as a platform to build computer games, unlike traditional systems such as Nintendo's Gameboy. The player develops a personal relationship with the device through a self-production process that determines the individual programming of games. See: <www.olafval.de/mignon/english> (Accessed in December, 2008).

This article suggests some trends that the art and design of interactive systems may consider in order to generate greater collaboration and cooperation among the different agents who work with digital products. Accordingly, some works of playable media are analyzed which involve various participants in emerging happenings and in narratives that are open to participation and to altruistic behaviour. It is considered that these works insert the players in a symbiotic relationship with the machine, thereby constructing part of the fiction and interactive work. We can summarize the system of mixed relationships and crossed realities that the simulation culture imposes in four words: configuration, game, narration and action! Understanding and researching the form in which shared and collaborative authorship may be generated online is fundamental for the implementation of dynamic environments in which different people participate and interact. (2) In this context, it is necessary to stimulate active participation in the discussion and conception of digital *cross media* (3) narratives that may depend on different distribution processes (Web, mobile phones, print, TV, DVD, software, virus, advertising panels, T-shirts, among other possible modes of support).

The activism inherent to *human-machine* design consists of the creation of simple rulebooks that generate greater complexity as inputs are received from numerous individuals. These strategies prompt us to consider some playable and subversive practices: the hacker as a digital culture model may be considered as a creative element in the creation of gaming sites where playable practice allows access to 'crooked' characters. In this context, it is considered that "where once art was at the center of moral existence, it now seems possible that play, given all its variable meanings, given the imaginary, will have that central role" (Sutton-Smith, 1997: 144). Games and playable spaces for the enjoyment of multiple participants, due to the inherent ambiguity and richness in the production of possible senses, may represent environments conducive to group 'writing'.

In giving evident emphasis to entertainment, the perpetual upgrade and technological mediation, digital culture impels us towards the constant need to acquire new products and gadgets that must be configured by the experience's agent, e.g., the participant/player/reader. This aspect leads us to consider the concept of interactivity while configuration; these 'products' no longer have a cinematic character, typical of more immersive practices that imply a distance between the spectator and the work, in order to begin involving a participant actively in its production, who not only configures his or her systems (4) in a customized manner but also produces his or her own narratives and fiction. Accordingly, a digital art approach to design is suggested where design mediates art and technology (Flusser, 1999; Bolter & Gromala, 2003). The dilution of boundaries between different disciplines and an evident criticism of modernist categories allows for the removal of some very prevalent twentieth-century dichotomies, now overcome, such as popular art *versus* elite art, art *versus* entertainment, art *versus* design, art *versus* handicrafts, etc., in a shift from the concept of art to the concept of gaming. Therefore, the following question is posed: what elements materialise in narratives emerging from such elite cultures and what elements are truly original in the culture of current tribes?

5—Regarding the dynamics between marketing, technology and culture in digital contemporary rhetoric, see, for example the book *Digital Play, The Interaction of Technology, Culture and Marketing*, by Kline, Dyer-Witford and De Peuter.

The frequent disparagement of ornamentation and spectacle as forms of excellence in popular culture and the valuation in intellectual terms of ‘high genres’ promotes a recurrent notion, which assumes that only objects of a certain wise and profound culture are worthy of academic analysis. In this context, an analytical ‘reading’ of products and the surfaces present in digital culture is proposed, assuming that these elements may be at least as interesting as those emerging from so-called ‘high’ or ‘noble’ arts. Michel Maffesoli believes that online creativity is conducive to digression and does not value the projects and ideas with final character but rather favours the process of work and the dissemination of concepts, generated in a changing form and with great plasticity. It may be considered that the sense of searching beneath the surface of things is favoured online (Maffesoli, 2008). Recognition and acceptance of work depends—as Sónia Rodrigues tells us—upon the repertoire, on the horizon of expectations and upon whoever is reading. The receipt of the trivial narrative may be extremely creative and the receipt of cultured literature may be repetitive, confirmative and passive. Saying that the production of popular merchandise is trivial conceals the fact that sometimes trivial represents the acceptance of these works by those not well prepared to receive them (Rodrigues, 2004: 150). Popular culture always was “capable of producing ‘types’ so well refined that they spanned centuries” and it becomes even more difficult for this rationale to define cultured literature. Now: “if both are capable of creating more than types, symbols, what really distinguishes them?” (Rodrigues, 2004: 146). Sónia Rodrigues tells us,

Mass culture assumes the existence of the market economy, which allows access to various social sectors and a plurality of material goods and imaginary consumption. It also assumes overcoming the dichotomy or polarization between high culture and popular culture and is characterized by the inclusion of its messages to daily society in an inconsistent manner, separately from the will of the people

(Adorno cited by Rodrigues, 2005: 143).

The digital artist is forced to master the ever larger group of narratives (economy, marketing, technology and culture) (5) and the theorization relating to *human-machine* interaction yielded the term *playability*, a central theme to digital experience and aesthetics. Cyberculture allows life to be rendered into a work of art, art lived through daily existence (Maffesoli, 2008:135). Online cooperative interactions that constitute an immediate, fluid, decentralized and playable ‘day-to-day art’, takes us to the return of aesthetic dynamism that seems to prevail in our lives, all of which is a basis for mutual experience (Maffesoli, 2008:96). In digital ecologies, there is a recurrent relationship between competition, in the sense of group discovery, and cooperation, completion of tasks and objectives through cooperative interactions.

The manner in which *media studies* are articulated as so-called *new media studies*, may be summarized by reviewing some fundamental points in the distinction between the two (Dovey & Kennedy, 2006). Therefore, in the case of *media studies*, the social effects of technology are considered to be socially determined. The audiences are passive, and a greater emphasis is placed upon interpretation and representation, in a

process that centralizes spectators and treats them as consumers and workers. In the specific case of *new media studies*, the nature of society is considered to be technologically determined. The consumer gives rise to the interactive systems participant where configurative experience and simulation are imposed in a culture in which media are ubiquitous, participants are co-creators of works and there is an evident and recurrent permanent system of games.

Without delving into distinctions that separate *media studies* and *new media studies* into different groups, a more diluted inclusion is chosen between the two and, accordingly, the World Wide Web, virtual reality and graphical computation are not divorced from previous media but rather homage them, compete with them and imitate the media which preceded them. In this context, there is incorporation and ‘remediation’, where photography reinvented painting, film reproduced theatrical, literary and photographic aspects, television incorporated film, vaudeville and radio. Simulation arises as the new visual arts paradigm: change of the visual order which was produced between the figurative regime of *representation* and that of *simulation* and which profoundly affected the visual arts (Couchot, 2003). Simulation as procedural representation (‘happening’) is a ‘game of life’, where unforeseeable effects and emerging narratives may be initiated simultaneously by numerous individuals in different geographical locations.

Furthermore, it is deemed necessary to stimulate the capacity of systems to generate shared knowledge by multiple agents, applying the concept of emergence as well as variation and surprise. Artists or designers of interactive fiction systems only build a set of rules, which are later amplified, developed and recreated by participants. Interaction is processed not only with the board or playing field but also with other people. A definition of emergence must consider that the key features of an emerging system have two fundamental components: an opening to the environment and the ability to measure or make changes within it. Accordingly, it is of fundamental importance to generate the capacity to process adaptive changes and consider the emerging autonomy of the machine. Therefore, conceiving dynamic platforms and interfaces that allow for the appearance of unplanned standards requires thinking about emergence as cooperation *versus* competition and dividing the relationship between both trends in a balanced manner.

In *Field of Play* (6) (2007), Australian artist Troy Innocent created an online board game easily recognizable as the classic children’s game of ‘rock, paper and scissors’. Participants from various locations around the world may play together and see their actions reflected online at a Melbourne gallery. According to Troy Innocent: “the game became an integral part of contemporary experience” and *Field of Play* is an urban art environment where three iconographic languages (orange, blue and green symbols), inspired through electronic networks, digital games and tribal cultures, appear integrated so as to generate an interaction in two different public spaces—virtual space on the Web and the real space of the gallery.

7—Interview of Troy Innocent available at <www.boutwelldrapergallery.com.au/images/art/bdg_Innocent_LUDEA_Text.pdf> (Accessed in December, 2008).

8—*Ibid.*

9—For more information about the *Icónica* project, see: <<http://iconica.org/transforms/index.htm>> (Accessed in December, 2008).

10—For more information about the *LifeSigns* project, see: <<http://iconica.org/lifesigns/index.htm>> (Accessed in December, 2008).

If *Field of Play* created a system that assembles participants from different locations around the world, in the 2005 *Ludea* project, the artist creates a system that assembles participants in a single location. Inspired by the classic board game Ludo, *Ludea* is a version of the same game, geared towards the twenty-first century. On the streets of Melbourne, three warrior cultures fight to conquer territory. According to Troy Innocent, “*Ludea* is a micro-nation where language and culture are generated via play. On the streets of Melbourne three warring cultures struggle for territory: Neo-Materialists use traditional forms of communication such as words; Post-Symbolics communicate only through images; Post-Humans are reliant on machines for communication. Each tribe gathers resources and tags in colour—Neo-Materialist orange, Post-Symbolic green and Post-Human blue. Victory goes to the clan that achieves the widest domain.” (7) The idea of this project is based upon the construction of a space, *Ludea*, which explores three different ideologies that by themselves define territories and different lines of communication and are immersed in their own digital playable culture. Innocent states:

The Ludeans come from a generation that has grown up with games, abstract machines and digital processes as second nature. It has become second nature for them to make abstractions of reality in terms of systems, processes, flows, and models. Ludea explores the post-human condition and unstable nature of contemporary reality through the construction of three different experiences of place. These experiences occur through signs and symbols that are mapped onto the real world locations. The aim is to create meaningful connections and experiences between three different public spaces – virtual, networked and physical. It also draws on theories of ‘possible worlds’ generated by the combination of artificial intelligence (AI), digital games, and idea of ‘world building’ through invented language and culture. On a more metaphorical level, the new work creates interactive spaces and systems that manifest experiences of a world characterised by uncertainty, multiplicity, complexity and connectivity—thus it makes us aware of the changing nature of reality. (8)

In *LifeSigns* (2004), Troy Innocent built a multi-player game laid out on 4 individual LCD displays and a global projector on the gallery floor where all elements converged. His research leads us to question the manner in which virtual worlds may be vehicles for new forms of communication and expression. The codification of processes related to Artificial Life, exploratory software of digital creatures with their own lives, mixed with semiotic, computational aspects, had already been addressed by the author extensively in *Icónica* (9) (2002). *LifeSigns* presents a study of systems and codes of meaning in digital media and in interactive games with an emphasis on playable aspects and the manipulation of process and space. The result of this recombination strategy is a hybrid that expresses a form, structure, information related to colour, sound, movement, surface and behaviour. In *LifeSigns*: a world is played out and an emerging language is explored, the idea that new meanings may be generated through interaction between humans and digital agents. (10)

The inclusion of participants interacting in different global locations not only in the physical environment but also in digital space is present in the

11—Andrea Zapp's website is available at the following address: <www.azapp.de> (Accessed in December, 2008)

12—For more information about *The Imaginary Hotel* project, see: <www.azapp.de/tih_01.html> (Accessed in December, 2008).

13—For further information about the *Unheimlich* project, see: <<http://creativetechnology.salford.ac.uk/unheimlich>> (Accessed in December, 2008).

14—*Ibid.*

15—For further information about the *Human Avatars* project, see: <www.azapp.de/ha_01.html> (Accessed in December, 2008).

16—Agoraxchange / *make the game, change the world*. See: <<http://agoraxchange.org/index.php?page=218>> (Accessed in December, 2008).

majority of works by the German artist, Andrea Zapp. (11) In *The Imaginary Hotel* (12) (2002), the author builds an exhibit in a gallery which simulates a hotel room. In this room, online visitors may change and configure two different walls through a back office, choosing the paint or wallpaper, changing the portraits in the frames, or even calling visitors to interact with them. The exhibition space may be viewed on the project website, allowing remote access of the environment generated by the entrance of visitors who actually visit the gallery. Andrea Zapp has a background in Film and Television and her work is characterized by a need to conceal technology as much as possible in order to provide greater emphasis of narrative and dramatic scenic aspects.

In *Unheimlich* (13), from 2005, Andrea Zapp collaborated in the creation of a telematic performance, with the notion of the 'uncanny' as a point of departure. In a collaborative space, we come across the following narrative: "It's 1 a.m. in Manchester, England, but two enigmatic sisters have stayed up late to see you, and to (telematically) greet you with a kiss as you step into their space, in real time, thousands of miles away." (14) In real time, a new character may enter the space where the two virtual sisters are located, so many kilometers away. Somehow, the two will be there waiting to involve the new person in their eccentric games, rituals, secrets and conversations. All of this takes place in an environment of fantastic landscapes inspired by images from digital games or in traditional living rooms, at the discretion and whims of the two creatures.

In *Human Avatars* (15), also from 2005, Andrea Zapp imagined a media art facility in which a dialogue was created between the real and the virtual. In this context, visitors of the exhibition discover a small wooden house in which they are invited to enter. A live image of the participant's body is projected onto a remote version of the model in the same house, but this house has furniture, where other visitors can see the films generated on a small scale and through a window. This facility's architecture and setting are somewhat childish, but the immediate interactive experience is controversial since it includes a voyeuristic strategy behind the idyllic aspect, in a dollhouse atmosphere where there is a mapping and surveillance system that controls the participant's movements and actions in the experience.

The use of the Web to generate critical and reflexive interpretations over the nature of contemporary experience is evident in projects such as the game *agoraXchange / make the game, change the world* (16), assigned to Jacqueline Stevens and Natalie Bookchin by the Tate Modern in London. *agoraXchange* is an online community dedicated to the design of a *massive multi-player* game that addresses matters related to global politics, with the intent to challenge violence and inequality underlying current political systems. The game was introduced at Tate Online on 15 March 2004, and has since received contributions from various individuals in the construction of its rules and ideas. According to the game's online statement:

We put forward agoraXchange to elicit collaboration for challenging a world in which myths about birthright result in violence and suffering within and among nations and families. We urge eliminating the laws responsible for nation and

17—For a possible reading of the entire statement, see: <<http://agoraxchange.org/index.php?page=233#233>> (Accessed in December, 2008).

18—Janet Abrams, “Other Victories”, in *If/Then Play*, Netherlands Design Institute, pp 232- 247.

marriage because we believe that these institutions misshape our material and psychic lives and constrain the imagination in ways that stunt us all (17)

Online systems for multiple players may help to stimulate collaboration and competition in a form of dialogue that takes into consideration some basic premises, namely the need to establish a prolific debate that generates action-based behaviours and incorporating contributions of a systemic nature where more complexity is obtained from simple rules. Emerging complex behaviour arises as a result of relatively simple interactions. Two possible examples from *game studies* are the case of Chess, common in Western societies, and its equivalent in Eastern societies, Go. There are fewer rules in Go, compared to Chess, and some professional players of the former say that it has assumed greater complexity as rules continue creating plays according to possible strategies. Furthermore, as we indicated before through the concept of emergence, it may be considered that simple rules generate greater complexity.

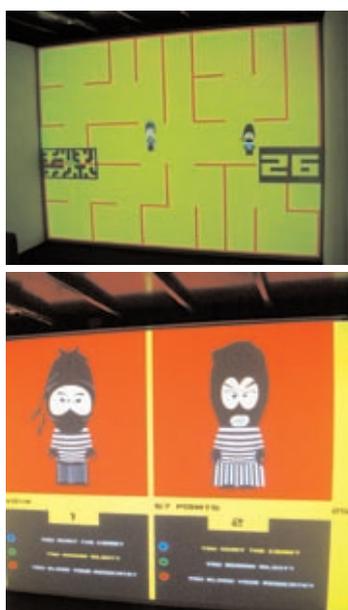
Complex emerging behaviour arises as a result of interactions between relatively simple subsystems and is based upon a set of direct and indirect models and synergies. The new paradigm is to model the world that organizes itself through a process of synergy, a frequent phenomenon in nature and human societies. In direct interactions, the individual contributes in real time and in a group setting with other individuals to develop the system, and these interactions may be considered as a mechanism of biological, sociological, psychological and physical self-organization. In indirect interactions, there is cooperative interaction in which an individual contributes to the modification of an environment, opening up the possibility of another individual subsequently responding to that environment with a new input (Ramos, 2002). The existence of altruistic behaviour arises alongside another type of behaviour, competitive behaviour, which is also characteristic of human societies and biology. Artificial ecologies present two different problems, or rather, the cooperation and competition of virtual creatures, which, like humans, adopt different interaction strategies.

If the cooperative organization leads us to analysis of altruistic behaviour, or rather, behaviour that benefits the ‘other’ organism or individual, an important phenomenon both in nature and human societies, then competition was also identified as an important factor in biological structuring. Cooperative behaviour normally depends on some degree of altruism and may be of fundamental importance for understanding online interactions (Lindgren & Nordahl, 2000: 15) but competition likewise generates new configurations and strategies due to the dispute between two opponents. The root of the word ‘compete’ goes back to the Latin *cum petere*, which means, ‘to seek together’ (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004: 256). Therefore, it may be considered that competition is fundamental to encouraging and generating new configurations and stimulating opponents to produce better results in a constant striving that generates unexpected effects in game system design.

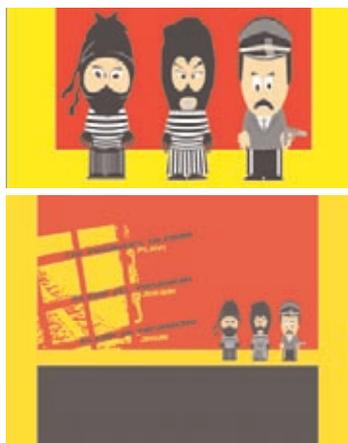
The Israeli artist Uri Tzaig, cited by Janet Abrams in the text “Other Victories”, (18) takes us to a football game where two balls are introduced

19—This project was conceived and produced in partnership with Ivan Valadares of the firm Ydreams Portugal. For more information about this software engineer see: <www.ydreams.com/yardreams_2005/index.php?page=44&view=team:Details&zepp_obj_id=242> or the company's website, <www.ydreams.com> (Accessed in December, 2008).

20—For further information about this festival, see: <www.lamundial.com.es/interparla> (Accessed in December, 2008).



+ F1—Game or prisoner's dilemma exhibit screen. *Interparla Festival*, February 2008 (Patricia Gouveia and Ivan Valadares).



+ F2—Graphical interface images from the *Game or prisoner's dilemma* exhibit. *Interparla Festival*, February 2008 (Patricia Gouveia and Ivan Valadares).

to change the focus of vision that is normally centred on just one. In the context, the artist constructs a new game in which the structure is subverted by the inclusion of two elements, redefining the rules of traditional games such as football and basketball in which any behaviour of attendance becomes decentralized. This change in the conventions of the game, two balls, two centres of attention, prompts us to lose the ball's centralizing power. It is the rigid structure that persists in our sporting matches that Uri Tzaig seeks to study and deconstruct.

There are two types of behaviour identified in the global economy 'game' (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 1997), those practiced in western *versus* eastern society. These behaviours may be explained by the difference between so-called finite games, zero-sum games where the object of the game is to determine who wins or who loses, and infinite games or collaborative games, i.e., the prisoner's dilemma type, where the importance lies in the evolution of the game itself. If in the first case of zero-sum games, we face a Darwinist metaphor of progress in which the unit of survival is the individual and the board game is a neutral space, in the second case, the winning player and losing player are the same, and we face behaviour that favours the individual in the game played. It may then be considered that the objective in finite games is to survive, such that the winners exclude the losers and normally win everything. These board games are relatively simple and the rules are defined in advance. On the other hand, in infinite games the objective of the playing process arises from the development of the game itself and the winners show losers other ways to play. In this case, there is a shared victory and relative complexity in which the rules may be changed.

An objective of this text's author has been to reconcile the two playable tendencies, cooperation *versus* competition, in a balanced manner that allows for the application of interesting strategies from the perspective of aesthetic fruition. In this sense, three different art and design projects were created: a playable media exhibit called *The Prisoner's Dilemma Game* (2008) (19) which was part of the 2008 *Interparla Festival* (20) in Spain (figures 1 and 2); an e-mail game, *JOV, Joga Outra Vez*, or "Play It Again" (2005), which relied on the participation of around 20 individuals (18 active and two passive participants) and stimulated discussion surrounding various issues related to technology and virtual spaces (figures 3 and 4); and a blog for dissemination and collaborative writing called *Mouseland* (2006-08). This space for dissemination and critical debate is touted as a site for discussion relating to aspects associated with digital culture in its playable, cinematographic and musical dimensions. *Mouseland* is a persistent world, which relies upon a full-time collaborator (Rafael Gouveia) located in Paris, France, and upon various contributions from visitors who submit content and actively respond to games, puzzles and texts, which have been available there for two and a half years (figures 5 and 6).

+F1, +F2

The first project, *The Game or Prisoner's Dilemma*, shown in figures 1 and 2, was conceived in partnership with Ivan Valadares and sends us to a playable digital application through images projected on a wall and arranged from a computer. Interaction is possible through the control of

21—See: <www.tourdejeu.net> (Accessed in November, 2006).

22—Manuel Boutet, “Des jeux d’adultes? Corporités et sociabilités dans les cyberespaces ludiques”, in Mélanie Roustan (Ed.), *La Pratique du Jeu Vidéo: Réalité ou Virtualité?*, Dossiers Sciences Humaines et Sociales, L. Harmattan, Paris, 2004, pp. 99-111.

23—The game’s structure of rules was conceived taking into consideration that the author of this environment lived between Lisbon and São Paulo; therefore, the following terms were used: nomadism and distance, emigrant and exile. The game functioned with a connecting link between the author and her community of friends and interests. For further information about this experience, see the PhD thesis: Patrícia Gouveia, *Joga Outra Vez, um conjunto de objectos que contam histórias inteligentes* [Play It Again, a group of objects which tell intelligent stories], School of Social Sciences and Humanities at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa, unedited Doctoral Thesis financed by FCT, Lisbon, 2008.



+ F3—Letter of reflection regarding the suffragist movement / *Joga outra vez* (2005)



+ F4—Graphs of points and progression by eighteen anonymous players / *Joga outra vez* (2005).

two joysticks and two players must cooperate in order to finish the three available levels. These levels consist of three different platforms/maps: fleeing from the police (labyrinth), responding to a questionnaire and eliminating the agent in combat through collaboration. This application was inspired in the classic prisoner’s game introduced by the theory of games and emphasizes aspects related to logic and mathematics, facilitating an understanding that cooperation is fundamental for progressing in a board game.

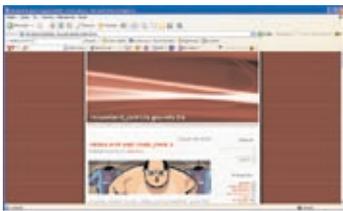
Game or Prisoner’s Dilemma emerges as a non-zero-sum game in which the total points distributed between the players depends upon actions chosen in the game. The result or objective of the actions is the maximization of points, which is not so much a matter of defeating the opponent. This game has the following structure: we start with two prisoners who were incarcerated and suspected of committing a crime together. Unless one of them confesses, there is no way to convict them. The party responsible for their imprisonment offers a price to whoever confesses the crime. If one of the prisoners confesses the crime, the other will receive a lengthy sentence. If both confess the crime they will be imprisoned for a shorter period of time. Finally, if both remain silent, they will be freed due to a lack of evidence. The game is fast and requires a certain degree of diplomatic skill. The digital application is created in three languages: Portuguese, Spanish and English.

Joga Outra Vez (figures 3 and 4) was a game created in the context of a doctoral thesis with the same name and was created for e-mail. The concept introduces us to the games of the *Tour de Jeu* (21) explained in the article, “Des jeux d’adultes? Corporités et sociabilités dans les cyberespaces ludiques”, by Manuel Boutet. (22) These e-mail games are heirs to postal mail games in which there is an immense amount of discrete time, allowing for a game of chess, naval battle or other game to be played remotely if players are in different geographical locations. Therefore, each of them sends a game by post with a ‘board’ where the plays of two or more participants playing that game are indicated. Currently, this possibility is broadened, in terms of speed, by the use of the Web and e-mail such that the number of games proposed is limitless: strategy, role-playing games, simulation, etc., with historic, comedy, realistic or other subjects. The trick that makes these interactions possible is that the players do not play in real time, at the same time, but rather one at a time, *tour par tour*. The qualities required from players are explicit: patience and attendance. The main advantages presented: freedom (played when there is time, but upon selecting the type of game to be played, a time estimate must be made in order to get involved) and environment (a game sometimes lasts for months). The ‘one-at-a-time’ aspect of connected players, contrary to the majority of online games, allows more time for reflection and creative expression in which the player must demonstrate compliance, perseverance, patience and common sense.

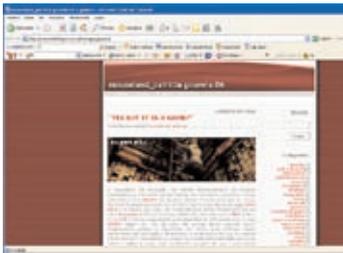
+F3, +F4

Joga Outra Vez (nomadism and distance) (23) was created with the objective of building different textual bodies/characters: the body of the manager/emigrant/exile (game master) and different anonymous bodies.

24—The aforementioned text is available online at: J. Yellowlees Douglas, “What Hypertexts can do that print narratives cannot”. See: <www.nwe.tfl.edu/~jdouglas/reader.pdf> (Accessed in December, 2008).



+ F5—Mouseland (2006)
cyberculture area



+ F6—Mouseland (2006)
game art area

The anonymous players are in *monologue* with one another but in *dialogue* with the body of the manager/emigrant/exile. The anonymous players are correspondents chosen from a very selective database of persons who may share interests, as well as broad and specific discussions. Initially, there is a very narrow connection between the manager and the anonymous players but as the database advances, it is extended to include new connections. Turbulence, chaos (which by definition implies a structural order) and freedom of expression are stimulated, but the system manager exercises censorship rights in the context of concealing the identity of anonymous players and in order to maintain the database's confidentiality. *Joga Outra Vez (JOV)* has ten specific rules and represents the launching of five letters (texts) which are later discussed via e-mail. These general letters allow the manager to assign seven scoring cards (punishment, privilege, motivation, prestige, participation or gold) and accordingly to make the system to evolve. The board game manager generates the individual reflections of participants and assigns points to different contributions whereby participants who generate more reflection and commentary from others receive more points.

The Mouseland blog, represented in figures 5 and 6, was created in May of 2006 and is installed on the videogames community server at the University of Aveiro in Portugal. This site was constructed for the purpose of stimulating and publishing academic studies about electronic games and is frequently updated. In the blogosphere, ‘mouseland’ has been a site that has lauded and has garnered participation in which not only videogames are discussed, but also subjects relating to digital culture, cyberculture, cyberfeminism, film, exhibitions and other categories. Apart from being a space for the dissemination of digital culture, Mouseland organized some collaborative written versions of games where the object was to construct some interactive arguments, or rather, the joint creation of stories and narratives. The result may be examined on the blog under the ‘scripts’ area and includes various banter from soap operas and tv series references.

+F5, +F6

Interactive narratives, according to J. Yellowlees Douglas, (24) have a nomenclature similar to that of some *avant garde* and experimental fiction. They are narratives of multiplicity and interspersed with predecessors in traditional print culture, who are present, by way of example, in the works *The Alexandria Quartet*, by Lawrence Durrell, *Rayuela*, by Julio Cortazar and *Pleasure of Text* by Roland Barthes. They are narrative fragments, perspectives in conflict, interruptions. Objects revealed dynamically. Works that mirror our movements in the system, our process for inclusion in the work's space. Unlike the spatial rigidity of printed text, changes always occur to ‘texts’ present in digital products. None of their versions is final, since it may be constantly altered, recombined and remade. Accordingly, a constant dynamism is permitted to facilitate corrections, updates and modifications. Therefore, in losing the rigidity of text, we also lose its unity, which allows us to escape what Gérard Genette, cited by George Landow, denounced as the idolatry and fetishism of written work as an absolute, closed and complete object (Landow, 2001: 79). Digital objects allow the reader to take various routes through a fixed body of ‘lexias’ but also to construct their own narrative links. Hypertext and hyperfiction ask us to

abandon the notion of a unitary text and adopt the idea of dispersed writing. The proposed fragmentation of the body of text in numerous pieces of words and images is explained by Roland Barthes in *S/Z*, cited by George Landow, in the following manner:

(...) we shall therefore star the text, separating, in the manner of a minor earthquake, the blocks of signification of which reading grasps only the smooth surface, imperceptibly soldered by the movement of sentences, the flowing discourse of narration, the 'naturalness' of ordinary language. The tutor signifier will be cut up into a series of brief, contiguous fragments, which we shall call lexias, since they are units of reading

(Roland Barthes *S/Z*: 13, cited in Landow, 2001: 64).

Furthermore, this article argues that online games may recreate precisely a textually derived structure—contiguous fragments and shrapnel of phrases and words—already present in hypertext and hyperfiction. This structure appears in the genesis of hyperfiction, yet also in a new version closed to the reader from the perspective of creation and configuration and only open to this interpretation perspective. Online games may broaden this trend through the possibility of the insertion of textual excerpts and blocks arising from and created by the very reader/participant/player. This opening of the playable system, through the creation of games which serve to create other games, or the narrative lines which jump from platform to platform, expressively broaden the system of participation and collaboration of interactive fiction. This reader/participant/player may generate his or her own stories from personal narratives, characters constructed, worlds inhabited and remade, and lines of code manipulated and inserted into an existing system. Even other individuals may be invited to share these units of text, code, videos or images, allowing them to be altered, broadened and reconfigured.

The time of the tripartite narrative (the time of the story, narrator and reader) and the game's implosive sense of time (Juul, 1999, 2005) in which everything happens simultaneously—namely, where the story occurs and is lived and recounted in an implosive manner, allows for the reconciliation of narrative structures that merge the avatar or player's action together with the story told 'on the fly'. The designer of the system, or *puppet master*, who conceives and publishes a book of possible rules so that the participant subsequently assembles the pieces and solves mysteries, is responsible for this non-linear structure of textual blocks. Interactive fiction lacks the narrative plot to make possible a book of rules open to manipulation and action in an emerging form of narration, which continues to be defined regardless of how the story is lived. It is considered that "creating a good player character within an interactive fiction world involves putting this character in a situation that is motivating for the interactor—but not giving the interactor an actual dramatic script or a role to play." (Monfort, 2007: 140) The immediacy of simulation and the possibility of mixing first-person narratives with stories told in the second and third person (Douglas, 2007) allow for implosive stories from alternative reality games, with greater plasticity and meaning. Favouring the process of game system *mastery* by participants and their capacity to resolve enigmas and puzzles, the design of *human-machine* interfaces includes open fiction and narration that

25—See: <<http://secondlife.com>> (Accessed in December, 2008).

26—See: <www.worldofwarcraft.com/index.xml> (Accessed in December, 2008).

27—On February 10, 2007, a stylographic pen was intentionally left in the Lisbon Coliseum during a concert performed by the American band Nine Inch Nails. This pen was later found by a fan of the band and generated a set of mysteries and puzzles, all created from a narrative structure forged and generated in real time. The marketing strategy was conceived by an agency specializing in alternative reality games and by the band's mentor, Trent Reznor, and relied upon public collaboration. Approximately 30 website and thematic blogs were built, T-shirts were printed and mobile phones were used. The strategy encouraged participation and collaboration in a fiction which involved kidnapping of fans, an appearance by the band at a warehouse, etc. (Rose, 2008).

28—Currency used in the game *Second Life*.

29—Artificial language developed for the game *The Sims*.

30—Regarding intersections between the real and digital economies see Edward Castronova, *Synthetic Worlds, The Business and Culture of Online Games*, University of Chicago Press, 2005.

allows the players to create their own style and personal experiences in a collaborative network where they perform as actors in the digital drama.

Cross media narratives in this context are places for fluid, collaborative writing where different forms of support serve as creative material towards the progression of the plot and the definition of digital fiction, in an alternative reality in which the means are used to produce shared and persistent entertainment spaces. Gaming platforms for various participants such as *Second Life* (25) or the *World of Warcraft* (26) but also environments for dissemination and communication such as MySpace, H5, Last FM, Flickr or LinkedIn (27), among others, may help to generate interesting narrative extensions in the creation of crossover spaces, enigmatic puzzles and numeric drifts. The shared interactive argument gains new plasticity and generates an aesthetic relationship that rests on the shared experiences in which everything is an opportunity to stimulate the collective body, where representations become porous and theoretical systems weaken, accentuating ongoing creativity conducive to digression. As Maffesoli states, fiction in most cases precedes reality (Maffesoli, 2008: 87-89). Digital ecologies and creatures from games, cross media narratives, the virtual economy of *Linden Dollars* (28) and the *Simlich* (29) language have done much to deeply penetrate real ecologies (cf. Castronova, 2005). (30) Simply by paying close attention to these dynamics of popular online culture, we may understand some social and communicative factors prevalent in various contemporary tribes.

Bibliography

- Janet ABRAMS, "Other victories", in *If/Then Play*, Netherlands Design Institute, Amsterdam, 1999, pp. 232-247.
- Jay David BOLTER, Diane GROMALA, *Windows and Mirrors, Interaction Design, Digital Art and the Myth of Transparency*, MIT Press, Cambridge (Massachusetts), 2003.
- Manuel BOUTET, "Des jeux d'adultes? Corporéités et sociabilités dans les cyberespaces ludiques", in Mélanie Roustan (Ed.), *La Pratique du Jeu Vidéo: Réalité ou Virtualité?*, Dossiers Sciences Humaines et Sociales, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2004, pp. 99-111.
- Edward CASTRONOVA, *Synthetic Worlds, The Business and Culture of Online Games*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2005.
- Edmond COUCHOT, *Technology in Art, from photography to virtual reality*, Editora da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), Rio Grande do Sul, 2003.
- Jon DOVEY, Helen W. KENNEDY, *Computer Cultures, Computer Game as New Media*, Open University Press, New York & London, 2006.
- J. Yellowlees DOUGLAS (no information), "What Hypertexts Can Do that Print Narratives Cannot" at <www.nwe.ufl.edu/~jdouglas/reader.pdf>. (Accessed in December, 2008).
- Jeremy DOUGLAS, "Enlightening Interactive Fiction, Andrew Plotkin's *Shade*", in Pat Harrigan & Noah Wardrip-Fruin (Eds.), *Second Person, Role-Playing and Story in Games and Playable Media*, MIT Press, Cambridge (Massachusetts), MIT Press, 2006 pp. 129-36.
- Vilém FLUSSER, *The Shape of Things, a Philosophy of Design*, Reaktion Books, 1999.
- Patrícia GOUVEIA, *Joga Outra Vez, um conjunto de objectos que contam histórias inteligentes* [Play It Again, a group of objects which tell intelligent stories], School of Social Sciences and Humanities at Universidade Nova de Lisboa, unedited Doctoral Thesis financed by FCT, Lisbon, 2008.
- , "Paraísos artificiais: autoria partilhada na criação contemporânea e na era dos jogos em rede" (Artificial paradises: shared authorship in contemporary creation and in the era of online games"), in AAVV, II Ibérico, Communication Sciences Acts of Congress, 2004, pp. 567-576. See: <www.labcom.ubi.pt/livros/labcom/pdfs/AC-TAS%20VOL%201.pdf> (Accessed in December, 2008).
- Charles HAMPDEN-TURNER & Fons TROMPENAARS, *Mastering the Infinite Game*, Capstone Publishing, 1997.
- Troy INNOCENT, *Field of Play*, 2007. See: <<http://www.fieldofplay.net>> (Accessed in December, 2008).
- , *Ludea*, 2005. See: <www.boutwelldrapergallery.com.au/imagesart/bdg_Innocent_LUDEA_Text.pdf> (Accessed in December, 2008).
- , *LifeSigns*, 2004. See: <<http://iconica.org/life-signs/index.htm>> (Accessed in December, 2008).
- , *Iconica*, 2002. See: <<http://iconica.org/forms/index.htm>> (Accessed in December, 2008).
- Jesper JUUL, *Half-Real, Video Games Between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds*, MIT Press, Cambridge (Massachusetts), 2005.
- , *A Clash between Game and Narrative, a thesis on computer game and interactive fiction*, 1999, unedited masters thesis, at <www.jesperjuul.dk> (Accessed in May, 2004).
- Stephen KLINE, et al, *Digital Play, The Interaction of Technology, Culture and Marketing*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal & Kingston, London, Ithaca, 2003.
- George P. LANDOW, *Hypertext 2.0, the Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, London, 2001.
- Kristian LINDGREN, Mats G. NORDAHL, "Cooperation and Community Structure in Artificial Ecosystems", in Christopher G. Langton (Ed.), *Artificial Life, an overview*, MIT Press, Cambridge (Massachusetts), 2000, pp. 15-37.
- Michel MAFFESOLI, *Iconologies, nos idol@tries postmodernes*, Éditions Albin Michel, Paris, 2008.
- Nick MONTFORT, "Fretting the Player Character", in Pat Harrigan & Noah Wardrip-Fruin (Eds.), *Second Person, Role-Playing and Story in Games and Playable Media*, MIT Press, Cambridge (Massachusetts), 2007, pp. 139-46.
- Vitorino RAMOS, (2002), *MC2, Collective Conscience Machines*, 2002, in <<http://alfa.ist.utl.pt/~cvrm/staff/vramos/MC2pt.html>>, 2002. (Accessed in March 2004).
- Sónia RODRIGUES, *Roleplaying Game and the Pedagogy of Imagination in Brazil*, Bertrand Brasil, Rio de Janeiro, 2004.
- Frank ROSE, *Nine Inch Nails, Let's Play! The Esoteric Game of Trent Reznor*, Jornal Blitz, Lisbon, March 2008.
- Katie SALLEN & Eric ZIMMERMAN, *Rules of Play, Game Design Fundamentals*, MIT Press, Cambridge (Massachusetts), MIT Press, 2004.
- Jacqueline STEVENS, Natalie BOOKCHIN (2004), *Agoraxchange / make the game, change the world*. At <http://agoraxchange.org/index.php?page=218> (Accessed in December 2008).
- Brian SUTTON-SMITH, *The Ambiguity of Play*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1997.
- Olaf VAL, *Mignon Game Kit*, 2004. See: <www.olafval.de/mignon/english> (Accessed in December, 2008).
- Andrea ZAPP, *Human Avatars*, 2005 See: <www.azapp.de> (Accessed in December, 2008).
- , *Unheimlich*, 2005. See: <<http://creativetechnology.salford.ac.uk/unheimlich>> (Accessed in December, 2008).
- , *The Imaginary Hotel*, 2002. See: <www.azapp.de/tih_01.html> (Accessed in December, 2008).