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Matters of Content, Form and Im-material

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Why is it still easier to get an entire museum collection on the Internet than to get a single work of Internet-based Art in a museum space? As with the nature of this question, both aspects have to be taken into account: the field of Internet-based Art with its characteristics and proponents, as well as the mechanisms that allow institutions to filter what the public at large understands to be art. Within this balancing act between independent (sometimes anti-institutional) work on the one hand and institutional (sometimes commercial) work on the other, the transference of artworks created on, for or with only a slight glance at the Internet into a setting that is normally dedicated to the presentation of highly accepted and valued forms of art can only be developed case by case, according to what the typology of the actual artwork requires. Internet-based Art is constantly shifting between the daily news, commercial and social-political interests and the reactions to it, between technological innovation and the cultural context in which technology is always embedded. It oscillates between an expanded field of contemporary art and cultural practice and its well-defined precursors in the 20th century history of artistic expression—many reasons why Internet-based Art is often stuck in a ghetto between the different contexts it emerges from.

In this regard, this book analyses how artistic creation on—and based upon—the Internet and the processes of its re-formulation in the real space can be developed in order to find appropriate presentational modes, suitable for both sides—the Internet and the art world—in favour of interdisciplinary discourse. It also represents a synopsis of the activities of the art collective CONT3XT.NET over the past five years, since it was founded in Vienna in early 2006 by Sabine Hochrieser, Michael Kargl, Birgit Rinagl and Franz Thalmair. Programmatically, this group of artists, curators and authors—their different roles and functions sometimes regarded strictly, sometimes as a fluid continuum—work at the basis of contemporary visual, textual and networked practices. Always starting

from the idea of the context as the most indecisive and variable but relevant constraint of any situation, the collective analyses the spatial, temporal, discursive as well as the institutional framework that conceptual artistic practices are rooted in today. Here the main point of interest is the exploration of creative territories shifting between the 'virtual' and the 'real' as well as between the dimensions of the 'inside' and the 'outside' of the field of art. This book can be read as a loose documentation of projects as well as a screenshot of tendencies that have emerged and disappeared within the past few years. It is not intended to be scientific or strictly theoretical, nor is it a product of artistic expression or pure curatorial practice. But in any case it must be understood as a protocol of workflows concerned with matters of content, form and im-material.

Internet Work

Starting with a fact that has been clarified extensively and by many authors: provided that there is a computer with Internet access, Internet-based Art can be viewed at any time and any location and can therefore be left in its own medium of production—or, to put it bluntly and to talk in terms of exhibitions, the medium equals the showroom. Over more than 15 years, the curation of Internet-based Art in a medium of its own has developed into a multifaceted communication process on content among users from all backgrounds and provenances. Artists, activists, programmers, scholars from different disciplines and all kinds of users and spectators can be involved in the process of curating Internet-based 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 it was already termed in 1998, not only creates a public space for the protagonists of Internet-based 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 an Internet-based process of curating, as are providing resources, initiating collaborations and remaining in contact with international networks.

Expanding the curators' field of action is closely linked to the characteristics of art produced on and for the Internet. It allows them to incorporate more than the supervision, contextualisation and exhibition of artworks in museums, galleries or alternative spaces. Internet-based Art does not necessarily have to be presented in a customary exhibition space, because, as already mentioned, as it can be viewed, used and interacted with anywhere at any time. In many cases, Internet-based Art emerges only through the participation of an audience with diverse approaches to the Internet, who comment on, transform and disseminate artworks in multifaceted ways, which have

sometimes been described as rhizomatic. In addition, the somewhat communicative mechanisms this art is based on are simultaneously its subject, thus allowing it to function as a reciprocal feedback loop between the author and the spectator or, in other words more suited to the context Internet-based Art, between a group of networked collaborators. In the 20th century, the numerous postulations on authorship and on the concept of work as a definable entity with a definable set of limits gave way to a discourse that 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.

Apart from the still-existing need to define the variable characteristics of Internet-based Art and the many forms in which it is realised, the question that should be the focus of the curators' interest with regard to traditional institutional work is

not primarily what Internet-based Art 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 into real space raises 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 Internet-based Art does not need to be exhibited in the traditional context of museums, galleries or alternative spaces, for cultural discourse and the analysis of the mechanisms of contemporary society it is more than urgent to find appropriate ways of presenting the tactics artists use to deal with a medium that is omnipresent and affects our daily lives impetuously and more than any other medium. With the development of exhibition strategies that take the form of a "living information space that is open to interferences"[8] as well as with the combination of Internet-based Art with traditional forms of art, the chance to be shown in museum contexts thus 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—everyday commercial and political developments.

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 Internet-based Art into 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 the way that the design of an extended typology of spaces, including the Internet, structures creative practices"[9] and raises the chance of reaching a broader audience and achieving 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 an Internet-based 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 of stressing this two-way exchange between the virtual and the physical space might be a shift—on both sides—from a paradigmatic, technology-driven and hermetically closed curating to a syntagmatic, context-oriented and transparent working process that abstains from the notion of exclusivity.

Traditional art institutions today continue to filter what the general public understands to be art. The selected and thus privileged art genres of painting and sculpture, or younger categories such as installations, performances and video, then enjoy the further attendance the institutions offer: exhibition, documentation, study, preservation, archiving etc. In this way the art canon, art history, and last but not least—to talk in economic terms—the material value of art on the art market, are created. From the viewpoint of reclaiming cultural value, museums should take into account the question of how a traditional institution—more or less characterised by rigid hierarchies and centuries-old customs and habits—can come to terms with the artworks the 21st century 'networked society' has developed over 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, art institutions frequently ignore the fact that "the global network itself became the educational environment for those without direct access to institutions."[12] Even if the early promise of the utopia of a critically engaged media-consumer/producer on the Internet has only been fulfilled on a very limited level, the integration of alternative modes of re-presentation and the acceleration of discourse as forced by some specialists might be taken into account for the re-presentation of Internet-based Art in the physical environment of an institution.

In the context of Internet-based Art, the metaphor of an archive can be applied to the tasks of museums and to other traditional art collections: "The discursivity of multimedia, and how it can be associated with dialectical 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 these 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] and the art market.

Contextual Work

In parallel to the emergence of new challenges for museums and art institutions, the border between the work of an Internet-based 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 Internet-based Art on their computers at home—is lost. The installation of computers in an exhibition room, as was done in the early stages of exhibiting Internet-based 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 material 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—commodities that are suited to presentation in real settings without losing their ephemeral, immaterial, variable, networked and finally Internet-based characteristics. One possible way of escaping this dilemma might be to consider the contextual and the discursive environment that art on the Internet is created in. Talking in terms of the mutual relations of curatorial and artistic practices and relying on "the collaborative model [which] is also crucial to the artistic process itself",[15] this context can only be clarified by increasingly becoming one and dissolving the strict distinctions between the two working processes, which are still considered to be different.

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 and performers have been characterised by many different terms to

describe these 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 have come a long way, as have the curatorial activities concerned with it. Many of the early enthusiastic ideas, developed to 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 reinforced the idea of curating on the Internet within the context of "a community-based narrative of everyday life"[17] and in a much broader sense as the filtering of information of any kind.

Described by a perpetually utopian terminology already used at the early beginnings of artistic experimentation with the online medium, the commercial creators of Web 2.0 nowadays 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 labelled 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 of the ongoing commercialisation of these 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 it possible for "acts, ideas and products [to be] 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 Internet-based Art on the various platforms is more than an expert on 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 also for the conjunction of different cultural and artistic disciplines in favour of the many forms an interdisciplinary and networked environment can assume.

Translation Work

Within the framework of discursive strategies, the curation of Internet-based Art, online as well as offline, can be specified as translation 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 linked to the production of written documents: the mobilisation of participants via invitation mails, calls for papers and the creation

of temporary discursive and/or dialogic 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 invention or re-use 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 Internet-based Art works in and within the same medium as the artist, which inevitably results in the fact that curating can only be an "adaptive discipline, using and adopting inherited codes and rules of behaviour."[23] These explanative, meditative and finally translation strategies of curatorial re-shaping are also meant to be forms of visualising power structures and the role of Internet-based Art within the global processes of political and economic 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, raised to a global level by the proclamation of the so-called '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, arose out of the criticism of linguistic and literary theory. Nevertheless, Walter Benjamin's concepts in the essay The Task of the Translator can be applied to the field of Internet-based Art and directly applied to the curator's daily work. In the early 1920s, he already described the relation between the original text and its translation "as a tangent [which] 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 interdependence between the original and its translation can be compared to the interdependence between an Internet-based work of art and the way it is exhibited in real space.

In this case "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] Whether it is the simple documentation of an artwork by means of contextualising strategies, the focus on just one single component of an artwork relevant for the exhibition or the development of derivative works, if Internet-based Art wants to become recognised as art and not as a 'funny-gadget industry' the display of

those artworks in museum, gallery and alternative 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 […] 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 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 connected to its production and reception on the Internet.

As today's technology will tomorrow be more than old, only the cultural context it emerges from, the aesthetic value it creates and the effects it has on our society can be the translation 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 much longer and thus reaches much deeper into what is known as human perception. The variability of Internet-based Art is just as linked to the fluidity of technology, and vice-versa. Both of them can therefore only be thought of as the point of contact where the tangent touches the circle and then pursues its own course, its own modes—which are modes of translation.

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Net-Work::Curatorial Practice

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Steve Dietz

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"[T]he present book reflects upon how artistic creation on—and based upon—the Internet and the processes of its re-formulation in the real space can be developed to find appropriate presentational modes, suitable for both sides—the Internet and the art world—in favour of interdisciplinary discourse."
CONT3XT.NET

In the mid-70s photographer/artist/curator/editor/theorist Lew Thomas "curedited"[1] a series of exhibitions and publications—Photography and Language (1976), Eros and Photography (1977), Structural(ism) and Photography (1978) and Still Photography: The Problematic Model (1981). The series came about at a time when there was real ferment about photography as a medium and Thomas, in a sense, was the voice that lost out, at least for a time, to the megaphone that was John Szarkowski and the Museum of Modern Art. In an open letter to Szarkowski printed in Structural(ism) and Photography, Thomas wrote:
"I am delighted by the inclusion of my photographic piece in the exhibition [Mirrors and Windows:] American Photography since 1960. For me the show manifests a single, unalterable conclusion that you, not Minor White, Robert Frank or Gary Winogrand, are the star of this survey."[2]

Thomas was not beyond placing his own mark on an exhibition, but at least in Photography and Language he believed that the open and structured nature of the exhibition would lead to a different result than Szarkowski's Mirrors and Windows, writing in the introduction: "In order to stimulate interests beyond the fetishism of the object and to allow artists outside California to participate on an equal basis, an 8" x 10" horizontal format was made an unequivocal condition for entry to the exhibition. Within this context artists were free to send as many prints as they thought necessary to fulfill their projects. Images could be any size, vertical or horizontal, so long as they were presented in the prescribed format. Unmounted and unframed work would then be stapled to the gallery walls in alphabetical order. Therefore, the conditions and policy

of Photography and Language made it possible to install work without subjective mediation, encourage work beyond a regional scope, neutralize the value of the object and equate an EXHIBITION WITH THEORY. Thus A CONTEXT WAS ESTABLISHED TO EXPLORE THE MEANING AND IDENTITY OF ART AND ARTISTS [emphasis added]."[3]

Arguably there is currently a similar ferment around "artistic creation on—and based upon—the Internet."[4] What is it? What's good? How is it different? How is it the same? What's the best way to show it? How do we get beyond "it"? CONT3XT. NET's curatorial practice, at least as represented in this book, is not unlike Thomas's—and Szarkowki's—notion of the exhibition as a site for theory, as well as, importantly, a way to get beyond that theory to "the meaning and identity of art and artists."

Without hesitation, despite Szarkowski's decades-long hegemony in the art photography world, there is no single answer to these questions about either photography or "Net Art." What we can observe in CONT3XT.NET's work is a kind of feedback loop between Net Art and curatorial practice. The apparent "problem" is how to present so-called immaterial work in real, physical space. Arguably, however, the real problem is the role of curation in the full-blown age of the "computerization of society."[5]

At a minimum, the problems are not unrelated—or unheralded, as Thomas noted about photography and language and Conceptualism: "Once linguistic structuring is integrated with photographic procedures genres are subjected to reinterpretation and expansion. Unexpected formats emerge enabling artists to handle content that no longer can be contained within a pictorial tradition …

The independence of ideas in relation to photography has opened up an entirely new set of possibilities to deal 'with the social mediation of the physical world through the agency of signs' as put by Victor Burgin."[6]

Trans-formation

"[D]igital artworks, although predetermined by the binary code, do not become 'real' (in the sense of generally comprehensible) until the code is transformed into text, image or sound (when the data file is opened and the commands executed). Both language and digital artworks are based on processes, transformations and continuous fluidity."
CONT3XT.NET

At the heart of CONT3XT.NET's exhibition practice are two overlapping questions: what is the possible relationship of immaterial (Internet) art to material space, especially the white cube of the art world, and what is the possible role of the curator in manifesting this relationship?

The artist duo MTAA has a famous Simple Net Art Diagram[7] from 1997,which at the time worked in the same way that animated GIFs were intended to work. It caught your attention and made you think about Net Art and what it might be beyond displaying an image of a painting on your computer screen. While both provocative and effective, it always bothered me a bit because it seemed to imply a place—not necessarily a process—and seemed to ignore the human sensorium. How can the art happen there, if you are not Tron?

Jim Campbell's Formula for Computer Art,[8] however, localizes the 'here' in MTAA's Simple Net Art Diagram as, in essence, the algorithms and memory in a Turing machine—or computer. In this model, here is a process and not, exactly, a place. The network itself is just a bunch of connected Turing machines. In addition, Formula for Computer Art makes it explicit that input into the system can be anything, as can the output: language, weather, touch, Net Art, exhibitions etc.

In 2010, as part of Translation Is a Mode. | Übersetzung ist eine Form., CONT3XT.NET exhibited MTAA's related Commons Art Diagram (2007), which, according to MTAA, is "a digital image that illustrates where the 'art happens' or the 'art could happen' within the alternate

sharing economy."⁹ Essentially, MTAA's conceptual or philosophical statement was transformed into a political statement about the necessary conditions for the creation of art in general.

Taken together, these diagrams seem to neatly illustrate a set of possible answers to CONT3XT.NET's—and my—questions. In particular, keeping in mind the idea of the computer as a "language machine,"¹⁰ if you overlay the curator with the black boxes of algorithms and memory, imagine Net Art as an input with any possible output, exchange the nodes of the commons for whatever context you care about—the art world, global politics, chess—then you have a bi-directional map or feedback loop of both net-work and curatorial practice as trans-formation.

Re-cension

"Variations and versions are central components of a globalized and constantly faster-paced everyday culture. Only a short time after their introduction, products and services—especially in the field of information technology—are quickly expanded, reformulated and refined, and different versions are produced for different markets. The functions and properties of goods are continually being adapted to consumers' needs, which leads to the worldwide economic network constantly spitting out new remakes, reproductions and also imitations and unauthorized fakes—can we talk about interpretations?" CONT3XT.NET

Interpretation is not unrelated to that black box of algorithms and memory that sits between input and output in the Formula for Computer Art—or between "products and services" and their variations, versions, expansions, reformulations, refinements, differentiations, adaptations, remakes, reproductions, imitations and fakes. But how is an interpretation any different or better than any of the above? More to the point, how or why is curatorial interpretation any different or better than the transformations wrought by market forces? Certainly there can no longer be any credible argument for the original—or original thinking that purports to distinguish

itself merely by its existence. Nor is there any longer any credible argument against the copy and its legions: the cut up, the mash up, collage, the remix. Let us stipulate, instead, the human condition as one of 'recension,' which Raqs Media Collective in <u>A Concise Lexicon of / for the Digital Commons</u> defines as: "A re-telling, a word taken to signify the simultaneous existence of different versions of a narrative within oral, and from now onwards, digital cultures. Thus one can speak of a 'southern' or a 'northern' recension of a myth, or of a 'female' or 'male' recension of a story, or the possibility (to begin with) of Delhi/Berlin/Tehran 'recensions' of a digital work. The concept of recension is contraindicative to the notion of hierarchy. A recension cannot be an improvement, nor can it connote a diminishing of value.

A recension is that version which does not act as a replacement for any other configuration of its constitutive materials. The existence of multiple recensions is a guarantor of an idea or a work's ubiquity. This ensures that the constellation of narrative, signs and images that a work

embodies is present, and waiting for iteration at more than one site at any given time."[11]

While Raqs Media Collective does not suggest as much explicitly, it seems to me that recension shifts the focus of curatorial practice from originality to that which is generative, seeking iteration. What this means in practice is precisely a matter of practice, practice, practice. Of iteration. But likely it means that rather than telling the story of a work of art, one is telling a story. And more than that, one is modeling how to tell stories, providing the tools for others to create their own recensions of the work at hand.

Maria Anwander's <u>My Most Favourite Art</u>, for example, points in part to how the didactic labels about a work of art influence the audience's reception of that work, even when the art is on the wall right in front of you. And even when it is not. But more than that, she is modeling a curatorial practice, which, I suppose, steals the limelight from the individual works, but in doing so creates

such a fascinating recension that one is compelled to think about the physical recensions anew.

Trans-lation

<u>"The path of translation, however, is a long one when a text is to be transferred into another language and ascribed new purposes in order ultimately to learn that each new reception entails a change in meaning in the sense of interpretation..."</u>
CONT3XT.NET

One of the central tropes of CONT3XT. NET's exhibition-as-theory approach to curatorial practice is the idea of translation. Not translation-as-decoding, which Warren Waver famously and influentially wrote about in 1949: "When I look at an article in Russian, I say, This is really written in English, but it has been coded in some strange symbols. I will now proceed to decode."[12]

Not that kind of translation. As Warren Sack and Sawad Brooks wrote about their project <u>Translation Map</u> (2003):

"We propose an alternative that is simple common sense to translators: translation is a form of collaborative writing between people, specifically between authors and translators. Instead of trying to build a computer program that can translate automatically, we are attempting to build a computer program that can help connect people together over the Internet facilitating a collaborative re-writing process. Like any translation, the result will be good if the contributing translators are good writers."[13]

Sack and Brooks' point is more than that translation is not decoding; it is more than that the translator must choose words to represent in one language those of another, which is an interpretation, not a decoding. Their underlying point is that translation is a collaboration: at minimum between the translator and the words of the absent author; between the translator and de Saussure's "parole"— the way a language is concretely deployed by a society. In relation to the idea of translation as a mode, Sack and Brooks state the following: "Our ... approach is

based on the following observation made most acutely by the sociologist of science and technology, Bruno Latour: 'The word translation has at least two meanings: one linguistic, the other geometric.' The meaning of 'translation' in the discipline of geometry means a movement from one position to another. Rather than as a problem of linguistics and text, we propose to examine language translation as a problem of border crossing, movement, and spatialization."[14]

According to CONT3XT.NET, "in most of our exhibitions we try to transfer the immaterial aspects of the Internet into 'real' material, into installations, into printed paper, into wood, into objects."[15] Clearly, in this process—or mode—of curatorial practice, there is not a fixed, one-to-one correspondence between the original (or earlier recension) and the exhibition format—at least not a stable one—but there is an interpretation.

Similarly, CONT3XT.NET might argue, you cannot take the dynamic works from the habitat of the network and simply represent them with a label—this is naming–decoding—as killing. Interpretation is a recension that must be generative. Interpretation is an inherent mode of curatorial practice, and CONT3XT.NET must decide, generally in collaboration with the artists but not entirely, how to manifest the form and content of the network recension of any works exhibited. There is not necessarily a correct answer in this process—although there may be wrong ones—but there is a kind of feedback loop between CONT3XT.NET's interpretive mode and the content of an exhibition, which is both an instantiation of and a theory about their curatorial practice as translation.

Inter-active

"The audience becomes the meaningful subject and the author is no longer at the helm."
CONT3XT.NET

If the translator is also an interpreter, which is to say a kind of author, then the curator is also an author, not just

of the exhibition but also of the works in the exhibition by virtue of translating them from the network into real, physical space. The difference, however, is that new media work, at least some of it curated by CONT3XT.NET, is interactive. It is dynamic. It changes, and it is in this context that the audience becomes the author of the work, or at least the latest recension.

For example, in the exhibition <u>Untitled (The Author Entitles Texts By Experimenting With Art.)</u>, Nikolaus Gansterer's <u>Mnemocity (Figures of Thought II – VI)</u> consists of "scrappy text fragments, individual words and pieces of conversation are extracted from books and arranged into long strips of text. The rearrangement of linear books results in an organic-looking structure of knowledge, which is similar to an analog hypertext." According to CONT3XT.NET, "Gansterer reveals the multidimensional topographies of language, which only continuously reproduce when they are received."[16] <u>Untitled (The Author Entitles Texts By Experimenting With Art.)</u> both

underscores and undermines interactivity as a distinctive characteristic of New Media Art by presenting works where the materiality of the form is fixed, while the content of the work remains free floating in an interaction with the viewer.

Con-text

<u>"[T] he exhibition encourages viewers to pursue the art into the world outside and to leave the exhibition in order to explore other contexts."</u>
CONT3XT.NET

Perhaps not surprisingly, if in 20th century art abstraction has signaled the siren call for the autonomy of the work of art, independent of its context, its means of production, its author's biography, independent of other recensions, then CONT3XT.NET's argument is that net works that embrace abstraction inevitably lead back into context. For example, as CONT3XT.NET writes: "Anyone loading Reynald Drouhin's website <u>IP Monochrome</u> inevitably generates a monochrome colour square through the IP address

of their computer. The code number of the IP address is suddenly transformed into RGB (red-green-blue) values and hexadecimal codes to be released as an individual colour reference. Without their permission being asked, the spectators of the artwork (users) become creators of a monochrome colour field that is unknown until its realisation: monochromacity serving as a localised identity within a virtual network."[17]

We have become so tethered to our devices, so dependent on the ubiquitous presence—grounding?—of the network, that it is fascinating to think about this immaterial place as what draws us back into the world from the isolation of the white cube, the abstraction of the non-autonomous work of art.

Meaning-Identity:: Art-Artists

To return to Lew Thomas's argument that by treating exhibitions as a site of theory a context is established to explore the meaning and identity of art and artists, curatorial practice around net works is taking place in the context of an art world ecosystem from which it has been largely excluded. CONT3XT.NET plaintively and accurately begins this publication: "Why is it still easier to get an entire museum collection on the Internet than to get a single work of Internet-based Art into a museum space? As with the digital image and net works, curatorial practice needs to find a new position, and CONT3XT. NET proposes to do so "by reflecting upon itself and thus pointing to things other than itself."

[1] See CONT3XT.NET, Curediting—Contextualising Internet-based Art, http://cont3xt.net/blog/?p=1078 (March 29, 2011).

[2] Lew Thomas, Structuralism and Photography, NFS Press, San Francisco, 1978, p. 26.

[3] Lew Thomas, Photography and Language, NFS Press, San Francisco, 1976, p. 6.

[4] CONT3XT.NET, Matters of Content, Form and Immaterial, p. 4 (in this book).

[5] Alain Minc and Simon Nora, The Computerization of Society, The MIT Press, Boston, 1981.

6 Lew Thomas, Structuralism and Photography, NFS Press, San Francisco, 1978, p. 26.

7 MTAA, Simple Net Art Diagram, ca. 1997, http://www.mtaa.net/mtaaRR/off-line_art/snad.html (March 29, 2011).

8 Jim Campbell, Formula for Computer Art, 1996-2003, http://jimcampbell.tv/portfolio/miscellaneous_references (March 29, 2011).

9 MTAA, Commons Art Diagram, 2007, http://www.mtaa.net/mtaaRR/off-line_art/commons_art_diagram.html, (March 29, 2011).

10 See Sarah Schultz, Simon Biggs Questions Our Questions [Interview], The Shock of the View: http://www.walkerart.org/salons/shockoftheview/sv_intro_biggs.html (March 29, 2011).

11 Raqs Media Collective, A Concise Lexicon Of/For the Digital Commons, 2002, http://www.raqsmediacollective.net/texts4.html (March 29, 2011).

12 See Warren Weaver, Translation, in: William N. Locke and A. Donald Booth (eds.), Machine translation of languages: fourteen essays, Technology Press of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass., and John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, 1955, pp.15–23, http://www.mt-archive.info/Weaver-1949.pdf (March 29, 2011).

13 See Warren Sack and Sawad Brooks, Translation Map, in: Translocations, 2003. http://latitudes.walkerart.org/artists/index486c.html. (March 29, 2011).

14 Ibid.

15 E-mail correspondence with the authors (March 22, 2011).

16 CONT3XT.NET, Untitled (The Author Entitles Texts By Experimenting With Art.), p. 48 (in this book).

17 CONT3XT.NET, White, Yellow, Blue, and Black, one Coincidence, and one Object, p. 28 (in this book).

White, Yellow, Blue, and Black, one Coincidence, and one Object.

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Galerija Galženica, Velika Gorica/Croatia
September 15 – October 17, 2010
-

A reduction of structure, material and space; if colour articulates itself independently of interpretation or context does that make it autonomous? Monochromacity has been considered the most essential form of abstraction, having provided a source of inspiration for non-figurative and non-representational tendencies in contemporary art; these ideas need to be taken still further in the age of the digital image. The notion of a pure medium proposed by 20th century modernism with its ideals of autonomy is increasingly being displaced by mixed-media approaches: "In this post-medium condition, however, the autonomous realms of the world of technical devices and the intrinsic characteristics of the world of media retain their relevance. In fact, the specificity and autonomy of media is growing ever more differentiated."[1]

How does the media quality of a digital image determine its appearance? If the Internet is used as a tool for communicating artistic expression, how does that relate to the history of art? What ways of reading the Internet have users developed? These questions point to the fact that "reflecting on this condition is not an end in itself, but at best an intrinsic and obvious undertaking."[2]

The exhibition White, Yellow, Blue, and Black, one Coincidence, and one Object. presents eight international positions in Internet-based Art that embrace monochromacity as a formal principle without clinging to the ideological aims of earlier artistic avant-gardes. The works on display implicitly address the deconstruction of the digital image via text (code) and explicitly ask whether, in the face of the present image overload, there are ways of escaping the so-called crisis of representation. It is therefore possible to read these abstract works of art as art about abstract art. Other than with the presentational medium of monochrome painting, their "two-dimensionality",[3] which is limited by the browser and restricted to the screen, is not accepted as the boundary of the work. On the contrary, the exhibition

encourages viewers to pursue the art into the world outside and to leave the exhibition in order to explore other contexts.

This reference to the socio-cultural context and the viewers' response defines the exhibition's political dimension. The focus is on the material, which is not solely necessary for the existence of these works but forms a complex system of implications and references to media and society. Between iconoclasm and image overload, autonomy and new forms of representation, the digital image needs to find a new position. It does so by reflecting upon itself and thus pointing to things other than itself.

The exhibition White, Yellow, Blue, and Black, one Coincidence, and one Object. addresses the conditions determining both the form and content of monochrome art works. The interaction between these closely linked levels is revealed in "a mutual tension that arises when representing and represented, material and meaning come under scrutiny. Form does not become transparent with regard to content. On the contrary, when art is viewed it becomes unclear what the content is and what the object of representation is."[4] In the viewers' perception this results in an oscillation between artwork, exhibition display and media references, the political dimensions of which unfold in the etheric realm of the space-time continuum.

It is this tension arising between art and politics, "with neither of the two representing or instrumentalizing the other, that it is possible for art to become political. For art to develop a political dimension it is therefore necessary to approach the sensory world or the arrangement of the original material in a way that is different from what traditional political categories would appear to suggest."[5] Autonomy could therefore be said to arise from the 'here' and 'now' when art is viewed.

[1] See Peter Weibel, Postmediale Kondition (Exhibition in the context of the art fair Arco, Centro Cultural Conde Duque, Madrid), http://vmk.zhdk.ch/flz/postmediale_

kondition_weibel.pdf (June 12, 2010).

² Marie Röbl, <u>Abstrakte Erb- und Patenschaft. Streiflichter auf Hintergründe, Kategorien und Raster</u>, in: Norbert Pfaffenbichler and Sandro Droschl (eds.): <u>Abstraction Now</u>, Edition Camera Austria, Graz, 2004, p. 36.

³ Clement Greenberg, <u>Modernistische Malerei</u>, in: Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (eds.): <u>Kunsttheorie im 20. Jahrhundert. Künstlerschriften, Kunstkritik, Kunstphilosophie, Manifeste, Statements, Interviews</u>, Hatje Cantz, Ostfildern-Ruit, Vol. II, 2003, pp. 931–937.

⁴ Juliane Rebentisch, <u>Zur Aktualität ästhetischer Autonomie. Juliane Rebentisch im Gespräch mit Loretta Fahrenholz und Hans-Christian Lotz</u>, in: Tobias Huber and Marcus Steinweg (eds.), <u>Inästhetik. Theses on Contemporary Art, Diaphanes</u>, Zurich/Berlin, 2008, p. 116.

⁵ Christian Höller, <u>Ästhetischer Dissens. Überlegungen zum Politisch-Werden der Kunst</u>, in: Hedwig Saxenhuber (ed.), <u>Kunst + Politik. Aus der Sammlung der Stadt Wien</u>, Springer, Vienna/New York, 2008, p. 190.

UBERMORGEN.COM
The White Website (2002)

Installation, website on server,
black-and-white print, A0 format;
frameless screen, wooden box

EXHIBITION VIEW, GALERIJA GALŽENICA,
VELIKA GORICA/CROATIA, 2010

The White Website of UBERMORGEN. COM refers to the crises of representation that began when photography first found its way into fine arts. The essay On the Iconoclasm of Modern Art by Hans Ulrich Obrist appears as a pop-up window as soon as the website is activated: the text carries forward the history of art from the moment when "the material-bound, object-like paradigm was replaced by insight into the linguistic nature of all artistic expressions"—or, in an additional essay by Paulo Herkenhoff, hidden in the source code and simply in the form of the virtual, elusive white.

Untitled document—no name, no content, no design, but still: Michael Kargl's website <u>webzen</u> attracts a great deal of attention when regular browsing is suddenly interrupted by visiting this Internet address. The art work <u>webzen</u> tries to leave conceptual thinking, to understand life as the art of abandon and to experience reality beyond duality and logical thinking as well as beyond space and time. It tries to overcome itself by means of meditation of the most essential formulas of source code: <html>, <head>, <title>, <body>—system, spirit, concept, body. Nevertheless, overcoming itself would only be possible if this website had never existed.

Michael Kargl
<u>webzen (2009)</u>

Installation, website on server,
adhesive letters, dimensions variable

EXHIBITION VIEW, GALERIJA GALŽENICA,
VELIKA GORICA/CROATIA, 2010

Monochromacity as the result of a participatory process: in September 2007 Charles Broskoski's entirely white, single-serving website entitled <u>Let's Turn This Fucking Website Yellow.com</u> went online. Consisting of an explicit address (URL)—to be understood at the same time as a call for action—and one single index page, it was designed as a collaborative experiment: each visit produced a yellow pixel. With each reload the site inevitably became more and more yellow. On March 09, 2008, about seven months after its launch, the experiment was successfully completed: "Thank you".
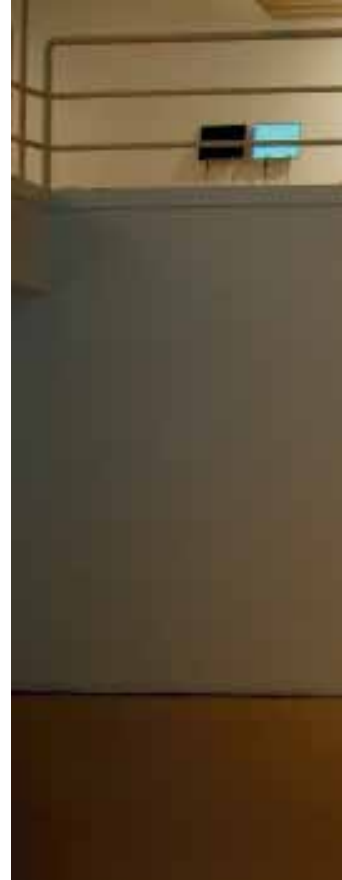
Charles Broskoski
<u>Let's Turn This Fucking Website</u>
<u>Yellow.com (2007-2008)</u>

Installation, website on server,
frameless screen

EXHIBITION VIEW, GALERIJA GALŽENICA,
VELIKA GORICA/CROATIA, 2010

Jan Robert Leegte
Blue Monochrome.com (2008)

Installation, website on server,
frameless screen, wooden box

EXHIBITION VIEW, GALERIJA GALŽENICA,
VELIKA GORICA/CROATIA, 2010

Longitude, latitude, focus, final destination: Pacific Ocean. Jan Robert Leegte's <u>Blue Monochrome.com</u> uses Google Earth tools to transform satellite images of the world's water surface into ready-mades. Geographic coordinates are linked to the coordinates of a website, the real space is linked to the virtual; the title of the artwork represents, at a linguistic level, what can be seen in the picture: a granulated blue surface with minimal elevations, which can immediately be associated with thick acrylic on canvas. A view of the world according to Google's view of the world.

Yves Klein's patent for the International Klein Blue, a colour patent that the French artist applied for in the 1950s, seems to have no more meaning on the Internet. Ryan Barone's International Klein Blue (Google Monochromes) is the result of a Google research into colour fastness, showing eleven different monochrome blue colour squares. The result of the research into International Klein Blue leads into inaccuracy and faultiness, but finally back to Yves Klein's fascination for the colour blue: contemplation.

Ryan Barone
International Klein Blue
(Google Monochromes) (2008)

Installation, website on server,
frameless screen, wooden box

EXHIBITION VIEW, GALERIJA GALŽENICA,
VELIKA GORICA/CROATIA, 2010

The Black Website of UBERMORGEN.COM refers to the crises of representation that began when photography found its way into fine arts. The essay On the Iconoclasm of Modern Art by Hans Ulrich Obrist appears as a pop-up window as soon as the website is reactivated: it continues art history at the moment where "the material-bound, object-like paradigm was replaced by insight into the linguistic nature of all artistic expressions"—or, in an additional essay by Paulo Herkenhoff, hidden in the source code and simply in the form of the virtual, elusive black.
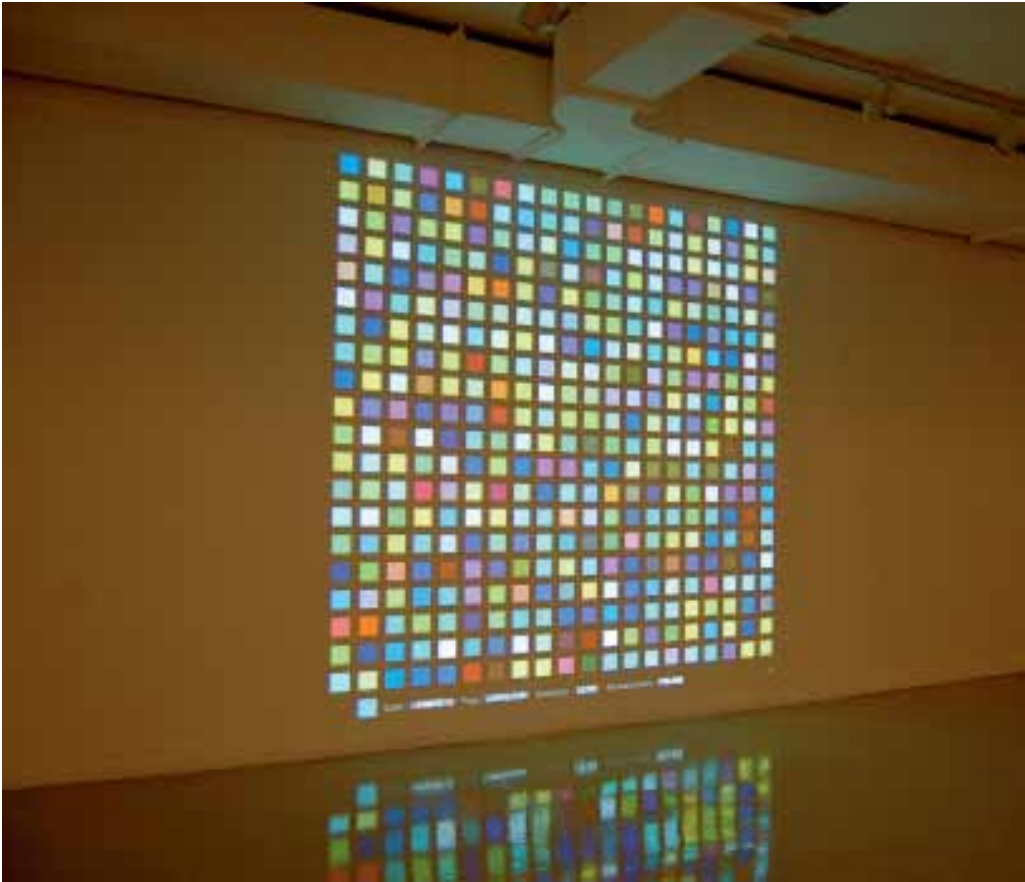
UBERMORGEN.COM
[The Black Website (2002)](#)

Installation, website on server,
black-and-white print, A0 format;
frameless screen, wooden box

EXHIBITION VIEW, GALERIJA GALŽENICA,
VELIKA GORICA/CROATIA, 2010

Anyone loading Reynald Drouhin's website IP Monochrome inevitably generates a monochrome colour square through the IP address of their computer. The code number of the IP address is suddenly transformed into RGB (red-green-blue) values and hexadecimal codes to be released as an individual colour reference. Without their permission being asked, the spectators of the artwork (users) become creators of a monochrome colour field that is unknown until its realisation: monochromacity serving as a localised identity within a virtual network.

Reynald Drouhin
IP Monochrome (2006)

Installation, website on server, projection onto the wall

EXHIBITION VIEW, GALERIJA GALŽENICA, VELIKA GORICA/CROATIA, 2010

Michael Kargl
all you can see (2008)

Custom-made computer,
shell script, 40 x 48 x 20 cm

EXHIBITION VIEW, GALERIJA GALŽENICA,
VELIKA GORICA/CROATIA, 2010
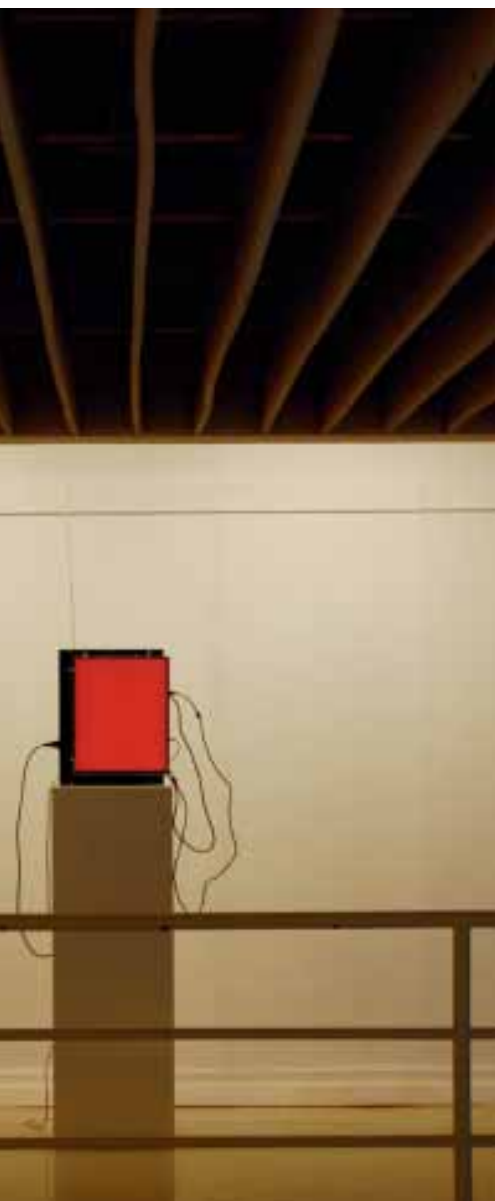
Michael Kargl's <u>all you can see</u> continues the reflections and theories about the end of painting that have been known from art history for a long time. In the video object, monochromacity is transformed into a play on the extension of the material. The time-based representation of structures visualises the background processes. Exhausting all structural preconditions, the artist sequentially lines up all possible 17 million different colours of a computer screen. The result is an eight-day-long changing process from black to white at a rate of 25 pictures per second.

<u>Untitled</u>
<u>(The Author Entitles Texts</u>
<u>By Experimenting With Art.)</u>

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<u>Kunstverein Medienturm, Graz/Austria</u>
<u>June 19 – August 28, 2010</u>
-

Pseudonyms, avatars and artificial characters—incognito and bodiless, authors appear transiently on blogs and online forums using them as a hiding place in an increasingly transparent world. Nameless, without age or origin, in this vague anonymity they seem to make good "The Death of the Author"[1] as it was emblematically postulated long ago in the context of literary theory. However, even if the biography—in theory—might have disengaged from the meaning of the work, the literature and art scenes continue symbolically and actually to focus on the individual. Institutions that adjust their program to the market according to significant stages in the lives of their protagonists but also debates around copyright and copyright licenses directly refer to the irrevocable relevance of the biography in a "regime of biographism and narcissism, service processuality and authenticity"[2]—the curriculum as measure of all art production?

Starting from the idea of a "modern scriptor" who is "born simultaneously with the text"[3]—as introduced by literary criticism—the exhibition <u>Untitled (The Author Entitles Texts By Experimenting With Art.)</u> questions an art-market-driven orientation towards subject and biography as meaningful criteria in the valuation of art. The mainly language- and text-based artworks in the exhibition reflect the role of the artist-subject both in the production and reception aesthetics-based discourse in the current socio-political context and with respect to the interpretation practice in exhibition space. Above all, the art scene acts as superstructure, as a mechanism that outlives itself and seems only to facilitate the construction of sense relations.

The main focus of the exhibition is the figure of the author, which is raised to a universal instance, meaning a model-like artist subject, an existence that is independent of the individual and evolves only with the interactive relation of artwork and audience—text and reader—and is defined during its time of the "enunciation".[4] The complex and entangled relations between the producing and the receiving subject are thus opened up for the aesthetic valuation of art in a media context: "The autonomy

of art, consequently and according to this understanding is not anymore inside the object, but is inferred from the relation of subject and object: with respect to the specific manner of how we experience objects of art—in particular in contrast to other things."[5]

Not least by the title of the exhibition, the role of the curator is analyzed in the light of the complex interplay of the artist's status and its commercial marketability, of the artwork's production and reception processes and the institutional critique that opposes the system of the art market. The unassigned Untitled raises the editorial tasks of the exhibition makers for discussion, thus allowing the reader's/visitor's imagination the greatest possible scope. At the text level on the other hand, the computer-generated subtitle—The Author Entitles Texts By Experimenting With Art.—summarizes what Roland Barthes has described as a "tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture."[6] Finally, the work emancipates itself from the artistic concept and the reader is defined as "the space on which all the quotations that make up a

writing are inscribed without any of them being lost".[7] The audience becomes the meaningful subject and the author is no longer at the helm.

[1] See Roland Barthes, Image Music Text, Essays selected and translated by Stephen Heath, Fontana Press, London, 1977.

[2] Diedrich Diederichsen, Eigenblutdoping. Selbstverwertung, Künstlerromantik, Partizipation, Kiepenheuer & Witsch, Cologne, 2008, p. 196.

[3] Roland Barthes, Image Music Text, Essays selected and translated by Stephen Heath, Fontana Press, London, 1977, p. 145.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Juliane Rebentisch, Ästhetik der Installation, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 2003, p. 105.

[6] Roland Barthes, Image Music Text, Essays selected and translated by Stephen Heath, Fontana Press, London, 1977, p. 146.

[7] Ibid., p. 148.

Thomas Knoll, Seetharaman Narayanan, Andrew Coven, Julie Kmoch, Scott By
Marc Pawliger, David Howe, Sau Tam, Julie Meridian, Joe Ault, Vinod Balakrish
Jon Clauson, Chris Cox, Alan Erickson, Paul Ferguson, Todor Georgiev, Jerry H
Edward Kandrot, Sarah Kong, Tai Luxon, John Penn II, John Peterson, Tom Pink
Cris Rys, Geoff Scott, John Worthington, Tim Wright, Rick Wulff, Jackie Lincoln-
Yukie Takahashi, Kelly Davis, Sandra Alves, Karen Gauthier, John Nack, Yoko Na
Gwyn Weisberg, Maria Yap, Kevin Connor
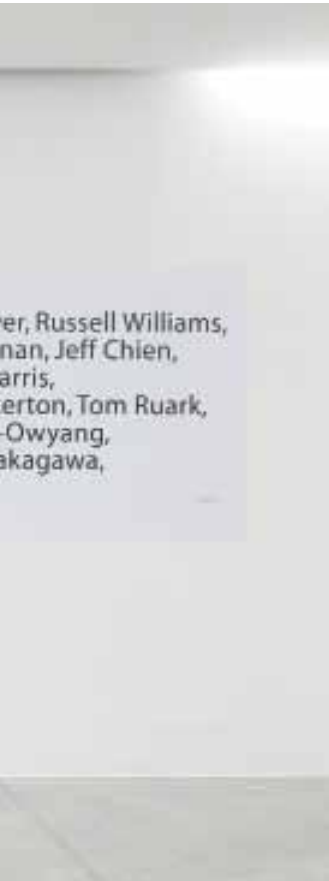
Who are Sarah Kong and Andrew Coven, who is Jackie Lincoln-Owyang? Who is responsible for today's production and manipulation of photographic images? Who defines the international standards of image data? While Adobe Photoshop is loading, 41 names briefly appear on the screen. The list of people involved in the development of the image processing application begins with Thomas Knoll, its inventor, in order to proceed hierarchically in descending order. In Some Of The Names Of Photoshop, Anna Artaker shows all the names on a four-and-a-half-meter-long paper banner—the static presentation of what can otherwise hardly be noticed. With her text installation, using Photoshop's own Myriad font, the artist not only puts the ability of the audience and perhaps of Photoshop users of assigning the names to the program to the test. But at the same time she questions the role of the leading international monopoly Adobe Systems Inc. by looking behind the scenes of contemporary image production and its tools. The focus is on the people who—in a metaphorical and literal sense—automatically inscribe themselves in the process of image editing every time the program is loaded.

Anna Artaker
Some Of The Names Of Photoshop (2009)

Banner, black-and-white print on paper, 464 x 91 cm

EXHIBITION VIEW, KUNSTVEREIN MEDIENTURM,
GRAZ/AUSTRIA, 2010

The Zielscheibe group, the Dadaists, Surrealists, Bauhaus, Experimentele Groep, Cobra, Abstract Expressionists, Situationist International, Spur and the Austrian Filmmakers Cooperative: if popular portrait photos from art history books are to be believed, apart from one token female artist all these 20th century groups of artists were male. In Unbekannte Avantgarde, Anna Artaker confronts this phenomenon with alternative research. On sheets of paper added as captions to the original photographs, she duplicates the people portrayed as silhouettes and gives each abstract male head a female name. Kurt Kren, Hans Scheugl, Gottfried Schlemmer, Peter Weibel and Ernst Schmidt jr., for example, become Linda Christanell, Mara Mattuschka, Lisl Ponger, Moucle Blackout and Maria Lassnig. Starting from the allegedly imaging function of photography, which inevitably makes each arrangement a historical document, in Unbekannte Avantgarde Anna Artaker develops a parallel history of artist subjects aiming to a certain extent at revising the staging of documentary photographs and their gender relations.

Anna Artaker
Unbekannte Avantgarde (2008)

10 historical photographs, black-and-white prints on baryta paper
(dimensions from 10 x 6.70 cm to 30 x 18.60 cm, unframed);
10 captions, black-and-white prints on paper, à A5 format

EXHIBITION VIEW, KUNSTVEREIN MEDIENTURM,
GRAZ/AUSTRIA, 2010

Miriam Bajtala
arbeiten für ohne titel (2008/2009)

60 black-and-white prints on paper, à A4 format;
7 framed collectors' versions, dimensions variable

EXHIBITION VIEW, KUNSTVEREIN MEDIENTURM,
GRAZ/AUSTRIA, 2010

Artists call their works "untitled" when they do not want to constrict them by linguistic signs, thus seeking to draw the audience's attention increasingly to the form. In arbeiten für ohne titel, Miriam Bajtala reverses this process. Fictional series such as "improvisation mit zeugen, unerforschte zeitprobleme" (improvisation with witnesses, unexplored time problems) or "geschenkte keller mit fundament" (donated basements with foundation) serve the artist to create artworks exclusively in the form of titles such as "die sehnsucht war ein längenmaß" (desire was a measure of length) or "am boden liegend, sieht sie den himmel nicht" (lying on the ground, she cannot see the sky). The text and photo installation is presented in two different variants. The collectors' version shows the photographed images of the backs of the frames holding the photos. When the frame is turned round, the original appears: a typewritten text on a sheet of white paper. The artists' version shows the originals in the form of sheets of paper with the texts written on them. Through the oscillation between artistic object and its visual and language-based representational form, the audience is faced with an offer full of expectation, an offer, however, that remains without visual fulfillment—and finally a linguistic sign.

The setting of both videos <u>Ohne Schatten: trigger</u> and <u>satellite me</u> by Miriam Bajtala is a former bakery in Vienna. A chalk circle, eighteen meters in diameter, is drawn on the floor and separated into fifty regular fragments which narrow towards the middle, where the actress Anna Mendelssohn sits in a rigid pose. The dramatic culmination is the lighting of a lighter in the actress's hand. Whereas in <u>Ohne Schatten: trigger</u> Miriam Bajtala films the protagonist of the video from fifty different angles and brings the singular tracking shots in line with the marks towards the middle on the floor, the video images in <u>satellite me</u> are no longer linear in time but spatially structured with the help of a computer program. The five-second sequences—the fifty tracking shots to the middle of the circle, which are taken from the original video trigger—are re-arranged alongside individual frame lines. With her arrangements Miriam Bajtala creates containers for narration where the action shown becomes a variable. The artist constructs an open depository of looks, which she returns to the audience's perception as supposed common property.

Miriam Bajtala
Ohne Schatten: trigger and satellite me (2009)

2 videos, 2:25 min and 3:56 min (looped)

EXHIBITION VIEW, KUNSTVEREIN MEDIENTURM,
GRAZ/AUSTRIA, 2010

Nikolaus Gansterer
Mnemocity (Figures of Thought II-VI) (2005/2010)

Installation, cut books, paper, nylon,
dimensions variable

EXHIBITION VIEW, KUNSTVEREIN MEDIENTURM,
GRAZ/AUSTRIA, 2010

A meme, like a gene, does not purposely do or want anything—it is either replicated or it is not. Analogous to the gene, the so-called meme is a structure of ideas that is capable of reproducing autonomously. According to the theories of the biologist Richard Dawkins, Nikolaus Gansterer's text installation Mnemocity (Figures of Thought II – VI) takes up the idea of a literally understood figure of thought, which is shaped out of modified text material. Scrappy text fragments, individual words and pieces of conversation are extracted from books and arranged into long strips of text. The rearrangement of linear books results in an organic-looking structure of knowledge, which is similar to an analog hypertext, while its substance is increasingly consolidated by the networked interplay of the elements of this complex library. Nikolaus Gansterer reveals the multidimensional topographies of language, which only continuously reproduce when they are received. The installation is supplemented by a lecture performance, which translates the text installation into drawing, a class where the process of realizing, thinking and denoting appears extremely concentrated. For the artist, the act of drawing is research in its classical form: one feels one's way, experiments, always anew, step by step.

Michael Kargl
you, evidently, are a
timewaster (2008-2010)

Installation, book, 210 pages (20 x 9 x 3 cm),
edition of 3 copies; adhesive letters,
dimensions variable

EXHIBITION VIEW, KUNSTVEREIN MEDIENTURM,
GRAZ/AUSTRIA, 2010

"In the future everyone will be famous for fifteen minutes"—Andy Warhol's vision of an increasingly media-driven star cult and the staging of everyday occurrences was the starting point for the call for artists with the title Everyone will be famous for 150 kbytes, which was published by a design platform on the Internet. Michael Kargl's you, evidently, are a timewaster is a documentation of an e-mail communication between him and the institution calling for submissions. His application comprised 200 monochrome white surfaces, automatically generated by a custom-built computer program and to be sent to the e-mail address given in the call. After only 57 deliveries, however, the proposed performance was harshly interrupted: "you, evidently, are a time waster" came the answer, which programmatically describes the production conditions of contemporary art in a media environment, closing with the words "don't lose time anymore". The unsuccessful participation in calls and the drafting of concepts to nowhere is an actual component of an artist's daily routine. With you, evidently, are a timewaster, Michael Kargl elevates the process of submitting the artwork and its failure into the principle.

In brief succession a text sequence appears on the screen of a transparent object with, for an art audience, the promising title <u>objects of desire</u>: standard white typography on a black background, sentence for sentence, second for second, with a serial number for each restart, thus, a new artwork: "i am file number 1100"— "i am a unique piece of art"—"i was just created and will be gone in a few seconds." The sentence sequence concludes with "you own me now until you forget about me", in order to restart again shortly afterwards with "i am file number 1101". The basis of Michael Kargl's work <u>objects of desire</u> is the question of the determining parameters for Digital Art, of its role in the art scene and—moreover—of the originality and authenticity of artistic works whose authorship is directly connected to the person of the author. Does one have to touch and own an artwork in order to be able to define it as such or does the serial number alone suffice to speak of an original: 1102, 1103, 1104? On a formal level, the custom-made computer—the transparent object (of desire)—contributes to the reflection on the transience of art.

Michael Kargl
<u>objects of desire (2005-2008)</u>

Custom-made computer, shell script,
40 x 50 x 16.5 cm

EXHIBITION VIEW, KUNSTVEREIN MEDIENTURM,
GRAZ/AUSTRIA, 2010

Self-creation or self-preservation? The formal language of contemporary art seems to be indecipherable without its theoretical vocabulary, since the artwork is only ultimately shaped by the tool of language. Today, artists are forced to match this language and acquire text-related skills in order to be able to contextualize their work. Miriam Laussegger's and Eva Beierheimer's worte#25/installation/der/die betrachterIn interpretiert/2010 is based on a collection of around 3,500 specific technical terms from art magazines, catalogs, talks and lectures and is on display as a freely accessible text generator on the Internet and as text installation in the exhibition. Under worte. at/art-words.net on the Internet, users can select individual terms from a German and English word database, add their own words, define their frequency and the number of sentences and finally generate an 'individual' text. With respect to the spatial installation, the two artists assume the function of the generator. Only the interaction of the components of this hybrid determines its purpose: autopoiesis, or in the language of the generator: "Die Zeit-Raum-Sprachbezüge verknüpfen in diesem Regenwetter eine irreversible Formensprache mit einer Kunstmaschine." (In this rainy weather the time-, space-, language-references link an irreversible formal language with an art machine.) or: "Der/die AutorIn tituliert Texte durch eine versuchsweise Kunst." (The author entitles texts by experimenting with art.).

Miriam Laussegger and Eva Beierheimer
[worte#25/installation/der/die betrachterIn interpretiert/2010 (2010)](#)

Installation, 6 cut acrylic glass boards, 6 mirrors, à 40 x 80 cm

EXHIBITION VIEW, KUNSTVEREIN MEDIENTURM,
GRAZ/AUSTRIA, 2010

Language follows the rhythm of grammar, speaking that of sound: in the videos <u>wir alle</u>, <u>vielleicht</u> and <u>vorsprung</u>, Jörg Piringer generates abstract visual text compositions by means of concrete language-related manifestations and stages these in a flickering of black typography on a white background. The words are taken from text fragments from a politician (<u>wir alle</u>), declarations (<u>vielleicht</u>) and advertising (<u>vorsprung</u>). He combines the typeface of the words with their articulation and detaches the sense of the written and spoken words from its original medium in favor of image and sound. He extends the concept of the early literary avant-garde through the analysis of the evolutionary process of language and its meaning. The voice becomes the interface in a dynamic electronic context, which evolves on the spot as quickly as it dissolves again. The collection of animated letters and signs shown on the screen gradually seem to dissolve the language. The system of language, which has been constructed by social consensus, is reduced to the "arbitrariness of signs" (Ferdinand de Saussure). Similar to scientific experiments, Jörg Piringer creates experimental arrangements where he literally allows the particles of language to collide.

Jörg Piringer
<u>wir alle (2001), vielleicht (2002),
vorsprung (2004)</u>

3 videos, à 2:00 min (looped)

EXHIBITION VIEW, KUNSTVEREIN MEDIENTURM,
GRAZ/AUSTRIA, 2010

Translation is a Mode. | Übersetzung ist eine Form.

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<u>Kunstraum Niederoesterreich, Vienna/Austria</u>
<u>April 09 – May 29, 2010</u>
-

Manner, quality, version, condition, design, look, shape, arrangement, fashion, style, way, cut, type, structure and form—a quick search of any dictionary and online translation programme gives numerous results for the English term 'mode'. The path of translation, however, is a long one when a text is to be transferred into another language and ascribed new purposes in order ultimately to learn that each new reception entails a change in meaning in the sense of interpretation: translation—a mode?

Based on philological-linguistic translation theories, the exhibition <u>Translation is a Mode. | Übersetzung ist eine Form</u>. shows language-based Conceptual Art relating to the broad subject area of translation. The focus of consideration is, on the one hand, on translation processes inherent in the work, which are scrutinised regarding their mutual relationship at the level of the content, the medium and the form. On the other hand it illuminates context-related interpretation processes, which influence the individual works of art from a curatorial as well as from the recipient's perspective and locate them "as an indispensable practice in the world of mutual dependences and networking."[1] As a result, linguistically critical elements come into view that are related to socio-economic, socio-political and not least (art-)institutional contexts and transferred to the phenomenon of translation.

As early as the start of the 1920s, in his essay <u>The Task of the Translator</u>,[2] Walter Benjamin was already objecting to the binary nature of traditional translation methods and was promoting the idea of the transparency between an original and its translation: "It [the translation] does not cover the original, does not black its light, but allows the pure language, as though reinforced by its own medium, to shine upon the original all the more fully."[3] The title of the exhibition <u>Translation is a Mode. | Übersetzung ist eine Form.</u>, which is drawn from Walter Benjamin's reflections on the subject, makes it clear exactly what the individual art works are concerned with. The German term 'Form' and its English counterpart 'mode', which Harry Zohn used for his

Benjamin translation <u>The Task of the Translator</u>[4] at the end of the 1960s, flows in an exemplary way into the range of tension between fidelity to the text, translator's freedom and the increasing emancipation of the target text from a simple reproduction of the original. The materiality, the material and the substantial phenomena that define the expression 'Form' in German are loosened in the English in favour of a continually changing modus operandi of translation: 'mode'.

With the rejection of the idea of an original, Walter Benjamin anticipated something that some 60 years later had developed into a metaphor of translation of and between the cultures. The 'translational turn', which started developing in cultural studies in the 1980s, ultimately complemented or even replaced what had long been considered the determining parameters of translation, such as original, equivalence or fidelity "by new guiding categories of cultural translation such as cultural representation and transformation, strangeness and alterity, deplacing, cultural differentiation and power."[5] By reconnecting culturally specific forms of behaviour with the literary and linguistic category 'text' the field of translation was finally opened up for discursive and socio-politically motivated (artistic) practices.

Against the background of Walter Benjamin's critique of fidelity to the work and with an eye to the extension of the concept of translation into a cultural-studies understanding, the exhibition <u>Translation is a Mode. | Übersetzung ist eine Form.</u> operates between these two poles. The selected works trace transitional situations that may be characterised as "object spaces of relations, of situations, 'identities' and interactions by means of specific cultural translation processes"[6] of a linguistic kind. Just as every translation is based on an original, it is also preceded by an interpretation that starts with the idea of a work and continues to its reception. In this respect the artwork is not understood as a finished product or the result of a completed process, but as a continuing

and continually renewing process, which—as a fleeting stocktaking and aesthetic experience—"just as a tangent touches a circle lightly and at but one point… thereupon pursuing its own course according to the laws of fidelity in the freedom of linguistic flux."[7]

[1] Doris Bachmann-Medick, Cultural Turns: Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften, Rowohlt, Berlin, 2006, p. 238.

[2] Walter Benjamin, Charles Baudelaire, Tableaux parisiens, in: the same, Gesammelte Schriften, vol. IV/1, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1972.

[3] Walter Benjamin (translated by Harry Zohn), 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, Routledge, New York, 2004, p. 81.

[4] Ibid., pp. 75–83.

[5] Doris Bachmann-Medick, Cultural Turns: Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften, Rowohlt, Berlin, 2006, p. 239.

[6] Ibid., p. 246.

[7] Walter Benjamin: 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, Routledge, New York, 2004, p. 82.

In the installation <u>Textsynthese III</u> Eva Beierheimer and Miriam Laussegger use exhibition catalogues produced by the Kunstraum Niederoesterreich in order to give them a new function in two respects. Organised as object-like arrangements, the catalogues can on the one hand no longer be read by the users of the gallery's library, but they can be viewed by visitors to the exhibition. On the other hand, the deconstructive element of this site-specific work also reflects itself at the semantic-textual level. Individual words, sentences and passages of text from the publications are combined into ever new text units by means of highlighting in order to allow stories and alternative narratives to emerge. The way the fragments are received, however, is subject only to the interpretation of the observers or readers.

Eva Beierheimer and Miriam Laussegger
<u>Textsynthese III (2010)</u>

Installation, 18 exhibition catalogues (2005-2010) of the Kunstraum Niederoesterreich; mirror cube, 45 x 45 x 30 cm

EXHIBITION VIEW, KUNSTRAUM NIEDEROESTERREICH, VIENNA/AUSTRIA, 2010

"Textile", "mesh", "binding", "texture" or just "the structural make up of a connected surface": in <u>TextEdit Textiles</u>, following the etymology of the word text from Latin, Arend deGruyter-Helfer and Aylor Brown analyse varying structures and forms of networking. In a dialogic situation, one part of the artist duo uses the default Apple text-editor software TextEdit to generate text patterns based on personal messages and wishes. Then, using Photoshop picture-editing software and a digitalised 'loom', the other transfers the text works into textile patterns. The result of this process is a humorous oscillation between transient language and solid fabric, between the virtual space and its material extension.

Arend de Gruyter-Helfer and Aylor Brown
TextEdit Textiles (2008)

5 pieces of cloth, cotton/rayon, à ca. 40 x 50 cm;
2 colour photographs, à 20 x 30 cm

EXHIBITION VIEW, KUNSTRAUM NIEDEROESTERREICH,
VIENNA/AUSTRIA, 2010

Gerhard Dirmoser
art in context—Die Kunst der Ausstellung
(since 1995)

4-part poster, colour print on paper,
à A0 format

EXHIBITION VIEW, KUNSTRAUM NIEDEROESTERREICH,
VIENNA/AUSTRIA, 2010

"Exhibition as machine theatre", "exhibition as a collection of material", "exhibition as ritual" or "as situative production": in <u>art in context—Die Kunst der Ausstellung</u> Gerhard Dirmoser presents an almost incalculable number of quotes, titles, terms and concepts on the subject of 'exhibition'. The systems analyst has collected several thousand research findings from various specialist literature on the processes of exhibiting, in order to classify these with 32 semantic aspects in the form of a monumental diagram. Similar to an association cluster, the observers start to go more deeply into this multifaceted network of relations of artists, authors, providers and art institutions, ultimately lose themselves in it and, during the observation, they themselves become part of the context depicted. The study was commissioned in 1995 by the OK—Centre for Contemporary Art in Linz/Austria and includes material going back to 1980.

Ouagadougou, Buenos Aires, Bamako, Maputo, Port of Spain, Vienna … Observers of Aleksandra Domanovic's Internet-based work Hottest To Coldest.com face a not-more closely definable range of worldwide city names. The artist does not order the cities according to the usual social, political or economic significance such as gross domestic product or population but according to their respective current air temperature. The art work is provided with the latest data at relatively brief intervals by news feeds from more than 200 weather stations. However, before the observers have the chance to interpret the information displayed and to receive additional information on ecological aspects or geopolitical hierarchies, the compilation of text changes again and so primarily evokes contemplation.

Aleksandra Domanovic
Hottest To Coldest.com (2008)

Website on server, wooden
projection display (4:3)

EXHIBITION VIEW, KUNSTRAUM NIEDEROESTERREICH,
VIENNA/AUSTRIA, 2010

Johanna Tinzl and Stefan Flunger
<u>La défense oder: ∞ (2006/2010)</u>

Kinetic installation, camera modules,
movement detectors, motors, metal rods,
cables, gearwheels, wooden block, clamps

EXHIBITION VIEW, KUNSTRAUM NIEDEROESTERREICH,
VIENNA/AUSTRIA, 2010

In <u>La défense oder: ∞</u> Johanna Tinzl and Stefan Flunger draw the viewers' gaze to a translation process that ultimately, however, remains invisible. Two opposing surveillance cameras attached to movable fixtures are in constant movement, as one is activated by the vibration of the other. The video images of a movement recorded by the surveillance cameras are transformed into further movements in a freely accessible technological translation apparatus—black boxes (detectors)—and generate an interpretation loop which seems to reduce itself ad absurdum. Based on the crossover point of the lemniscate sign for infinity, the artist duo negotiates their concern with media archaeology in the form of a kinetic installation.

At a first glance Jochen Höller's works Bücherliste, Bücherspektrum and Soziogramm could be categorised as kinds of academic texts. Only on close observation does it emerge that the list, the spectrum and the diagram are not objective information but the visualisation of the artist's subjective thought clusters. Bücherliste reflects the artist's powers of memory based on his own experience of literature and in Bücherspektrum he relates this to the reading habits of his immediate social and occupational environment, while Soziogramm transfers Höller's personal network structures—similar to those familiar from social media platforms such as Facebook—onto paper. The artist shows snapshots from life, the subject of the portrayal is he himself, the picture he had drawn betrays a lot—even if never everything.

Jochen Höller
Bücherliste (2008), Bücherspektrum (2008), Soziogramm (2009)

3 drawings, collages on cardboard, framed, 100 x 70 cm, 70 x 80 cm, 80 x 80 cm

EXHIBITION VIEW, KUNSTRAUM NIEDEROESTERREICH, VIENNA/AUSTRIA, 2010

Michael Kargl
on translation (2008/2009)

Custom-made computer, printer,
wooden box; video, 2:30 min (looped)

EXHIBITION VIEW, KUNSTRAUM NIEDEROESTERREICH,
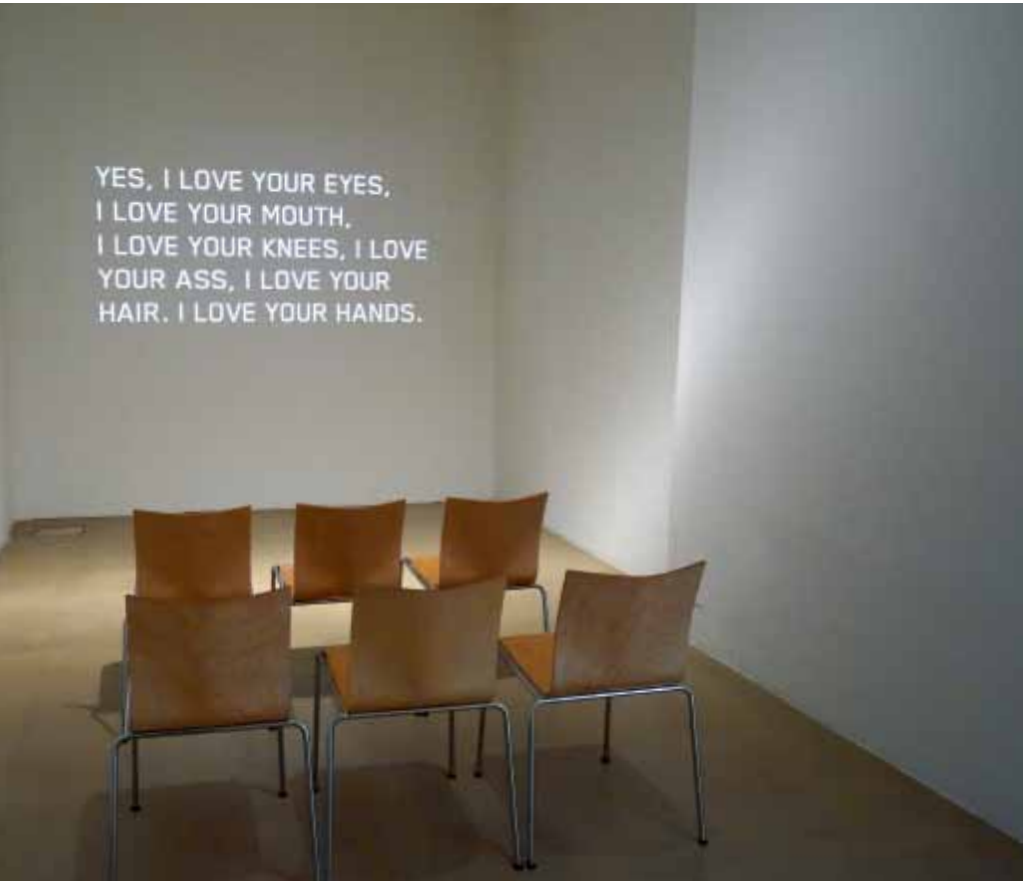VIENNA/AUSTRIA, 2010

So what *is* the main task of translators? Michael Kargl examines this question by having a custom-made computer program translating a text fragment of Walter Benjamin's essay <u>The Task of the Translator</u>. The object <u>on translation</u>, which results from a performance, focuses on the translation process itself and, as a never-ending transcription process between ASCII signs and binary code, analyses fundamental concepts of the translation discourse such as 'fidelity' and 'freedom' or 'authenticity' and 'original'. The processual and performative element of this transcription from one sign system into another has been intensified by the artist's incorporation of a random variable—a translation mistake, a misunderstanding. Chance and free will are just as inevitable as they are immediately coupled to the person of the translator—their main task: interpretation.

"You're OK?"—"Do me a favour. Just be nice, OK?"—"Are you sure you are OK?" ... No sound, no picture, just white typography on a black background, familiar dialogues between a man and a woman, which nevertheless sound somewhat strange. On the principle of deconstruction, in Prologue Annja Krautgasser dismantles individual dialogue sequences from classic films by directors such as Jean-Luc Godard, Michelangelo Antonioni and Claude Sautet, but also by young film makers such as Vincent Gallo and Gus van Sant. The artist translates and writes down the spoken sequences in order to present them as recombined and thus fictional dialogues in the exhibition room. The original forms of the film medium are only vaguely recognisable in the new work— an endless loop of text images. The audio footage can no longer be heard inside the cinema auditorium but can be read in the exhibition room as a moving-image dialogue.
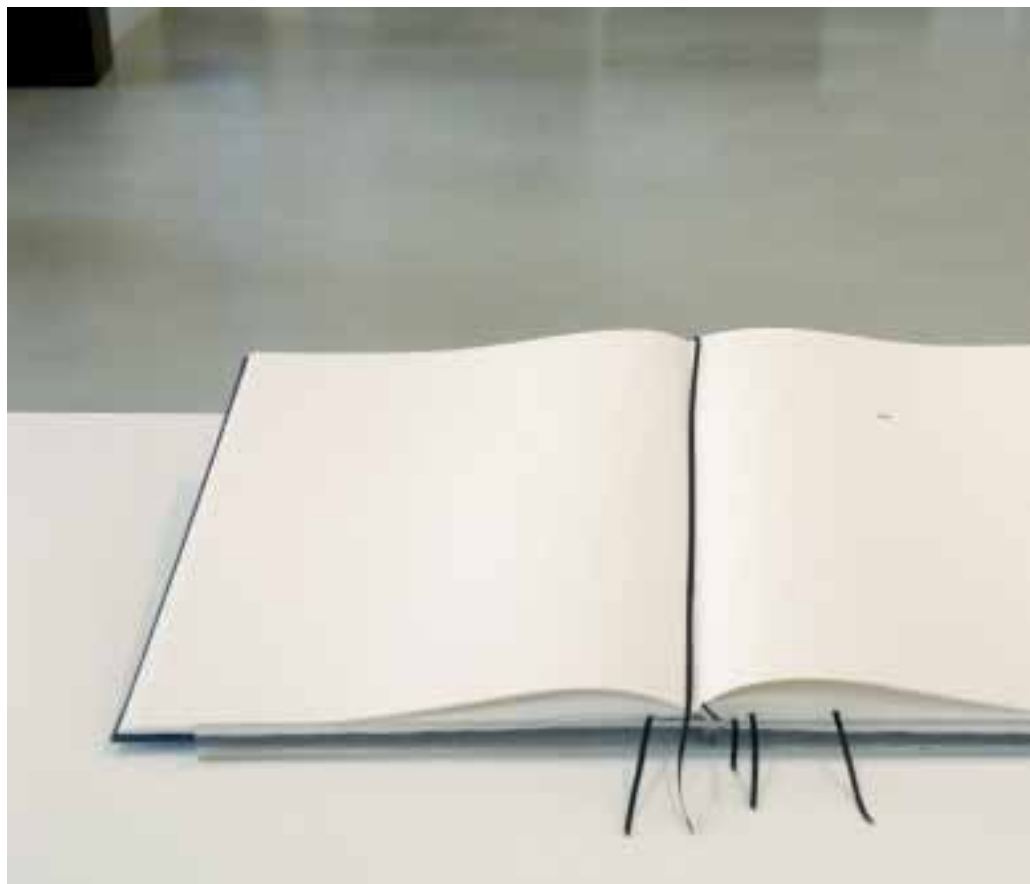
Annja Krautgasser
Prologue (2007)

40 black-and-white slides (looped),
projection onto the wall, seating

EXHIBITION VIEW, KUNSTRAUM NIEDEROESTERREICH,
VIENNA/AUSTRIA, 2010

In <u>Das Buch</u> Michail Michailov approaches the subject of translation by simply transferring his own person, the artist subject—his 'self'—onto the white pages of a book. The name of the artist is written, scattered across the individual pages of the object, but it is only when they have read the whole book that the observers can identify and reconstruct the artist's name, which is distinguished through the doubling of the sounds and letters: M-ich-a-i-l-o-v. The artist's identity, reduced to the minimum of text, solidifies with the reception of each individual letter and increasingly resembles a signature or a business card, and not least an (auto-) biography—there is sufficient free space for interpretation between the lines and letters.

Michail Michailov
<u>Das Buch (2009)</u>

Book, 100 pages (28.5 x 36.2 x 2.5 cm),
edition of 5 copies

EXHIBITION VIEW, KUNSTRAUM NIEDEROESTERREICH,
VIENNA/AUSTRIA, 2010

MTAA (M. River &
T. Whid Art Associates)
Simple Net Art Diagram
(ca. 1997), Commons
Art Diagram (2007)

Installation, website on server;
black-and-white print, 150 x 150 cm

EXHIBITION VIEW, KUNSTRAUM NIEDEROESTERREICH,
VIENNA/AUSTRIA, 2010

Two computers, linked by a cable with a flashing red spark sign on it captioned "The art happens here". As early as 1997, with Simple Net Art Diagram, the artist duo MTAA (M. River & T. Whid Art Associates) were visualising the fundamental processual approach of Internet-based Art. Their diagram, however, is not just an attempt to relate to the technological and media conditions of Net Art, but also to the questions that are immanent in art, which had already been posed by predecessors in the 1960s/70s. If in Simple Net Art Diagram it was just two computers illustrating the network, in Commons Art Diagram, produced ten years later, it is a strictly market-regulated commercialisation system in which Internet-based Art 'happens' today. Again, "The art happens here" is the accompanying text to the spark, but this time it is surrounded by symbols for music, data, moving images, texts and logos of alternative copyright licences.

In its original version nam shub web is a processor for websites that Jörg Piringer had programmed to create Visual Poetry and on which users could modify the representation of texts. If a dynamic website is used as a source of text, the result—the visual poem— changes in parallel with the changing content. In the exhibition room the texts that have been worked on appear as printouts on paper. At brief intervals the transient results of this automated procedure are printed out according to the principle of chance and cover the floor of the exhibition room. nam shub web installation borrows from Neal Stephenson's novel Snow Crash: in this story, Nam-Shub was one of the first Sumerian precursors of the Babylonian jumble of languages and is understood as a neurolinguistic intervention against the standardisation of society. Jörg Piringer doggedly continues this project as a 'computer-linguistic hack'.

Jörg Piringer
<u>nam shub web
installation (2008)</u>

Installation, website on server,
text processor, printer, paper

EXHIBITION VIEW, KUNSTRAUM NIEDEROESTERREICH,
VIENNA/AUSTRIA, 2010

Arnold Reinthaler
temporal translation (2005)

Installation, endless paper tape,
772 x 10 cm

EXHIBITION VIEW, KUNSTRAUM NIEDEROESTERREICH,
VIENNA/AUSTRIA, 2010

The medium for Arnold Reinthaler's
temporal translation is a narrow roll of
endless paper. With a manual typewriter
the artist records his personal day
and everyday actions on it in twelve
categories—as a daily ritual. The
transfer of the time he has lived into a
simple barcode on rolls of paper and
the arrangement of the individual code
elements into different category units
can be read as a meticulously recorded
diary: one bar stands for an hour of lived
time, to which categories such as 'eating',
'sleeping' or 'communication' are assigned.
The translation of biographical into
semantic-lexical units may lead to the artist
'remembering forward' one day's data that
was collected by temporary stocktaking and
in this way living according to an aesthetic
image—that is, according to interpretation.

Sentence construction, word formation and sign combination—newspaper and magazine headlines cut out over a long period of time, collected, and finally digitalised and archived are the starting point for Veronika Schubert's Ausschnitte II, in which linguistic and spatial structures combine with each other. Using digital picture-editing processes and taking account of the sharpness of the observable contours, shading and light elements, photographs of architectural details of the exhibition room are filled with innumerable text fragments from the artist's archive. Veronika Schubert makes collages that turn sentences and empty phrases from everyday journalese into a mosaic of small parts, which depending on distance can be read or viewed either as a text collage or as an architectural view—text architecture.

Veronika Schubert
Ausschnitte II (2010)

3 photographs, colour print on dibond,
à 75 x 75 cm

EXHIBITION VIEW, KUNSTRAUM NIEDEROESTERREICH,
VIENNA/AUSTRIA, 2010

In Other Words…?
Discourses with Poetic Function

-

<u>Kunstpavillon der Tiroler Künstlerschaft, Innsbruck/Austria</u>
<u>March 26 – May 08, 2010</u>
-

Variations and versions are central components of a globalized and constantly faster-paced everyday culture. Only a short time after their introduction, products and services—especially in the field of information technology— are quickly expanded, reformulated and refined, and different versions are produced for different markets. The functions and properties of goods are continually being adapted to consumers' needs, which leads to the worldwide economic network constantly spitting out new remakes, reproductions and also imitations and unauthorized fakes—can we talk about interpretations?

Regarding the development of such market tendencies, the exhibition <u>In Other Words…? Discourses with Poetic Function</u> traces strategies of 'cultural versioning' in the sense of interpretation. The exhibition shows conceptual approaches that resort to existing "cultural texts"[1] from everyday activities or social-political conventions and/or social relations and reuse them two, three or multiple times. At the interface between literature and visual arts and within the context of the writing of history, institutional critique and the (non-)transparency of public structures, the primarily language-based artworks are embedded in a reciprocal system of "media cultural self-explanation,"[2] whose self-analytical moment is central as a formal condition for artistic production.

Beginning with the aesthetic effect of the self-referential field of artistic activity, the exhibition orients itself via the philological-linguistic concept of the "poetic function" of language.[3] In this structuralist concept, language does not refer to any object in a reality external to language but rather to elements and categories of language itself. The artworks presented here go a step further. Purposelessness, self-analysis and poetic autonomy are confronted with the context of extra-linguistic discourse and, consequently, with topics such as those of media and art studies, so-called tendencies toward democratization, virtualized social relationships, marketing strategies within the art world and the construction of literary forms and everyday rites. In analyzing their own

conditions of existence, the artworks refer in equal measure to themselves and beyond themselves, and the processes of interpretation, raised to the status of facts, slide back in the end into the social-political discourses from which they also originate.

Borrowing Roman Jakobson's division into "intralingual", "interlingual" and "intersemiotic" forms of interpretation,[4] we can determine different artistic strategies in this exhibition. Among them are the conversion of cultural products from their original form of representation into a completely new one; methods of reformulation in the sense of reproductions that allow the 'original' to remain recognizable, and also transference of signs within various semiotic systems. Regarding the methods of "contextualizing interpretation",[5] which can be read as critical remarks or commentary on the 'original text', the exhibition In Other Words…? Discourses with Poetic Function investigates developments that contribute in the end to 'cultural versioning'. In the process, source texts end up in entirely

new variations, resulting in new originals; texts are literally interpreted and inverted with the help of cultural texts—in the end, almost the same thing is said in other words.

[1] See Doris Bachmann-Medick, Cultural Turns: Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften, Rowohlt, Berlin, 2006.

[2] Ibid., p. 82.

[3] Roman Jakobson, Linguistik und Poetik, in: Jens Ihwe (ed.), Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik, Fischer, Frankfurt am Main, 1971, pp. 142-78, quoted in: Heinz Ludwig Arnold and Heinrich Detering (eds.), Grundzüge der Literaturwissenschaft, DTV, Munich, 2005.

[4] See Umberto Eco, Quasi dasselbe mit anderen Worten: Über das Übersetzen, Hanser, Munich and Vienna, 2006, pp. 267-68.

[5] Doris Bachmann-Medick, Cultural Turns: Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften, Rowohlt, Berlin, 2006, p. 67.
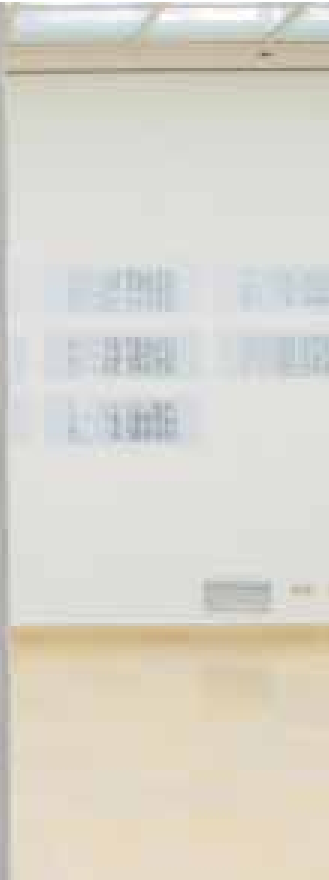
Many artworks fascinate Maria Anwander—artworks by Monica Bonvicini, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Thomas Demand, Ruben Aubrecht, Teresa Margolles, to name just a few. All these artworks have accompanied the artist over the development of her career to date. For the wall installation <u>My Most Favourite Art</u> she has collected title plates from international museums, art spaces and galleries over many years. In the art space, the artist presents the nameplates, removed from the walls without permission (stolen from the art institutions!) as souvenirs, as an encyclopedia of her preferences and ultimately as her own artwork. Viewers are required to give free rein to their imaginations—via the work titles, years of creation, technical specificities, photo credits and the logos of institutions—to conjure up the art works with the aid of their own backgrounds. This personal collection of linguistic representations of visual art can also be read, finally, as the source of inspiration for Maria Anwander's biography as an artist.

Maria Anwander
<u>My Most Favourite Art (2004-2010)</u>

72 title cards, dimensions variable

EXHIBITION VIEW, KUNSTPAVILLON DER TIROLER KÜNSTLERSCHAFT, INNSBRUCK/AUSTRIA, 2010

Andy Warhol, Alfred Hitchcock and Anne Frank are for A, Romy Schneider for R and Susan Sontag for S. Anna Artaker's Personenalphabet (A Portrait of the Artist as an Alphabet) consists of an arrangement of 32 portraits of famous figures from politics and culture. At first glance the stringing together of photos appears associative, but if the readers succeed in identifying and recalling the first initials of each person and combining them then individual words emerge, which finally form an entire sentence. The legibility of the sequence of images as a sequence of eight words (a, portrait, of, the, artist, as, an, alphabet) becomes a question about the common memory of people and knowledge of the media shared by the author of the work and her audience. The larger the overlap the more successful the interpretation of the individual signs will be—and the more successful will be the reconstruction of the person alphabet as a self-portrait of the artist.

Anna Artaker
Personenalphabet
(A Portrait of the Artist
as an Alphabet) (2008)

32 black-and-white prints on paper,
à A3 format

EXHIBITION VIEW, KUNSTPAVILLON DER TIROLER KÜNSTLERSCHAFT,
INNSBRUCK/AUSTRIA, 2010

Page upon page of special typographic
characters and punctuation marks, dates and
now and then some concrete details about,
for example, the Mac OSX operating system.
In Ruben Aubrecht's artist's book a picture
photography does not immediately come
to mind. Yet the artist has broken down an
unspecified digital photograph—a picture,
as the title states and simultaneously leaves
open—into its informational components.
The source code, usually transcribed by the
computer in order for the data to be viewable
by a user, has been linearly itemized and,
at the first casual glance, seems to follow a
narrative arrangement. The original image
eludes perception in favor of a text that is as
difficult to read and interpret as the image.
Without digital processing, again it can only
be perceived as a visual unity, as an image:
letter upon letter, geometrical form upon
geometrical form, sign for sign.

Ruben Aubrecht
a picture (2004)

Book, 253 pages (20.7 x 13.9 x 1.5 cm),
edition of 12 copies

EXHIBITION VIEW, KUNSTPAVILLON DER TIROLER KÜNSTLERSCHAFT,
INNSBRUCK/AUSTRIA, 2010

Michael Kargl
semantics (2009–2010)

Installation, website on server,
24 black-and-white copies, à A0 format

EXHIBITION VIEW, KUNSTPAVILLON DER TIROLER KÜNSTLERSCHAFT,
INNSBRUCK/AUSTRIA, 2010

Letters and numbers, words and entire sentences are all replaced by the same place-holding symbol: with Michael Kargl's originally Internet-based work <u>semantics</u>, users can feed Web addresses into a software system via a form, which returns the selected site in a form that visualizes its structure. The meaning and content seem to have been deleted, text made into image, context into structure; the viewer is no longer looking at the surface but at the architecture beneath it. The material components of linguistic expressions, its form, have been pushed to the foreground at the expense of the conceptual content and its application. Interpretation is now only possible on a formal level: is the leveling of contents by replacing their meaningful components with apparently meaningless symbols a democratizing or a totalitarian process?

In his research series <u>HOW TO DO THINGS WITH WORLDS</u>, Ralo Mayer analyzes miniature worlds, model worlds and their effects on forms of action and cultural practices. As a point of departure he uses the Biosphere 2 project, a sealed ecosystem created in Arizona in the early 1990s, in which eight scientists lived and researched for two years. Mayer approaches this project as the translator of an imaginary science-fiction novel, <u>The Ninth Biospherian</u>, by Roni Layerson. The book only takes on form through its translation into various versions and media formats and through the translator's interpretations. By way of a film script, performances, comics, miniatures of science-fiction novels and spatial scenarios, the artist develops narrative structures and investigates model worlds through fictional as well as documentary material. Mayer describes his artistic field of activity as performative research.

Ralo Mayer
(in collaboration with Oliver Gemballa, actor:
Christoph Gawenda)
<u>"Übersetzung und Verrat" (screen test "The Ninth
Biospherian" / Geller's trance #1) (2010)</u>

Two-channel video with glass installation, 15:00 min (looped)

"Reassurance: it's about nothing anyway",
"me&computer: much too slow", "good: lack
of money makes you diligent": personal,
irrelevant messages couple with intimate
admissions, rapture over a positive
experience fraternizes with displeasure over
lack of funds. For the installation Umsätze
im Detail Barbara Musil and Karo Szmit
utilize a special digital network in order to
communicate with one another over a number
of months. Not over Twitter or Facebook or
any of the other platforms defined as 'social',
but via the artists' bank accounts. Through
transfers of minor sums back and forth
between them, the artists appropriated the
space labeled 'purpose' for their messages,
entrusting their communication to a network
known for its discretion. Through conscious
misinterpretation, Musil and Szmit take up
the supposed democratic esprit of Web 2.0
and push it ad absurdum—misuse of the
purpose.

Barbara Musil and Karo Szmit
Umsätze im Detail (2007)

Ca. 300 bank statements (printouts)

EXHIBITION VIEW, KUNSTPAVILLON DER TIROLER KÜNSTLERSCHAFT,
INNSBRUCK/AUSTRIA, 2010

Lisa Rastl
Zen for Doing (2009)

Video, 8:30 min (looped)

EXHIBITION VIEW, KUNSTPAVILLON DER TIROLER KÜNSTLERSCHAFT,
INNSBRUCK/AUSTRIA, 2010

Zen for Doing is a documentation video that shows Lisa Rastl working as a commercial photographer for the exhibition Nam June Paik: Music for All Senses, shown at the Museum of Modern Art (Mumok) in Vienna in spring 2009. Her schematic work consists in reproducing documentary pictures of one of Nam June Paik's early performances, titled Zen for Head (1963): color balance, lighting, gray scale and white gloves. The photographer's work-flow and the reproduction loop, in which she is inevitably embedded, are only interrupted by the clicking and flashing when the camera shutter opens and closes again shortly afterwards. At exactly this casual, random moment, a new work of art comes into being; reproduction and that which is reproduced appear in a non-causal relationship, and the medium of photography opens up to the viewer's interpretation 'by doing'—in a performative act.

In many of his works, Arnold Reinthaler divides time into its immaterial components, reflecting the artistic subject—himself—in an arrangement made of past, present, and future; at the same moment, he recapitulates his findings in the form of constant recordings. In daily mapping, conceived as a project stretched out across multiple years, the artist visualizes everyday activities, such as sleeping, eating, visiting exhibitions or meeting with friends, and organizes these individual sequences of life into categories and cycles such as "personal hygiene", "social communication" ("face-to-face communication" and "tele-techniques") or "cultural reception". The meticulous recordings are transcribed in different gray monochrome surfaces on bookkeeping paper. The artist's goal is at some point, through the interpretation of the collected data, to be able to remember forward and perhaps in this way to live entirely according to an aesthetic image.

Arnold Reinthaler
daily mapping (since 2008)

13 pieces of bookkeeping ledger paper (journal)
with acrylic paint, à 93 x 30 cm

EXHIBITION VIEW, KUNSTPAVILLON DER TIROLER KÜNSTLERSCHAFT,
INNSBRUCK/AUSTRIA, 2010

A metronome ticks sixty beats per minute, second for second, in an endless loop, transmitted into public space over two horn loudspeakers made out of sheet metal. Soft and insistent, the ticking pervades the Kleinen Hofgarten in Innsbruck. Time passes until suddenly the monotonous rhythm of the sound installation Countdown is harshly interrupted: nine, eight, seven, six, five ... The countdown from nine to zero is part of a choreography defined by Johanna Tinzl and Stefan Flunger: an event is announced in various languages that, ultimately, comprises ten seconds of silence. Then the process begins all over again, each time in a new language. The artists inspire associations and emotional reactions with Countdown, without, however, fulfilling expectations. They maintain the highest degree of openness in the interpretation of the work.

Johanna Tinzl and
Stefan Flunger
<u>Countdown (2008/2010)</u>

Bullhorn loudspeaker, CD player,
amplifier, cable

EXHIBITION VIEW, KUNSTPAVILLON DER TIROLER KÜNSTLERSCHAFT,
INNSBRUCK/AUSTRIA, 2010

You Own Me Now Until You Forget About Me.

Speech and the ability for meta-reflection on one's own language are inherent characteristics of human beings. Since the beginning of the 20th century, language— whether written, spoken, or performed— has become more and more a part of the visual arts in various artistic practices and theoretical approaches, ultimately becoming a constitutive element and the 'source' code of Digital Art.

What all Internet-based projects presented in the exhibition You Own Me Now Until You Forget About Me. have in common is that they take as their starting point an exploration of language, with its arbitrary structures and rules, its various functions within society, its absurdities and constraints on the individual. Open processes are inherent to digital artworks, both in their production and in the mnemonic activities that emerge in their reception. Rather than focusing on the isolated—literary/literal—artwork, the exhibition highlights general artistic tendencies toward a discursive process that originates on the Internet and finds its way back to the 'virtualities of real life'.

As the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure[1] explained, human language can be described under three fundamental aspects: the biological preconditions for speaking ("langage"); the fixed system of rules and signs based on collective convention ("langue"); and the act of speaking itself, as ephemeral and individual statements and utterances ("parole"). De Saussure assumed that language can only be properly considered within the system of "langue", not through "parole". But such a division between social collectivity and individuality, between the general and the specific, does not hold when it comes to Internet-based Art and its mechanisms.

Quite the contrary, art on the Internet focuses on many interrelated practices of both the artist and the user, tracing individual experiences and questions back to a larger system, to society itself. Given the supposition that the language system—conceived as a collective institution of norms—and the speech act— conceived as an individual, coherent and meaningful utterance—are reciprocally

linked and that there can be no backflow into the system without speaking, it becomes clear that human language eludes immediate observation. Language can be examined only by reconstructing the process of its appearance, its articulation. Viewing our system of communication from this angle, we must ask if language is, then, an exclusively virtual product whose existence begins and ends with its realisation. By the same token, digital artworks, although predetermined by the binary code, do not become 'real' (in the sense of generally comprehensible) until the code is transformed into text, image or sound (when the data file is opened and the commands executed). Both language and digital artworks are based on processes, transformations and continuous fluidity. In the digital realm, language acts like a set of hidden stage directions or commands about "How to do Things with Words".² It can be thought of as a speech act that is realised through various media and that is part of an "infinite chain of acts of repetition, which cannot be grasped or controlled. [...] Their peculiar, strange character is constituted by the fact that they refer to contexts that are not present in the moment they are actualised."³ The creation of digital artworks is founded on the active participation of a user, just as the existence of language is founded on the person who speaks.

Text and image are considered to be humanity's oldest mnemonic methods for preserving orality longer and bolstering memory. In the digital realm, the processual aspect of text and image, and therefore their own 'orality', renders mnemonic functions obsolete. Furthermore, text and image are not only equally constitutive elements, but they are also irreversibly interlinked: on the one hand, text and image are both based on text; on the other, the binary code must be visualised in order to be comprehensible and so disembogues in a kind of equalising formula: "Language to be Looked at and/or Things to be Read".⁴ The transformation of text into image, and vice versa, is not a reduction but a translation, and the question is not what is lost in translation but what is gained.

In conclusion, to return to Saussure's thesis, the words, images and sounds in Digital Art are no longer discrete parts of the artwork, and the "langue" and "langage" are no longer part of the "parole". The individual elements of both systems are entangled in a performative act that renders interpretation obsolete. The "open work"[5] manifests itself through mediation and is created individually with each new reception of it.

But what happens when the user closes the data file, when the speaking person stops talking? "In the end there is nothing of an object here, just a process, a set of rules that leads you to the point of questioning unicity, ownership, and the object-like nature of digital art works"[6] and what you can hold is nothing more than the remembrance of it.

[1] See Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, ed. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye with Albert Riedlinger, tr. Roy Harris (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1986).

[2] See John L. Austin, How to Do Things with Words, Harvard University Press, Cambridge/Mass., 1975.

[3] Hartmut Winkler, Diskursökonomie: Versuch über die innere Ökonomie der Medien, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 2004, in: Peter Gendolla and Jörgen Schäfer (eds.), The Aesthetics of Net Literature: Writing, Reading and Playing in Programmable Media, Transcript, Bielefeld, 2007, p. 20.

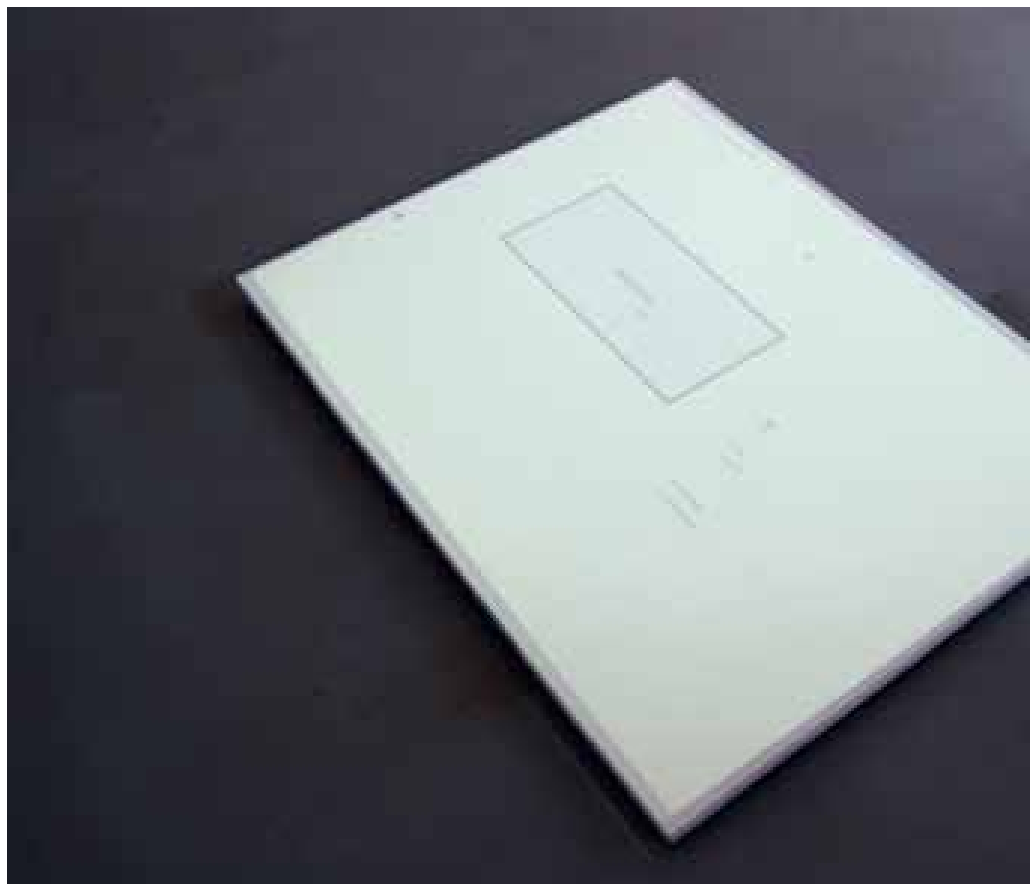[4] Robert Smithson used this phrase in a press release for the correspondent exhibition at the Virginia Dwan Gallery in New York in 1967, http://www.robertsmithson.com/essays/language.htm (November 01, 2010).

[5] See Umberto Eco, The Open Work, Harvard University Press, Cambridge/Mass., 1989.

[6] Luis Silva, Owning Netart for Free, http://turbulence.org/blog/2005/11/09/owning-netart-for-free/#more (November 01, 2010).

In <u>Apartment</u> Martin Wattenberg and Marek Walczak were inspired by Cicero's mnemonic technique of a memory palace. The user establishes an equivalence between language and space by typing words and phrases into the computer. After being automatically processed, language takes the form of a two-dimensional blueprint projected onto the floor of the gallery that allows the visitor to walk 'through' it. The semantic relationships of the written words are connected to spatial and contextual configurations and at the same time cause their architectural re-organisation.

Martin Wattenberg and Marek Walczak
(with additional programming by Jonathan Feinberg)
<u>Apartment (2001-2004)</u>

Website on server, projection onto the floor

EXHIBITION VIEW, MALA GALERIJA—MODERNA GALERIJA,
LJUBLJANA/SLOVENIA, 2008

In Karl Heinz Jeron's and Valie Djordjevic's performance, Marcel Proust's novel <u>À la recherche du temps perdu</u> is first encoded into zeros and ones and then decoded back into human language—that is, processed from the analogue to the digital and back again. The zeros and ones are read by two people alternately, then interpreted by a third, who represents a central processing unit (CPU), and finally stuck onto a wall panel by a fourth as display. The performers play computer with the ASCII version of this originally literary text. In the gallery, in addition to the video documentation of the performance, a 'copylefted' manual of instructions invites the viewer to continue the procedure at home.

Karl Heinz Jeron and Valie Djordjevic
<u>À la recherche du temps perdu (2005)</u>

Video, 2:30 min (looped); black-and-white copies,
A4 format; table, chair, white blanket

EXHIBITION VIEW, MALA GALERIJA—MODERNA GALERIJA,
LJUBLJANA/SLOVENIA, 2008

Kazimir Malevich's <u>Black Square</u> (1913) marks a turning point in art history in that it is a synonym for the possibility of the artwork's reduction. <u>HTML-Malevich</u> by Codemanipulator® intends to do the same by stripping the black square of its very 'materiality'. In addition, the viewer is confronted with the historical dimension of using text code as painting: in a later re-interpretation of the artwork, HMTL-CSS-Malevich, the size of the code is further reduced to a few lines by a newer standard of coding. Also, depending on the browser (the interpreter), the results rendered will be either Malevich's square or his circle.

Codemanipulator®
<u>HTML-Malevich (1996), HTML-CSS-Malevich (2001)</u>

2 black-and-white prints on aluminium, à 50 x 50 cm;
3 black-and-white prints on aluminium, à 100.6 x 100.6 cm

EXHIBITION VIEW, MALA GALERIJA—MODERNA GALERIJA,
LJUBLJANA/SLOVENIA, 2008

Jörg Piringer
nam shub web installation (2008)

Installation, website on server,
text processor, printer, paper

EXHIBITION VIEW, MALA GALERIJA—MODERNA GALERIJA,
LJUBLJANA/SLOVENIA, 2008

The website-processor <u>nam shub web</u>, originally based on the Internet, allows the user to apply his or her individual rules to the textual content of external websites so as to generate visual poetry. In the work's gallery adaptation, a printer is installed that endlessly reproduces the content of dynamic websites as hard copy. Over time, the floor of the gallery is covered with single sheets of paper that contradict the standardisation of human life and the unification of culture through linguistic manipulation.

In objects of desire, a numbered but
unsigned set of sentences, which
disappears from the screen as soon as
the next set is automatically displayed,
allows the visitor to become the owner of a
unique work of art, but only as long as he
or she keeps it in mind. This adaptation of
a previously Internet-based artwork called
the original (2005) ironically questions
topics such as unicity, ownership and the
object-like nature of the digital artwork.

Michael Kargl
<u>objects of desire (2005-2008)</u>

Custom-made computer, shell script,
40 x 50 x 16.5 cm

EXHIBITION VIEW, MALA GALERIJA—MODERNA GALERIJA,
LJUBLJANA/SLOVENIA, 2008

...nced.behaviour.brain+
09:23 PM June 30, 2007 from web

...of...a.....
09:23 PM June 30, 2007 from web

+sc_raping.the.n_sides.....
09:22 PM June 30, 2007 from web

...antling emotional [c]op[eing]eration
...07 from web

In _s[p]erver[se]_: 404 poetry_ by Mary-Anne Breeze, the reader is confronted with signs, numbers, symbols and snippets of programming code, all integrated into the system of our natural language by means of associative techniques. Originating in the micro-blogging system of Twitter, this piece of poetic writing blurs the boundaries between the "lisible" and the "scriptible text" (Roland Barthes). It does so by replacing the aesthetics of stylistic devices within a wide range of open semantic systems.

Mary-Anne Breeze—aka netwurker
s[p]erver[se]: 404 poetry_ (2007)

Wall text, dimensions variable

EXHIBITION VIEW, MALA GALERIJA—MODERNA GALERIJA,
LJUBLJANA/SLOVENIA, 2008

Christina Goestl
(with sound by Boris Kopeinig
and many thanks to Betty Dodson)
<u>viva la vulva recoded (1998-2008)</u>

Video, 2:50 min (looped)

EXHIBITION VIEW, MALA GALERIJA—MODERNA GALERIJA,
LJUBLJANA/SLOVENIA, 2008

The series <u>viva la vulva recoded</u> by Christina Goestl raises gender issues by animating special characters in the form of vibrant female genitals. In addition, this virtual reference to a pink sticker first spotted in the 1970s in San Francisco alters the formal expression of typography through its re-interpretation as a moving image with sound, thus creating an endless process of de-limination and conjunction between language and its visual expression.

Art, New Media and the Curatorial

-
In conversation with Sarah Cook
March 2011
-

On a certain level your book RETHINKING CURATING: ART AFTER NEW MEDIA[1] questions the opposition of New Media Art and contemporary art. Why do you think these two forms of art are comparable?

I think we take it as assumed that there has been an opposition between them, partially because New Media Art has put itself in opposition to contemporary art by redefining what art is and by existing outside the structures of contemporary art. We question that opposition in that we try to suggest that it doesn't need to be there and that any resistance to New Media Art from the side of contemporary art is often based on false assumptions. For instance some curators, uncertain of New Media Art because they don't know technically how it works, think that if the work is interactive it's going to be problematic for audiences at the galleries.

The second part of your question, when you say "comparable", I think what we, at CRUMB,[2] try to do is to indicate how New Media Art is just a part of contemporary art and shares some of the same characteristics, or behaviours, of things that are widely understood to form part of the contemporary art world. And then we show how it's a little bit different. I think maybe this is a problem in the book; we possibly should not have used that antagonistic language of difference. But at the time of its writing, five years ago, it was a way of indicating that there are other considerations that curators have to have when looking at New Media Art.

Why was it a problem to mention the difference in the book?

Because I think that curators are tired of continually defining why New Media Art is different. They're just tired of being in a ghetto. Also it's not helping the field, it's not helping the mainstream contemporary art world pay more attention to Media Art.

At the time when New Media Art really started to become something that museums were interested in they were just assuming it was like a three-screen video projection, or it used surveillance/CCTV, or it involved mapping and that made it

New Media. So people within the field of New Media said: "Stop emphasising the differences and start emphasising the similarities." Actually I think there's also a subjective level on which you can approach this question. Curators are individual people with taste, and you can see within particular institutions how curatorial taste shapes the programme. Just because there are so few dedicated Media Art curators within museums, those who are [within museums] are curating quite particular shows and they might be emphasising only one aspect of New Media Art practice. If that's the only art to get seen in a museum then the whole world assumes that that was all there is to New Media Art. I think this is problematic. But this is the nature of the contemporary art world and museum practice. If every museum had a curator who is responsible for Media Art then there wouldn't be this much of a division, because we would know a lot more about the plurality of forms that exist within the field rather than just the techy stuff or just the data-visualization stuff or just the mapping stuff or just the surveillance stuff.

<u>Why do you think curators don't look more into whatever New Media Art is? They have, for instance, to deal with certain very specific aspects of art and the common art world because it's their job. Why wouldn't they do the same with New Media Art?</u>

I'd like to think they're starting to, but, to answer your question, I suspect there is more than one reason. On the one hand it comes down to practicality. They have to pick some theme or some angle on a work because they only get the chance to do one show every five years in their museum. On the other hand I think that when you're encountering a field you know nothing about then you immediately start with the question: "What's different about it?" and for New Media Art the answer is often: "Oh, it's how it's made." And then you're focusing on the technology and that leads you down a certain path. That necessity narrows your research for you. When I interviewed Larry Rinder[3] about the <u>Bitstreams</u> show he curated at the Whitney Museum of American Art he wanted to indicate that he had given

audiences all possible angles on this field and that every contemporary artist was potentially a New Media artist. But when I actually walked around the show I felt like there was one work made using flash and one work made using computer architectural modelling and one work made using cinema cut-ups and so on. It seemed you had one work of every single technology. There were classics, great pieces, but as a result it was a show led by the technology.

Rinder felt like he had done his responsibility to the field. It was a very quick show to curate, he didn't have a lot of time to do the research and so he went to all the galleries and asked them: "Which of your artists are using technology?" And that's what came back. That is how he made that selection. It's a long time ago now, about ten years, but museums haven't taken on consistently tracking how the art is changing in that same way, because the technology is changing.

It means every time a curator says "I want to learn about what New Media Art is"

someone's going to tell them "Well, it's this technology now", and that is going to lead them down that path. That's my suspicion.

Is there some more integration of New Media Art into the common arts field or is it the same as it was, for instance, ten years ago?

I suspect there is more integration, but I think that artists who are really working with technology are still redefining art. So they'll always be 'in emergence' as they were back then. They will always try to change the boundaries of what we think art is and challenge the institutions that show it. For instance, I spent a year at Eyebeam in the labs. Artists there are writing software and are making prototypes of objects that might be design or might be activist tools. So in all those cases you might say: "Is it art or not?" That separates it further from the world of contemporary art, but in fact it expands the definition of art in general.

So it's more or less about art and not New Media Art?

I think that's why we called the book <u>Art after New Media</u>. Because we wanted to point to this moment when the technology becomes, to a certain degree, ubiquitous. There will always be artists working with technology that isn't commonplace, and there will always be people working in that landscape that is beyond what we think of as the landscape of art.

<u>If we talk about how to compare or how to differentiate between New Media Art and the traditional arts we always take the second field as a kind of commonplace. Do you think that there is an influence on what is happening in the traditional arts field from new media?</u>

Probably from new media in terms of the technologies and the social use of the technology. Probably not from New Media Art and what we are considering the artistic output of that.

<u>So more from new media culture?</u>

Yes. I think you see that librarians are not what they used to be, archivists are not what they used to be and storefront designers are not what they used to be. That's all because the way their work has changed, because of the technologies they have access to. The same can be said for curators or museums. Whether the type of art that is produced in the contemporary arts changes as well ... maybe. But then there is this whole other raft of factors about the economy of the art world, what state art publications are in, how much money there is for the galleries. All of those things are going to have actually as much effect as a change in the technology. I think maybe the design/art line is blurrier than it used to be.

<u>So it had more influence on the design area you mean?</u>

I think you see artists who work with new media technologies are more comfortable with the design world than they used to be. They might be better understood there than in the contemporary art world.

<u>Why should New Media Art be integrated in the art and not in the design sector?</u>

I think it would be a shame if New Media Art just became part of any other art world. Actually we want lots of different kinds of art worlds and lots of different kinds of art in them!

Some projects coming out of the labs at Eyebeam fit much better in design, some in activism, some fit much better in software programming and some like to be in the art world. My conversations with artists at Eyebeam were about where they want to be and what contexts they want their works to be seen in.

Some of them absolutely want their work to be seen in the design world, but not all of them do. I think that is the benefit of places like Eyebeam or the Banff Centre, which for many years supported artists through its New Media Institute. There aren't very many places in the world where artists can go to escape either the commercial art or design worlds or the commercial software and technology industries to actually make something new and then figure out where to go after that. There need to be more places like that.

In New Media Art there are certain structures that don't exist in the common arts field, such as labs or festivals for example. Especially the labs are more and more disappearing it seems, compared to the situation around 2000. Are these structures transforming into something else or is it still the way it used to be?

I think the labs that were there in the early 2000s were really hardware-based. That was about having the technology that artists didn't have access to. We certainly saw that the Banff Centre in 1991 started the Art and Virtual Environments Programme. They had a computer that was capable of doing VR and a programmer, John Harrison, who was there to help artists like Toni Dove and Michael Naimark to make VR works. But at a certain point such a technology no longer is exclusive, or the technology falls out of date and there is no new budget in order to upgrade it, or there is no budget to pay a technician to maintain it. And actually what artists want is to be in a studio situation where they can be in conversation with other artists. All artists

want that irrespective of their medium. Or they want to be left alone in their studio to retreat and just get on with their work. So places that were technology-based labs had to figure out whether or not they would become discourse environments, residency environments or residency with retreat environments. You can see that happening at the Banff Centre, and you see it a little bit at Eyebeam. Eyebeam at one point had a quite high-end video-editing suite. So an artist like Isaac Julien would go to Eyebeam and an artist like Geraldine Juarez would be paid to work on Isaac's films, but Geraldine would also make her own work on the side.

That was the model of production that existed then—part of it paid revenue for the commercial art world, part of it to support artists. But at a certain point they didn't need that anymore. Video artists were happy to go to a TV broadcast suite and pay hours for professional video editing by someone who works in that field (never mind having an artist do that for you). So the labs became much more about a discourse environment. I think that has merged. Maybe visual arts/contemporary arts residency models have learned that from the labs or vice versa, I don't know.

It seems there is a lot of discourse going on about curating right now. But this discourse often comes from online journalism and from blogging. How do you see this situation?

I keep a feed of every time anybody tweets the word 'curating' on Twitter and it just makes me laugh ... people curate their shoe collection, they curate what they're gonna wear today, they curate the cake they're gonna eat at lunch time ... it's ridiculous. The word itself has lost some meaning, as if it's been adopted to describe essentially an editing or filtering activity. We can blame bloggers for that if you want or we can blame journalists for that. I think when I first encountered reblogging as a concept I thought it was brilliant. And I still love Eyebeam's reblog, because I love that somebody takes it over and for two weeks you look at what they look at.

And they look at good stuff…

They look at good stuff and they get good feeds. Somebody decides on the feeds and so it's actually properly crowdsourced, from the crowd that you want to be hanging out with. I think that is a value in thinking about curating as taste-making. Online tools, tools of blogging, make it easy for anybody to do that. Anne-Marie Schleiner's idea about "filter feeders"[4] is still the right idea. If you're feeding a blog then you're going to filter things in a particular way. If you're feeding a gallery space you're filtering in a different way. The role you're going to take on, that role is going to change. Look at the VVORK blog: all it is is a caption. A caption and maybe it has a link in it. Artist name, title, date, link. That's it. Whereas going to a museum there would also be the medium it is made in and everything else. So it is an ongoing discussion and the word 'curating' has become seriously overused. Maybe curators will fight for it back, but perhaps they have done a pretty bad job in defending the word for a long time. When you think of curators who put their name in big letters on the poster and they don't even mention the artists' names, then they deserve the word taken away from them, popularised and given to everybody. I'm not going to say "No you haven't curated your outfit today," but I know it doesn't mean the same thing as when I curated a show.

Lars Bang Larsen and Soren Andreasen claim that the question of what a curator is "doesn't make sense, because the curator is not something; the curator does something."[5] What do you think the curator does?

One thing that you will start to notice in the next year—if you haven't already—is that curators are now talking about 'the curatorial'. It is not 'studies in curating' but 'studies in the curatorial'. Books are called 'the curatorial' because they're trying to take on that word to emphasise practice. "I'm concerned with the curatorial" rather than "concerned with curating" as a verb. I think that is really interesting because it's not even 'curatorship'. Curatorship seems to be something we have been using as a

word for caretaking versus 'the curatorial' which seems to be practice.

As a curator you do everything. From selecting, taste-making and gate-keeping to sweeping the floor, painting the wall, writing the exhibition press release, calling up the journalists and so on. I mean you do all of those thing entirely dependent upon the context you are doing it for. No matter if you are doing it for a book, for a blog or for a physical space. I make the canapés sometimes, so I consider that a part of it.

<u>Thinking of translation as a metaphor for curating, do you see yourself somehow as a translator? A translator between the different worlds of art, between real and virtual space and between different media?</u>

From being in conferences in other countries and having things simultaneously translated for me and talking to those translators I'm very aware that they are very neutral in the way in which they translate. In curating you're absolutely putting your own political and social ideas in there. I wonder if we need to introduce

a political idea to translating, maybe make it more like advocacy or brokering.

A broker is an economic translator, an advocate might be a political translator, a lobbyist or something like that. So that would be my only hesitancy at using the analogy of a translator for the work of curating ... I think absolutely yes, it's a task of translation but there is something else. I just always say that curators are individuals and they have things they like and things they don't like. And if that's not apparent in their show then it's probably not a good show. Why am I going to see it when anybody could have done it?

<u>But I would say that translating is a kind of neutral activity in general? Or should it at least be a kind of neutral activity?</u>

My experiences of conference-based simultaneous translation—saying one person's words in another language—is neutral. But I know that, for instance, when a writer brings out a new translation of Homer's <u>Iliad</u> people get very excited in case they find more nuance. Whether

they're looking for that nuance within Homer's Iliad or whether they're looking for a new nuance that the translator introduces. But maybe in the field of literature it is slightly different than in other fields. I don't think there's one way of looking at it.

[1] Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook, Rethinking Curating: Art After New Media, The MIT Press, Cambridge and London, 2010.

[2] Curatorial Resource for Upstart Media Bliss (CRUMB) is a resource for research and practice related to curating New Media Art, http://crumbweb.org (January 08, 2011).

[3] Sarah Cook and Larry Rinder, An interview with Larry Rinder, http://crumbweb.org/getInterviewDetail.php?id=11 (January 08, 2011).

[4] Anne-Marie Schleiner, Fluidities and Oppositions among Curators, Filter Feeders, and Future Artists, http://www.intelligentagent.com/archive/Vol3_No1_curation_schleiner.html (January 08, 2011).

[5] Andreasen, Soren Andreasen and Lars Bang Larsen, The Middleman: Beginning to Think About Mediation, in: Paul O'Neill (ed.), Curating Subjects, De Appel Centre for Contemporary Art, Amsterdam, 2007, pp. 20–30.

Ever-Changing Chains
of Work

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You make your birth certificate available
on request on your website. Any
enquiries?

Not yet, only remarks such as these. I
figured out that some people just know
it is my real name and some people think
I have changed my name in my passport
and forged my birth certificate.

How important is authorship in your daily
artistic practice?

Quite I guess, but this is a complex
question. What do you mean? My
authorship, or that of others? In general
I think authorship should be respected,
mentioned if needed, but should never
prohibit someone from using the fruit of
anyone's labour as source material for
new works. I think the cultural and social
impact of a fruit of labour is of importance
for my respect for its authorship. If the
author is publicly known and part of a
larger social canon, then mostly I don't
bother mentioning it. Most of the time
these authors are impossible to contact.
But if I can find their e-mail addresses and

if they respond personally, then I start
to care. Especially when I see they would
benefit from the accreditation.

I will give an example. In my work The
Revolving Internet.com (2010) I've used a
famous pop song (playing from a Chinese
server somewhere, really easy to find out)
without specifically mentioning who made
it. But in the source code of the work I
do openly thank the artist Chris Collins
for making Uneven Google.com (2010), a
Google page slanted by one degree. His
code inspired me to continue with my set
of animated Google search pages, which
I started with The Disagreeing Internet.
com (2008). Some people responded to
this first work without linking back to it. I
felt this was a shame. First of all, because
the audience missed the complete chain
of works, and the discourse could have
been highlighted. Seeing how works
relate to each other is what I enjoy about
comment threads on surfing clubs such
as Nastynets.com for example. People
respond to an initial post, and sometimes
the response is even better then the
original work, but it cannot be seen

separately. Second, because these people were friends or colleagues and now there was confusion in our audience about who started this way of using Google in an iframe with Javascript changing the DOM (document object model) values. That is why I mention Chris Collins in my code. He inspired me, and I respect his work, I want people to know that. There is nothing mystical about my authorship; I am inspired by good works and people. All the attention The Revolving Internet. com received included links to Chris' work. I enjoyed that.

I think it is respectful to let an author know that you have made a response or that you have used his work. But even more important is mentioning (within the context of the work, in its presentation, in the code etc.) the inspiration or the source of the work.

Especially when the work is not yet part of a larger social canon, and when it has the power to encourage a discussion. Just like re-blogging something, you credit the source, not the author per se. We should always highlight discourse, the chain of works, not be greedy with credit or respect.

The variation of products—especially in the field of information technology—has become an important component of a globalised culture. Only shortly after their introduction, online services are expanded, reformulated and refined with the aim of producing different versions for different markets and different users. Equally your artworks can be seen online in the form of websites and videos as well as offline in the form of installations. Are there different markets and different users in the art world too when it comes to talking about Internet-based and traditional art?

Yes, although recently I think it has to do more and more with the age-old story of people interested in the avant-garde versus institutional and conventional people who have the money that defines the market. The wish is of course to have your work overcome these limitations and speak to audiences that are not

defined by banal money dialectics. Only recently I met a young, seemingly smart curator with an expensive business card who did not have a clue what to think when it comes to talking about Internet-based Art. It will take a long time before the general public figures out that the Internet is a medium with medium specific qualities. Until then we will see different markets.

This is similar to Conceptual Art, which found different paths to commoditisation—think of Seth Siegelaub's <u>The Xerox Book</u>[1] for example, which was published in 1968. Conceptual Art would not exist without Seth Siegelaub, not an artist himself, but a dealer. He managed to find buyers for conceptual works, the catalogues, the remains of performances, the instructions for pieces etc. <u>The Xerox Book</u> is actually a catalogue made of an exhibition that never opened. The catalogue could be photocopied as much as you wanted. But now an original photocopy is priceless (Seth told me he makes new photocopies to be able to sell the old ones.) Siegelaub embodies the possible commoditisation

of Conceptual Art; under his guidance, the ideas of Conceptual Art found the material form through which they could be contextualised in the canon of contemporary art. I guess Internet-based Art is in a similar struggle at the moment, and I wonder which curator with a regular income has the guts to jump in and make it happen.

<u>Which of your online works would you consider the most appropriately 'versioned' for an offline setting and why do you consider it as such?</u>

I guess that would be <u>YouTube as a Sculpture</u> (2009), a project I developed for the Netherlands Media Art Institute, NIMk. It was based on a previous project called <u>YouTube as a Subject</u> (2008), where I animated the YouTube play button in videos that I put back on YouTube. Those videos looked as if the play button remained after it had been clicked to view the video, and it started to fade to black, move around or shake. This triggered the responses from other artists, such as Martin Kohout (recently nominated for

the YouTube Play Guggenheim award with that video), but especially Ben Coonley. Both of them animated other elements of the YouTube video interface.

For the exhibition space, I versioned this visual discussion by making a physical copy of the YouTube loading animation. A large space was covered in black theatre fabric, the kind that seems to suck the light out of a room. I hung eight Styrofoam balls in a circle to form the loading animation, with their size in relationship to the 'aspect ratio' of the back wall. When visitors entered the space, all the elements made it look as if they were encountering an enormous YouTube video. Inside they saw just eight big Styrofoam balls in a circle, illuminated one by one by eight spotlights and a simple disco light mixer.

The best thing about this piece was that the audience started versioning the sculpture themselves by filming it and uploading the documentation to YouTube, because this is what it reminded them of—and thereby completing the circle of production and reproduction. The success of the sculpture meant that audience members documented the sculpture and finally became the uploading medium for my participation in the visual discussion set in motion by YouTube as a Subject a few years earlier.

When you created YouTube as a Subject did you anticipate the (video and other) comments as a part of your work or did this rather happen accidentally?

The comments were one of the biggest compliments I have received in my life. I felt like I really needed to make the videos and upload them before someone else did it. But when the comments came into my inbox late at night, all seven of them one after another, notifying me of the responses made by Ben Coonley, I knew I had hit a nerve. I laughed myself to sleep. It was a great surprise.

Why is your YouTube channel designed with white typography on a white background?

The YouTube profile is something that follows me around, I never wanted it,

but for <u>YouTube as a Subject</u> I needed to keep it. I always hated the set up and the design of YouTube. When I was making my profile, I put a GIF file in the background with a white and a black frame alternating, to cause a stroboscopic effect and to chase people away.

Suddenly YouTube decided that they wouldn't allow that anymore, they wanted cleaner profiles I guess, less MySpace-like (I like the historical fact that the possibility of the animated background and all the MySpace tweaks were unintentional, seeing that they forgot to prohibit the use of HTML in the profiles). Finally I ended up with this result, and I like it.

<u>Since Internet-based Art began to emerge in the mid-1990s there has been a lot of theory about its ephemeral, fluid and performative characteristics—about its immateriality to mention one of the keywords surrounding this discourse. In contrast, you claim that you are dealing with the Internet as a material. How do you explain this?</u>

Well, I definitely see the performative aspects. If you document Internet-based Art, it is mostly best documented from the viewer's perspective. Saving the work itself is almost never the best way to archive a work. Internet-based Art can often be seen as a machine that is performing for or set in motion by the artist. In comparison, Performance Art is also very material, for example the age of the performer's body, the trained or untrained muscles, the materials next to the body, the audience, the space etc. The same goes with the files of Internet-based Art: how they behave in different circumstances, how a script behaves in different browsers. Scripts can stop functioning, just like paint can fade or a performer's body can stop functioning. The Internet is the medium for watching, sharing and publishing files, and its materiality is changing every day.

<u>The term "Post Internet"[2]—sometimes also used to contextualise your artworks— has been described as a condition, "when the Internet is less a novelty and more a banality [...] or when the photo of the art</u>

Yes this is very important, although I don't like being associated with the term anymore. I think the novelty aspect has not worn off for me in my research, there is too much left to explore. It might be beneficial for the acceptance of Internet-based Art as a valid art form as well as for the Internet to be considered a banality. But the term seems to be used a lot by people that only take content and inspiration from the Internet but do not work with the medium-specific qualities it has to offer. I regard this as limiting. It is more than a passing fad that needs to be incorporated in traditional and extremely conventional ways of making art. It seems that a lot of people still believe they can only create a valid social alibi as artists if they make paintings and sculptures. It is easy to use the Internet as a hip inspiration without confronting oneself with the real challenges that are ahead in using this medium for making art.

Making offline art with the knowledge that the Internet exists, of course I also do that, but using the Internet, which is still evolving, is a big part of my practice; I do not want to disconnect myself from it. I agree much more with the term "Internet-Aware Art",[3] coined by Guthrie Lonergan, to describe what I am doing. So it does not suggest that what I make is something that comes after the fad of the Internet, but I am consciously using the Internet as one of my works' main components.

Currently you are developing a concept to contextualise Internet-based Art by recording users in front of their screens as they interact with the artwork, which is then documented. This seems to offer a brilliant way to shift the focus from the technological condition of Internet-based Art to its use in everyday culture—can you explain the aims of this project more in detail?

I was often asked to advise institutions on archiving Internet-based Art, and I never knew what to say. There are so many different kinds of works, and only

a very small percentage of the works are static enough to archive through copying or backing up the data. Also most of the works are very, if not fully, dependent on the context in which they are viewed if they are to function as intended. Think of works in domain names, works that exist on video or blogging services, generative works etc.

To draw the comparison with Performance Art again, I felt as if people were trying to archive the body of the performer to be able to archive the work. As if you would freeze Marina Abramovic. In collaboration with Robert Sakrowski, art historian, former head of the Netart-Datenbank.org at TU Berlin and currently running the initiative Curating YouTube,[4] I am making a template for how to document your own private usage and viewing of Internet-based Art.

This would include filming the person using the computer with an over-shoulder shot and a screen recording, even including audio commentary. I am talking about the users in their natural setting,

at home, in private, with all kinds of stuff on their desks, or watching in bed, doing and looking however they want. Alongside that we will collect these documentations on YouTube and create curated playlists. We will initiate the documentation of old art works that are still online ourselves and hope to find partners in archiving this documentation footage next to putting it on YouTube. We decided to use YouTube because we don't have to run extra servers and the services are a safe and easy bet in archiving video for the future, easily accessible by other participants, including the possibilities for tagging and managing playlists.

Although I am worried about their censorship issues, so we will always make back-ups and keep our eyes open for other options. At the moment we are discussing with the Netherlands Media Art Institute, NIMk, and looking for other interested institutions and people. The most important part is the template, so other people can participate in this subjective guerrilla archiving. By documenting pieces they have made

themselves, which they love or they hate, and putting the documentation of art works online.

You argue that everything that pops up on your screen belongs to you—how many files do you 'possess' each day on an average?

Ok, I just looked in one of my caches and 4529 files were mentioned. Today was an average day, and it's not over yet; I use multiple browsers, so I would say between 10 and 15,000 files per day.

¹ Seth Siegelaub on The Xerox Book (1968): "What I was trying to do was standardize the conditions of exhibition with the idea that the resulting differences in each artist's project or work, would be precisely what the artist's work was about.", in: Hans Ulrich Obrist, Interview with Seth Siegelaub, 1999, http://www.e-flux.com/projects/do_it/notes/interview/i001_text.html (February 15, 2011).

² Régine Debatty, Interview with Marisa Olson, 2008, http://we-make-money-not-art.com/archives/2008/03/how-does-one-become-marisa.php (February 15, 2011).

³ Thomas Beard, Interview with Guthrie Lonergan, 2008, http://rhizome.org/editorial/2008/mar/26/interview-with-guthrie-lonergan (February 15, 2011).

⁴ Curating Youtube is a project by Robert Sakrowski, Axel Menning and Sven Baeucker. One of their projects is Curating Youtube Box, a temporary infrastructure for an exhibition space reacting to contemporary Web 2.0 phenomena including the hardware needed to stream movies via the Internet and the (temporary) exhibition environment these movies are presented in: http://www.curatingyoutube.net (February 15, 2011).

Stories Without Boundaries
But Full of Lies

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In conversation with Les Liens Invisibles
March 2011

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Could you please name the three most
influential pieces of art with regard to your
own artistic practice?

It's too difficult for us to reduce all into
pieces but we can have a try. Synthesizing,
we can say that we are children/victims of
the Duchampian century (as we said, we've
been Too Close to Duchamp's Bicycle,
2008); we've been largely influenced by
the global entertainment industry; and we
are big fans of the subversive projects of
Luther Blissett and its epigons.

In an essay Inke Arns claims that "the secret
act of making the world disappear through
software not only leads to a withdrawal
from visibility and perceptibility but also
implies an immaterialization of structures."[1]
Is this your focus, too?

We think that this issue of structures is an
interesting point to reflect upon and that
most of the Web 2.0. phenomena have to
be looked from this point of view. What we
try to do with our "anti-social not-working"[2]
pieces, a term coined by Geoff Cox, is not
just to create a parody of global collective

symbols like Facebook, Google etc. What we
are mainly interested in is the manipulation
of the inner structure to which the Internet
user-experience depends on. More than
the look and feel of a logo it is important
how people/users interact with these
invisible structures (search engines, blog
platforms, social networks etc.) and
what are the implications of these kind of
interactions.

The Internet is not just a collection of
pages. The Internet is an environment, a
landscape, through which people/users
move and in which they 'live'. The psycho-
geographic approach starts the analysis
of the organization of urban space and
proposes new joyful routes ('dérive') to go
through the cities as ways to temporarily
reject and implicitly subvert capitalist order.

In a similar manner, with works such as
Seppukoo.com (2009), Repetitionr.com
(2010) or Subvertr.com (2007), we are
interested in subverting the ordinary way
people move through digital landscapes and
interact with information as a temporary
rejection of the "prosumer"[3] condition.

Détournement, reverse engineering, subvertising … you connect a political and sometimes activist attitude with irony and humor: how do you prevent yourself from producing so-called lifestyle-subversion and oneliner-art?

More than a prevention it is a question of intent. Irony and humor are one of the easiest ways to capture people's attention and, at the same time, to criticize aspects of our everyday reality, but we don't want to reduce our interventions to some witticisms. Just like in Maieutics,[4] where irony has a strong educational purpose, for us this kind of approach represents a way to get people to understand our point of view and the meaning of our works. This practice is even more evident in our Web 2.0 détournements, where we act like the most famous social platforms in order to drive people into a comfortable place where they can replicate some of their well-known online habits as far as we face them with our subverted message.

In the context of your project REPETITIONR.COM you use the following quotation from Oscar Wilde: "A lie is the beginning of a new story. That's why we love art." A quick research on Wikiquote says that many misquotations are attributed to the author and categorizes the quotation as "unsourced". Can you verify its provenance and tell us why you love art?

Lies are superior forms of art: they are art in everyday life, art without art framework. Like a story without boundaries or a picture without borders, a well-told lie gives the illusion and/or the hope of changing reality. That's why people love drugs, politics, religion, utopia etc. And that's also why we love art.

The design and layout of your projects is kind of trappy: no pixel aesthetics, no eight-bit sounds, no obvious code manipulation as known from early Internet-based Art. Instead of this there are a lot of rounded corners, pre-designed widgets, WordPress templates and social media accounts. What is the most significant difference between early Internet-based Art and current practices?

It is the context that has changed. Even though sponsored by the dot-com corporations, the early Internet was mostly an unexplored space, populated by pioneers of all kinds. Nowadays the Internet has become a mature mass-medium and it is quite normal that about 16 years later Internet-based Art also looks very different.

As regards our work, we often use Web 2.0 aesthetics in order to create a contrast between the paradoxical content of the work (a fake-publishing service, a ritual suicide Web service etc.) and the appealing pop way this content is presented. On the one hand, the fancy and glossy aesthetics are functional in making the work accessible and believable to everyone while, on the other hand, we want to ironize the easy repossession of counter-cultural elements by mainstream media (for example with our projects Subvertr.com and Seppukoo.com). Let's think for example how the do-it-yourself approach has been absorbed and emptied by the so-called Web 2.0 phenomena.

What is the most significant similarity?

Well, if it is true that many things have changed, we have the impression that many artists who are now working with digital media have internalized and normalized the radical assumptions of early Internet-based Art. Let's think for example to the battles against the copyright—which many Internet artists have referred to—and let's look how common it is now for an artist to release a work on the Internet under a Creative Commons license.

Let's then think about the early contraposition between 'traditional' art contexts (galleries, museums etc.) and the Internet as a new space for art. Now everyone—even all those net.art pioneers from the early 1990s—presents their own work both on the Internet and in traditional contexts. Also use of the term 'net' itself has become useless for an artist. Today it is quite normal for everyone who has something to do with art to work with video, audio, multimedia into online and offline digital environments.

The (post-)modern subject has to negotiate and define itself perpetually by combining and re-combining the various cultural codes and contexts it is settled within—it has become a patchworked subject. As described by you, the project SEPPUKOO.COM is about "the liberation of the digital body from any identity constriction in order to help people discover what happens after their virtual life and to rediscover the importance of being anyone, instead of pretending to be someone." What is the difference between 'anyone' and 'someone' in terms of virtual suicide?

Many people have interpreted Seppukoo. com as a service to kill their own virtual life, and of course we played a lot on this opposition between 'real' life and 'virtual' life. But virtual suicide, as we intended with Seppukoo.com, was more like a way (back) to anonymity. It's not just a matter of privacy. The Internet and other forms of virtual life are an occasion to expand our identities, so why do we have to be reductive, having the same real-life identity constrictions when we are online?

In the end 'anyone' is to 'someone' what multiplicity is to singularity.

You clearly identify your works as works of art—is it important for you to be represented in an exhibition space?

I don't know why, but I think that Internet Art (and artists) are suffering a kind of inferiority complex toward 'traditional' forms of art. This would explain this necessity—felt by many artists—to exhibit a digital work in a physical space. It's as if it is the context to make the difference between a work and a work of art. Most of our works have been created and now exist on the Internet. And that's their natural habitat. This is also particularly true because there's no clear separation between the work, the users interacting with it and the reactions created by these interactions.

We personally love the Internet because of its very popular nature, which allows us to reach a more transversal dimension than the usual public frequenting art venues. Then, when we are called or

we need to exhibit our work in physical space, if possible we prefer to translate the project with other media (large-format reproduction, video etc.) in order to better communicate the idea behind it. But in the end we're saying nothing new, as this has happened so many times before 'Les Liens Invisibles' projects.

Among other things, interactivity and participation are important features of your work: how do you exhibit your artworks in traditional exhibition space where the Internet user is often reduced to a spectator?

Well, it usually depends on the exhibition and on the curator's choices, but, as we said before, we're more interested in preserving the concept behind the project instead of its digital representations, interactivity included. We also have to say that we use interactivity in order to reproduce the commodified look and feel of most of contemporary Web-based products. Taking the project out of the Internet means that this interaction loses its function.

In an interview at Networked Performance you call yourself "human interfaces between the users/spectators and the invisible."[5] Do you think that it is possible to escape from the system or does one rather have to act from the inside nowadays?

We used this expression in replying to questions from Luis Silva, who was asking us who we really are if we often define ourselves as an imaginary art-group. In regard to your specific question, probably we do not have a rational answer, we can just say that in our opinion the better way is to keep one foot outside the system, in order to have an overall view from a certain distance, and one foot inside the system trying to change it. Simply escaping is almost a way to lose contact with the whole world without any concrete advantage for ourselves or for our society.

Why do you use a French name?

There isn't any particular reason. At that time it sounded nice to us, so we used it. That's all.

¹ Inke Arns, <u>The Twists of the Snake: Minority Tactics in the Age of Transparency</u>, in: Jens Kastner and Bettina Spörr (eds.), <u>Not Doing Everything: Civil and Social Disobedience at the Interfaces of Art, Radical Politics and Technology</u>, Münster, Unrast-Verlag, 2008, p. 120.

² Geoff Cox, <u>Antisocial Applications: Notes in Support of Antisocial Notworking</u>, in: CONT3XT.NET (ed.), <u>Curediting</u>, Vague Terrain #11, 2008, http://vagueterrain.net/journal11/geoff-cox/01, (December 05, 2010).

³ Pit Schulz, <u>The Producer as Power User</u>, in: Geoff Cox and Joasis Krysa (eds.), <u>Engineering Culture: On 'The Author as (Digital) Producer'</u>, DATA Browser vol. 2, Autonomedia, Brooklyn/New York, 2005.

⁴ From Wikipedia: Maieutics is a pedagogical method based on the idea that due to the reason innate within each of us the truth is latent in the mind of every human being, but has to be "given birth" by answering questions (or problems) intelligently proposed., http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maieutics (December 05, 2010).

⁵ Networked Performance, <u>Getting too close to art: An email conversation between Les Liens Invisibles and Luis Silva</u>, http://turbulence.org/blog/2009/05/14/les-liens-invisibles-interviewed-by-luis-silva (December 05, 2010).

The 'One Idea,
One Result' Method

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In conversation with Jan Robert Leegte
October 2010

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You are an academically trained sculptor. How do you see the Internet—can it be defined as a space as such?

For me the Internet has always been a physical space. Working as a sculptor, the first moment I started experimenting with HTML code and viewed the results in the browser, I witnessed a physical installation. Later on, I tried to analyse why and formulated a few key aspects to help me define this experience.

The first aspect was the trompe l'œil effect of the screen interface. Considering the established history of this effect, you could hardly call it unique, yet the drop shadows of the computer interface relied heavily on this old principle. Next I discovered the (expectation of) interaction. This was a new addition and introduced not only the tactility but also the whole conceptual accessibility of the material. Thirdly, I thought of animation. Giving the object a random movement also forced existential distance between the viewer and the object. The final addition was a more personal one using code. By using code, the creator has to switch spaces to see the actual work. This action made me aware of the spaces I was switching between. Commanding objects through language and then viewing them in a different space of manifestation validated the physical presence of the GUI elements I was placing as an installation (scrollbars, frame borders, table borders etc.). I hope you are still following me…

To you, what is still intriguing about New Media after more than ten years working with it?

I was gradually creating abstract versions of the original interface sculptures, until the ornament worked. At that point the obvious relation to computer culture was only for the viewer who knew my history. In recent years I have stopped making these works and have been delving into the discourse of the new generation of Internet-based artists.

The whole discussion about public material, conceptualisation of material and the position as an artist to mention a few,

was very different compared to the net.art movement in the 1990s. And to me very refreshing.

Now I'm more into the 'one idea, one result' method of working and looking for a broader scope of dealing with digital material. The results, for instance, are the works Blue Monochrome.com (2008) and Slot Machine (2009). They are similar in intention to my older work, but choose a wider span of solutions and introduce small story lines.

What do you mean by the 'one idea, one result' method?

I have returned to the method of working I thought up for myself back at the art academy. It was formulated as being the only way to pinpoint a field of interest that remains impossible to grasp through one specific work. Most artists' inspirations lie in areas which are difficult or simply impossible to communicate directly (the experience of emotions, understanding time, philosophical concepts, etc). Out of this I derived the idea of 'circling your

prey'. When going public with one single work, the amount of interpretation is practically 360 degrees. When adding a second work, the focus shifts to the area in between these two. As you start adding more, you create a circle of work, gradually pinpointing to the intentional fascination you have as an artist. Making series will undermine this tactic. Series refer to the series itself, weighing down one point of the circle.

Back then I found artists such as Peter Fischli and David Weiss very inspiring as they kept reinventing themselves with every work. In this way they created freedom in their production and 'circled a prey' instead of focusing on series. I had lost this way of working myself in recent years. Recently through seeing the freedom in output in contemporary Internet Art apart from teaching students at the academy, I have reinstated the 'one idea, one result' method as essential to my work.

On the one hand, the reliefs and ornaments in some of your works refer

to something that is known from the software context, where graphical surfaces often operate with apparently spatial shades. On the other hand, those ornaments are also known from daily life where we are confronted with something decorative or with a haptic function (e.g. shades on keyboards for better usability). What is the relation between the apparently spatial in your work and the spaces your work is presented in? What is of interest to you in the field between those two kinds of space?

This is a problem I remember mentioning in an earlier interview. I'll roughly rephrase it again to see if I still think the same. At first I was not interested in exhibiting my work in a gallery space. At that time the Internet was the perfect platform, the public was dedicated and freedom from art institutions was refreshing. But after some time I noticed people were not experiencing the work as I intended them to. Due to the highly impatient character of the medium, the urge to click on something immediately when not confronted with content resulted in people not taking time to experience the spatiality or physicality of the works I showed them. So my rather minimal works were seen as hacker's or crash art. Not something I intended to do, others were doing a far better job at it. So I decided to go into the gallery space with the works, and they proved themselves instantly. People would stare at them for ages, touch them and walk around them. The confrontation between the two types of space was exactly what was necessary to feel the magic of the space in between. The work tries to question our experience of space and object. The confrontation is what it needed to get you out of your standard frame of thought.

You recently changed your online portfolio, but in an older version you make a clear difference between 'online studies/ software' and 'sculpture/installation', yet some of the works—such as untitled (scrollbars) (1997) and floor piece (1999)—seem to interrelate immediately. In your opinion, what is the most appropriate way to show Internet-based Art in the public realm?

The question is still unanswered after all these years. Many attempts at showing Internet-based work in galleries failed horribly. But then, my original works on the Internet didn't work out for the Internet public either. The work changes dramatically when transferred to the real world and this should be taken as a serious point from the first moment the work is born.

Nowadays, I try to create works online that are either highly interactive (Software out of Focus, 2008) or are embedded in Internet culture (The Internet Overexposed, 2008). In this way the context of the medium is embedded in the work itself. Works like Cassette Ceiling (2006-2007) are deliberately referential to the physical space and as online installations they would miss the point. Showing Internet-based work as a curator in a real life show is still a very tough exercise.

You twice installed a series of minimal posters titled THE SILENT ORNAMENTAL REVOLUTION (2008), once in the public sphere in Austria and once in Egypt. To what extent is the context in which your work is shown relevant for its perception and how would you describe the difference between these two public interventions?

Somewhat naively, I always thought my work was universal until my residency in Alexandria, Egypt. Of the posters placed in Graz and Alexandria, the Egypt poster series was much more powerful. The many contextual differences that were present strongly fuelled the title of the series. (The title originated during a residency in Vienna in 2006.)

An aspect such as the non-existence of graffiti or political/activist writings on the walls of Alexandria was unique. The fact that the participating students had never seen the walls of their city as canvasses was also unique as well as the tradition of abstract ornamentation in Islam or the hierarchy of the art system that the artists lived in. The result was very satisfying and raised many questions for me in the realm of cultural/political contextualisation of my work.

Apart from that the Austrian context in which the idea was born also worked for me, but not so much in the modular poster solution as in a Flash animation entitled <u>untitled (ornaments)</u> (2006) that I made on commission for the Kunstverein Medienturm.

<u>What is the difference between your work and the minimal work of artists such as Carl Andre, Donald Judd, Dan Flavin or Tony Smith?</u>

In general I would say that I turned on my heels where Judd ended and started heading back home (to Europe).
I agree with most of what he says, his animosity towards illusionism made perfect sense in the discourse back then, but now it seems very stigmatised. Being from the New York generation that felt it possessed the freedom to break from European tradition, his position seems to be all about that, whereas his ideas concerning three-dimensionality and illusionism merge beautifully in the work of Anish Kapoor or James Turrell for instance.

I'm just as interested as Judd in the presentational purity of, say, a stone lying in front of me. The only thing is, I have no idea of what I am seeing. By recognising the experience in New Media Art, I start deconstructing the experience itself. I am not really sure if there is any difference between the experience of an illusional brick or the real one.

<u>Every now and then you mention the term 'sublime' in your writing. What does it mean with regard to your work?</u>

I remember the well-known comment by Bruce Nauman regarding his work <u>The True Artist Helps the World by Revealing Mystic Truths</u> (1967). He was asked the same thing. He answered that he was sincere about the statement, but on the other hand thought it silly too. Presenting this grand statement in cheap neon light captured his ambivalence towards the subject.

I tried to describe my feelings concerning the subject of the sublime in the text <u>The Silent Ornamental Revolution</u> (2006).

In this text I point out that personally I find it important to strive to capture this experience, but on the other hand, I understand it has been corrupted in the process of 20th century art history. Therefore I wrote the text in an entertaining, theatrical style and used the ridiculed ornament as a central subject to personify this delicate subject. A very similar method to what Nauman referred to in his interview.

<u>In your opinion, what does it take for the traditional art world of museums and galleries to deal more with Internet-based artworks?</u>

They will deal with it. It has started and it will grow. The works will be commodified again, as Conceptual Art has had to succumb to, which will be a sad thing. But the vibrant original works will always emerge online.

<u>Monochromacity as a Reflection of Computing Processes in Internet-based Art</u>

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<u>In conversation with Thomas Dreher</u>
<u>September 2010</u>
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<u>Computer-generated and conceptual Digital Art played an important role within the early New Media Art experiments in the 1960/70s. Do you notice a recent upward tendency towards formal-aesthetic art practices on the Internet with trends such as the Single Serving Sites or Surfing Clubs?</u>

In the 1960s and 1970s only a few technological projects used electronic media to offer observers insights into whether and how computing processes are involved. Recent reconstructions of early art projects involving computing processes facilitate the reception of works that were widely ignored by the art world of these times. I have noticed that data visualization is the predominant subject of current Net Art. Although I see the current 'trends' mentioned above as being peripheral, they are nevertheless interesting as alternatives.

<u>Representation by the use of forms of non-representation—what can artworks such as Jan Robert Leegte's BLUE MONOCHROME .COM[1] or Ryan Barone's</u> <u>INTERNATIONAL KLEIN BLUE (GOOGLE MONOCHROMES)[2]—both referring to the French artist Yves Klein—contribute to art history regarding the relation between modern and contemporary art?</u>

In monochrome paintings, artists offer models for the relations between the material object of art and the 'esthetic object' in focusing the observer's attention on the relation between the application of paint and the carrier's surface. The reduction to optical, painterly and material problems should provoke discussions about the essence of paintings and—as the next step—about the essence of visual art. Monochromacity offers a model for recognizing the essence of one of the arts in an epoch with a production of art that is bound to specific media for sound, verbal or visual media phenomena.

In <u>unendlich, fast ...</u>[3] Holger Friese uses HTML to instruct the browser to present a blue field. He interrupts the blue surface by placing signs where they are not easy to find. These signs are elements of an image file. The screenshot is embedded in

the blue field. The two signs are repeated several times. They are neither letters of the alphabet nor part of the keyboard: the image file contains a screenshot of a postscript file.[4] The signs are dispersed in a color field without recognizable connections leading further between them, while signs in words and codes usually appear in contexts allowing readers to ignore irrelevant semantic fields.

In Codepoetry, parts isolated from codes are combined with fragments of phrases and words (e.g. Mary-Anne Breeze's mezangelle).[5] Particles of codes appear in browser presentations as if codes do not control the output via computing processes but disturb the output. Code fragments in the presentations of Codepoetry can provoke doubts as to whether graphical user interfaces (GUIs) are restricting possibilities of computing processes by making the code non-transparent.

Friese thematizes the relations between codes and presentations in a different way to Codepoetry. The iconic and indexical levels of Friese's unendlich, fast ... do not refer to textual parts, while its source code is a specific kind of text: a determined notation for instructions. With its combination of presentation and code with differing characteristics at each level—and with relations between them shown by the traces of signs for the navigation of machines (signs in a screenshot as an image of a postscript file for printers)—unendlich, fast ... offers a model for Net Art.

With the separation between instructions and output media, the digitization puts a question mark over abstract paintings' de-semantizing reduction to the materialized sign-forms. The de-semantization as a reduction to the material process in the tradition of the classical avant-garde is changed into a specific re-semantization: it divides as well as binds the instructions and computing processes that prepare the output.

In exploring the controversy between realism and abstraction—between representing and non-representing art

works—Max Bense defined the 'esthetic object' in Aesthetica.[6] For the Digital Arts, Philip Galanter revives Bense's inquiry into the esthetic domain in discussing the relation between information and redundancy again, but now for Generative Art.[7] While Generative Art discussed by Galanter foregrounds the production of iconic signs in the time dimension, Digital Art in its full range of possibilities includes multimedia and intermedia processes, making it difficult to reduce the question of the properties defining them as art to the question of the 'esthetic object'.

If multimedia and intermedia processes call into question the de-semantizing reduction to surfaces exclusively made for the visual perception then (as authors of 'modernism' and 'formal criticism') Clement Greenberg's and Michael Fried's project is called into question, to define the 'esthetic object' by a purely visual medium. Digital processes re-conceptualizations of the relation between code and computing processes and provoke one to regard the search for an 'esthetic object' as a special case within

Computer Art, while monochromacity appears to be a model of this search and its important function as a project of modern art.

In International Klein Blue[2] Ryan Barone presents an animated GIF file with eleven versions of the color blue to demonstrate the substitution of the one and final solution (the IKB, patented by Klein) by the variations of digital processes. Yves Klein's blue loses its importance as an unshakeable reference point, because Barone does not start his realization of a sequence of modified blue tones with the original, but with its traces on web pages: he starts and ends with (archived/stored traces of) digital processes.

The time dimension as the property of Barone's digital realization was a negative criterion for Michael Fried, because he regarded this dimension as provoking a 'theatricality'[8] leading beyond the reductionist project of 'modernism'. This kind of 'theatricality' became a core property of art works that integrate computing processes. The monochrome

field as an end of painting is used by Barone to prepare a sequence of the end's traces.

Monochromacity in Internet-based Art is generated by standardized color codes and fed by industrialized online resources. Is the autonomy of the artwork on the Internet illusive or—on the other hand—does it absolutely fulfill Clement Greenberg's postulation of modernism?

In Net Art neither are Greenberg's postulates fulfilled nor are concepts of monochrome paintings revitalized. In Truth and Process Philip Galanter transfers Greenberg's 'essentialist approach'[9] (with modifications) as a method to use and explain Generative Art. He defines its essence: "What is essential to generative art is not any particular material but rather the harnessing of process."[10] For methodological reasons I regard his six-years-older non-essentialist explanation of relations between information and redundancy as more persuasive.[7] Monochromacity in digital forms removes the design

questions of Generative Art that interested Galanter by refocusing on the relations between codes and the simulation of surfaces, between algorithmic notations and generative processes: these are the fundamental questions of digitization. Pointing to the digital modes hidden by Web 2.0 platforms can be one of the possible tasks of art.

The ciphers of the net participants' IP addresses deliver a data flow to Reynald Drouhin's IP Monochrome.[11] These data are used as a source of a visualization process. Drouhin does not present data visualization as a means of a better recognition of external relations but shows a process of transformation. The connection address for computers in telecommunications delivers the external source of a transformation in values of a digitized color scale (RGB values in hexadecimal numbers). The presentation shows the IP addresses as well as the monochrome color fields resulting from the transformation process: from numerical codes to colors.

The work exists as long as these processes are functioning. Preconditions for the observability of these processes are connections to the Internet and color codes compatible with browser presentations. Monochrome paintings have another contextual dependency: the relations of color applications to the material support mounted on the wall (or the wall itself) and its relations to the environment with moving observers. In short: spatial relations in monochrome paintings (for example by Robert Ryman and Gerhard Merz)[12] versus (references to) codes in Digital Art.

Abstract monochrome Internet-based Art is often connected to a complex system of references and associations. Just to name a few examples: in THE BLACK WEBSITE[13] and THE WHITE WEBSITE[14] by UBERMORGEN.COM as well as in WEBZEN[15] by Michael Kargl, the source code plays a determining role or, in Charles Broskoski's LET'S TURN THIS FUCKING WEBSITE YELLOW .COM[16] and in Reynald Drouhin's IP MONOCHROME,[11] the users and the users' geo-data

are bound to complete the artworks. Can we still talk about the critique of representation—or rather about the critique of this critique of representation— as a kind of digital meta-modernism?

In Concrete Art, reductions to a few elements and system criteria (the principles of non-contradiction within the 'Cartesian Grid') are crucial. Digitization presupposes these aspects in systems which are determined by their ability to react to external data. Meanwhile the modernism of Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried[8] obliged artists to make works for an immediate perception by observers, who were confronted with systems isolated from the environment, Digital Art presents processes of dynamic systems open to react to environmental influences at different and more than just visual levels.

Drouhin[11] integrates observers by using their IP addresses. By a technical assignment to their terminals, the recipients recognize themselves as being integrated into the network and into

the art work on the Internet: they are internal observers. Drouhin's overview of the actual IP addresses of the last observers and the transformations into colors offers a changing index of the last computing processes. The index involves other problems for a visual design than those that can be found in the color fields combined by Richard Paul Lohse (as linear phenomena of rows)[17] or by Gerhard Richter.[18] Lohse and Richter arrange their elements on picture surfaces for visual perception, while Drouhin's index indicates the digital processes on a web page and uses more than one visual level: the surface of the browser presentation combines forms and functions (to indicate the IP address when the cursor is moved over color fields and to read the source code).

In Digital Art the projects' openness to external influences is usually the result of their systems' steady internal properties. In the case of monochromacity in Digital Art, the narrowing of cultural and technical questions to machine-readable codes of visualization processes causes a specific

form of self-referential analysis—as works of the exhibition White, Yellow, Blue and Black, One Coincidence and one Object. demonstrate. The self-referential analysis can be interpreted as a resistance to everyday uses of the Internet comparable to the 'iconoclasm' of monochromacity in the history of painting: the withdrawal of pre-coded and spectacular images acquires a regulative function in the attention economy of Web 2.0.

Intertextuality and intermediality are keywords that frequently appear in theories about Internet-based Art. In Lessons in NetArt[19] you call the Internet a (trans-)medium. Can you be more precise?

Current computing possibilities constitute the transmedium while the Internet has become a part within a 'network of nets' (telecommunications, mobile-phone systems, satellites). The relations between codes as instructions and the formats of output media (texts, images, films, sounds)[20] remain at the center of artistic interest, with a specific focus on changing standards.

In an essay accompanying the exhibition POSTMEDIALE KONDITION,[21] Peter Weibel argues that the intrinsic characteristics of different media in the present context are not redundant, but rather that their specificity is becoming increasingly clear—'intermedia specificity' instead of 'medium specificity'?

Rosalind Krauss used the term "Post-Medium Condition"[22] to discuss the Multimedia and Intermedia Art of the sixties. The artists' response to Greenberg's reduction to the delimited flat surface ("flatness and the delimitation of flatness")[23] as the essential precondition of modern visual art have been combinations of media circumventing the quest for the pure medium. Conceptual discussions of different ways of observing the world have not seldom been the artists' guide to finding criteria for adequate selections of media and media combinations. The modernist project to find the best materialization of visual art's essence was replaced by investigations into possible goals for the development of relations between signs, technical functions and processes.

The human-machine interface is the crucial question of 'intermedia specificity' under the conditions of digitization. This cannot be considered separately from the human-world interface (theory of knowledge and cognition) following Peter Weibel's writings and works.[24] The conception of the human-world interface is the precondition for all other concepts of interfaces. Combined with the conception of the human-machine interface are investigations of how technical augmentations of our cognitive capabilities can be realized. These capabilities can be reduced by easily consumable graphical user interfaces (GUI). This is where Digital Art's criticism comes in: persuasive examples keep open the possibilities for alternatives to established interfaces.

You have studied the field of Internet-based Art since its early beginnings. What methods of contextualization and mediation are necessary to integrate Internet-based Art more into the general art canon, where it is still—more or less—considered as a marginal phenomenon?

I am interested in an Intermedia Art that evades the reciprocal dependencies of the art market and museums. These dependencies shape the institution of art, with consequences for art production (and art criticism) becoming increasingly easily recognizable since the 1980s. Canonization is not a step across this kind of institutionalization. Because Net Art projects find observers outside museums and galleries, I can find a plurality of different concepts in one artist's project list, instead of an artist's variations on the same successful idea.

[1] Jan Robert Leegte, Blue Monochrome.com, 2008, http://www.bluemonochrome.com (July 25, 2010).

[2] Ryan Barone, International Klein Blue (Google Monochromes), 2008, http://www.ryanbarone.com/international-klein-blue-google-monochromes.html (July 25, 2010).

[3] Holger Friese, unendlich, fast ..., 1995, http://www.ljudmila.org/~vuk/dx/friese/ende.htm (July 27, 2010).

[4] The postcript file had a blue background. Friese took over its blue hue for the enlarged monochrome field. Friese on the graphic-file: "... it is a screenshot of a postscript file (the data structure that's sent to a laser printer). Stars and lines represent the sign for infinity, a horizontal eight, in a form readable for computers.", http://www.fuenfnullzwei.de/art.html (July 30, 2010).

[5] On Maryanne Breeze's (Mez, Netwurker) Mezangelle, http://knott404.blogspot.com/search/label/mezangelle (July 30, 2010).

[6] Max Bense, Aesthetica I-IV (1954-1960), Baden-Baden, 1965/1982.

[7] Philip Galanter, What is Generative Art? Complexity Theory as a Context for Art Theory. Lecture, 12/11/2003, Papers of Generative Art 2003 Conference, Politecnico di Milano, Facoltà di Architettura e Società, Campus Leonardo, Milan, 2003, http://www.philipgalanter.com/downloads/ga2003_paper.pdf (July 27, 2010).

[8] Michael Fried, Art and Objecthood, in: Artforum, June 1967, pp. 12-23.

[9] Philip Galanter, The Problem of Evolutionary Art Is ..., in: C. Di Chio et al. (eds.): EvoApplications (Applications of Evolutionary Computation) 2010, Part II, in: LNCS (Lecture Notes in Computer Science) 6025. Berlin/Heidelberg 2010, p. 321-330, http://philipgalanter.com/downloads/evostar2010%20-%20galanter%20-%20the%20problem%20with%20evo%20art.pdf (July 29, 2010).

[10] Philip Galanter, Truth to Process—Evolutionary Art and the Aesthetics of Dynamism. Lecture, 12/15/2009, Papers of 12th Generative Art 2009 Conference, Politecnico di Milano, Facoltà di Architettura e Società,

Campus Leonardo, Milan, 2009, p. 216-226, http://philipgalanter.com/downloads/ga2009%20-%20 galanter%20-%20truth%20to%20process.pdf (July 28, 2010).

[11] Reynald Drouhin, IP Monochrome, 2006, http://www.incident.net/works/ipm (July 25, 2010).

[12] Gerhard Merz and Robert Ryman, in: Maurice Besset and Thierry Raspail, La Couleur Seule, L'Expérience du Monochrome, Cat. exhib. Musée Saint Pierre Art Contemporain. Ville de Lyon 1988, pp. 134-137, 232 s., 319, 328 ss.

[13] UBERMORGEN.COM, The Black Website, 2002, http://www.ubermorgen.com/THE_BLACK_WEBSITE (July 25, 2010).

[14] UBERMORGEN.COM, The White Website, 2002, http://www.ubermorgen.com/THE_WHITE_WEBSITE (July 25, 2010).

[15] Michael Kargl, webzen, 2009, http://michaelkargl.com/webzen (July 25, 2010).

[16] Charles Broskoski, Let's Turn This Fucking Website Yellow.com, 2007-2008, http://letsturnthisfuckingwebsiteyellow.com (July 25, 2010).

[17] e.g. Richard Paul Lohse, Fünfzehn systematische Farbreihen in progressiven Horizontalgruppen/Fifteen Systematic Colour Lines in Progressive Horizontal Groups, 1950/62, http://www.mkk-ingolstadt.de/content/html_files/podcast.php (July 31, 2010).

[18] e.g. Gerhard Richter, 1025 Colours, 1974, http://

www.tate.org.uk/liverpool/exhibitions/colourchart/artists/richter.shtm (July 29, 2010).

[19] See Thomas Dreher, Lessons/Lektionen in NetArt, http://iasl.uni-muenchen.de/links/lektion0e.htm (July 25, 2010).

[20] See Mitchell Whitelaw, Hearing Pure Data: Aesthetics and Ideals of Data-Sound, in: Arie Altena and Taco Stolk (eds.), Unsorted Thoughts on the Information Arts: A Guide to Sonic Acts 10, Sonic Acts Press/De Balie, Amsterdam 2004, http://creative.canberra.edu.au/mitchell/papers/HearingPureData.pdf (July 29, 2010).

[21] "Within this postmedial condition the apparatus world's autonomous worlds, the intrinsic properties of the media world don't become superfluous. To the contrary, the specificity, the worldliness of each medium is differentiated further." Peter Weibel, Postmediale Kondition: Introduction to an exhibition of the same title at the Neuen Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz 2005, http://vmk.zhdk.ch/flz/postmediale_kondition _weibel.pdf (July 25, 2010).

[22] See Rosalind Krauss, A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition, London, 2000.

[23] Clement Greenberg, After Abstract Expressionism (1962/rev. 1969), in: Clement Greenberg, The Collected Essays and Criticism, Vol. 4, Chicago/London 1993/2nd edition 1995, pp. 121-134.

[24] Peter Weibel, The World from Within—Endo & Nano– Over and Beyond the Limits of Reality, in: Karl Gerbel

and Peter Weibel (eds.), <u>The World from Within—Endo & Nano</u>, Ars Electronica 1992. Brucknerhaus Linz. Linz 1992, pp. 8-12.

From Where and to Whom
is a Text Speaking?

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<u>In conversation with Stefan Nowotny
May 2010</u>

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<u>You work, inter alia, as a translator in
French and English. How do you start
work on a new job?</u>

That's a question I find difficult to answer
in generalised terms. After all, a whole
series of factors impact on a translator's
work: factors connected to the relevant
text and the translation at hand, but also
factors linked to the form and context of
the job. Expectations like those expressed
by Walter Benjamin, for instance, in
connection with the translator's task
under particular given circumstances can
hardly be seriously fulfilled.[2] Despite the
theoretical interest that the phenomenon
of translation has attracted in recent
times, when it's seen as a concrete job
translating is still regarded as a simple
task of reproduction and the transference
of a given meaning from A to B—
expressed within an allotted time-frame,
economic framework etc.

I am not only mentioning this because
it is all too often ignored. It does, after
all, have a lot to do with my approach to
issues related to translation in theoretical
and practical terms. This approach can
probably best be summarised with a
question formulated by the translation
theorist Naoki Sakai: "what sort of social
relation is translation in the first place?"[3]
So the most generally applicable answer
to your question about starting off would
perhaps be: I start by asking myself what
the social relations are that I am dealing
with each time afresh in the specific case
concerned. The points mentioned above
are elements of this. But so too are, of
course, a whole series of subsequent
questions: From where and to whom is
the text speaking? What is its tone? What
are the things and worlds it is talking
about, some of which I sometimes have to
explore (and not only in the text itself, as
I might miss what it puts at stake)? How
do I make myself the addressee of the
text in order to then, for my part as the
translator, engage with new addressees?
From where and to whom am I speaking?
Etc. etc.—so it is about developing the
most varied of sensitivities, without this
process adhering to any specific scheme
that would enable me to begin in the same
way each time.

What does the notion of translation
promise and how can it keep this promise
without deteriorating into a kind of
conceptual superglue, as you phrase
it in the preface to your book written
with Boris Buden, Übersetzung: Das
Versprechen eines Begriffs?⁴ Is a different
term for theorising in this area of cultural
studies conceivable?

We weren't interested in suggesting a
need for a different term in our book.
On the contrary, we take the theoretical
application of the notion of translating
very seriously, and the promise bound to
it—which consists, among other things,
in showing a way out of identity-based
patterns of thinking and politics. When we
referred to the danger that translation is
becoming a conceptual 'universal fix-it,'
then it is because it is frequently applied
today as a vague metaphor: from political
and social processes of transformation to
what used to be called 'applied science',
everything possible is called 'translation'—
frequently without the approach to things
having changed much. The danger is,
then, that cracks in thinking are simply
filled over, that open questions are
covered more by this translation metaphor
instead of being confronted in a new
fashion.

An example: when there is a great deal
of talk today about 'cultural translation'
then there is a great danger that an
association—established in the era of
German Romanticism—of culture and
language, where the former is measured
on the basis of the latter, is simply
continued unchallenged, even if it appears
in a 'post-essentialist' variation. One
can, however, also think about how it
came about that everything is translated
today into issues of 'culture'—from
the most wide-ranging kinds of social
and political conditions and conflicts to
translational phenomena themselves.
What is it about this translation itself that
Boris Burden and I term 'culturalisation'?
What are the consequences for the
concrete shaping of our coexistence,
for instance in current processes of
migration, in a context of global power
structures, with the application of certain
concepts of translation in naturalisation

proceedings? Here we encounter constructs of hard 'cultural differences' that conceal how translation is denied—and that furthermore conceal the fact that migrants, in particular, are frequently among those translators with the most experience today. Such conditions cannot simply be responded to with the newest 'turn' in cultural studies, which spells everything out as a 'cultural' issue.

To remain in the field of literary translation, for Roman Jakobson the "poetic function"[5] of language is core, i.e. language no longer relates to objects in an extralinguistic reality in this understanding of it, but to itself. Can freedom from purpose and autonomy as claimed here tally with the currently much-discussed notion of translation in the field of cultural studies?

The thought that the way language functions has to be understood in terms of its internal relationships was core to the structuralist linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure, which Jakobson pursued. The issue was not so much freedom from

purpose and autonomy as to mark out a 'purely linguistic' objective field capable of scientific analysis. Yet this idea has another side to it, namely that of the additional hypothesis that every language forms a homogeneous sign system as a whole, even though it is deeply and intrinsically permeated with differentiation. Significantly, this has led to translation often having been handled like a poor relative in structuralist language thinking, because what happens 'in-between' such apparently homogeneous sign systems was hardly linguistically comprehensible under this premise.

The point of Jakobson's thinking about translation lay, then, in that he (eventually by referring to meta-linguistic cognitive acts) pointed out that acts of translation always occur even within a given sign system, as meanings can only be constituted in that something can always be said in a different way. And this ability to paraphrase can also be related to processes between different languages—or even between heterogeneous sign systems like, for example, linguistic or

pictorial systems. Jakobson held onto the construct of the homogeneity of semiotic systems, though. For him they are relevant in translation processes between languages, to the extent that, even though in principle everything can be conveyed in any language, each language must convey particular things, because it is a code with rules.

Linguistic acts, or acts of translation, clash in this sense with a nomos, i.e. that of the language concerned as a sign system. And I would tie in my answer to your question precisely here: if one presumes that existing linguistic codes represent the result of historical processes and that their relative stability is based on the social reproduction of their validity, then every act of translation touches on this fact of the reproduction of a given nomos without having to comply with it. It is not an autonomous act but can become a challenge to an existing nomos.

Is it conceivable for you to apply the concept of translation—seen from the perspective of cultural theory—to the field of contemporary art and, for example, to project it onto the task of the curator?

I have never worked as a curator myself, so I want to exercise caution in answering this question. I would, however, presume that modern and contemporary art have often worked with the potential of translation, and in some instances produced very complex translational arrangements: by, for instance, shifting the boundaries between art and non-art or the boundary between linguistic and pictorial systems, by mobilising and interweaving new procedures and media, by leaving the established spaces for art production and interrogating them from a critical standpoint, i.e. by actually challenging the nomos of artistic production and articulation in different ways.

As I tried to suggest in my first answer, translation does not begin where one attempts to transfer something from A to B. It begins where spaces, times and sensitivities are created that enable

heterogeneous elements to be related to one another—which can, incidentally, open up a new comprehension as well as new misunderstandings.

A similar thing can be said of the curator's range of tasks, especially against a background of the critical analyses of the historical and current functions of exhibitions, where there is every reason to raise new questions regarding the public, for example, or who is being addressed in exhibitions, and to respond with new practices. Here again one can raise the question: what sort of social relation is (curatorial) translation in the first place?

In his book EXPERIENCES IN TRANSLATION, Umberto Eco establishes that in changing the 'raw material' in the sense of a translation into different semiotic systems, one not only risks saying more than the original but one also risks saying less than it.[6] Where are the limits of translation to be found?

With Jakobson one could initially conjecture that at least the danger of saying less does not necessarily exist, because in principle everything can be said, or paraphrased, in every semiotic system. The translatability is limited, for him, only at the point where the linguistic form is entirely inseparable from the full constitution of signification, as it is in lyric poetry or in puns. In practice the problem is certainly more far-reaching, when one is dealing with the different and simultaneously complex historical charges of individual terms, for example. But why shouldn't one also, for instance, accept the time factor behind certain translations as a limitation? Just think of the task of simultaneous translators, who have an extremely limited amount of time available for their paraphrases.

Eco is cautious for good reasons when he precedes saying "the same thing with other words" by saying "quasi", as every translation is a transmutation. But I should like to draw attention to another limit to translating: there is a note by Walter Benjamin where he speaks of the lack of any need to translate music and opposes this directly to the difficulty of translating

lyric poetry. What interests me about this is once more a political issue. A particular mode of the culturalisation mentioned above favours availing itself—in a world-open pose—of everything that it regards as not in need of translation (from music and dance to fashion or cooking), but declines exactly there where a translation would actually be needed and where aspects of the pose mentioned would be profoundly shaken. To me this also seems to be one of the limits to translation.

Walter Benjamin describes translation with the metaphor of a tangent that touches the circle, i.e. the original, "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".[7] What position does the original occupy in the reception of the new work—in other words: isn't the process of translation rather than the result of a translation in the foreground?

Yes, the process is in the foreground. Incidentally, Benjamin did not only restrict this thought to the task of

translating but also to the critic's task. And furthermore—of special relevance to the art context—even to those 'originals' that are viewed as such with additional emphasis as they're considered 'classics', for instance. Strictly seen, though, nobody has ever written a 'classic'—or produced one in whatever form. Works can only become 'classics' as the result of a process that lends them this status, and translations can play a key role in this process. Which doesn't exclude but rather includes the fact that the sense of the 'original' concerned is subjected to significant transformations in the process.

This is not meant as a depreciation of the dimensions of production of the 'original'. On the contrary, Benjamin was particularly interested in this dimension. He considered works to be powerful magnetic centres, conquering contents,[8] and from his engagement with Goethe until his later works on Brecht or Tretyakov the issue was also always the question of concrete techniques of production. The problem is more that a particular fetishising fixation on the 'original' and

its per se defence neither does justice to the dimension of production nor to what Benjamin calls the "Nachleben" (afterlife) and "Fortleben" (survival) of a work in his essay on translation. One of the points made by the tangent simile that you referred to is, in my view, only to be understood in this context, i.e. fidelity and freedom in translation do not conflict but are components of one and the same process. Yes, it should be faithful, one should come close to the original, touching it at one point, and this contact represents an obligation; but at the same time it needs the freedom "to continue on its straight path", as the circle of the 'original' is not only a concrete form that could be doubled as a whole but the result of a (completed) movement—and touching it means pursuing a movement on one's own, one towards open horizons.

When do you regard your job as a translator as having been completed?

This is a question that often preoccupies me, just as it probably preoccupies many other translators. And it has long made

me think of Freud's essay on Analysis Terminable and Interminable.⁹ I don't want to belabour a particular analogy between translation and psychoanalysis with this reference, but linking my answer to Freud's essay allows me to respond to the question relatively succinctly. The one answer, which presumes a terminable translation, is then: when the translation has achieved a passable and, so-to-speak, sociable form, i.e. when it doesn't pose any more pressing problems and I have the feeling that it is capable of addressing something and somebody and is robust enough to endure. However these remain very unstable criteria. The other answer, to the extent that translations are interminable, is though: never. There is no avoiding having both answers.

[1] See Walter Benjamin, The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Charles Baudelaire's 'Tableaux Parisiens', in: C. Lee Harrington and Denise D. Bielby (eds.), Popular Culture—Production and Consumption, Blackwell, Oxford, 2001.

[2] Ibid., pp. 210-218.

[3] Naoki Sakai, Translation and Subjectivity: On 'Japan' and Cultural Nationalism, University of Minnesota Press,

Minneapolis/London 1997, p. 3.

4 See Boris Buden and Stefan Nowotny, <u>Übersetzung: Das Versprechen eines Begriffs</u>, Turia+Kant, Vienna, 2008.

5 See Roman Jakobson, <u>Selected Writings</u>, Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin/New York, 1972.

6 See Umberto Eco, <u>Experiences in Translation</u>, University of Toronto Press Inc., Toronto/Buffalo/London, 2001.

7 Walter Benjamin, <u>The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Charles Baudelaire's 'Tableaux Parisiens'</u>, in: C. Lee Harrington and Denise D. Bielby (eds.), <u>Popular Culture—Production and Consumption</u>, Blackwell, Oxford, 2001, p. 217.

8 Walter Benjamin: <u>Einbahnstrasse</u>, in: Walter Benjamin, <u>Gesammelte Schriften</u>, Vol. IV/1, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1991, pp. 83-148.

9 See Sigmund Freud, <u>Analysis Terminable and Interminable</u>, in: James Strachey and Anna Freud (eds.), <u>The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud</u>, Volume XXIII, 1953-1974.

There's More Than One Way To Do Microcodes

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In conversation with Pall Thayer
July 2009
-

How many hours of sleep did you have last night?

Less than eight hours.

What is your work SLEEP (2009) about?

It is a direct reference to Andy Warhol's movie Sleep (1963). The idea of reproducing it as a Microcode[1] came to me after watching a trivia contest on TV, where they asked a question about it. The interesting thing about the 'sleep' function in computer programming is that the program doesn't really sleep as such. The function can be used to make a program wait for another process to finish or simply to slow a program down so that it doesn't slow your computer down. But when you tell a program to sleep for a certain amount of time it has to keep working to make sure that it wakes up at the right time. I think this is essentially what Andy Warhol's film points out. When we're asleep we aren't 'doing nothing'. We are performing the act of sleeping. We're really doing something significant. The intended give-away, that my Sleep is related to Warhol's Sleep, is

the way in which the sleep time is defined. Perl's sleep function takes the number of seconds as an argument, so I could have written 'sleep(28800)' to make it sleep for eight hours. It was very important to Andy Warhol that his film should be eight hours long, because that's the average length of time that people sleep at night. So I tried to write it in a way that the fact that it sleeps for eight hours was a bit more visible, i.e. 'sleep((8*60)*60)'. In hindsight, I guess I could have created a variable named '$eight_hours = (80*60)*60;' and then written 'sleep($eight_hours)'.

Why did you decide to write MICROCODES in Perl and not in any other scripting language?

The most obvious reasons would be that it's widely supported (it's installed by default on Mac OS X and most, if not all, Linux distributions) and I've been using Perl for a long time and know it very well. The better that artists know their media, the more flexible it becomes. It becomes like putty in their hands, which they can easily shape into whatever they choose.

But there is a third, very important reason. Many 'professional' computer programmers want their languages to be very strictly structured in a way that there is a single 'right' way of doing something. This makes it easier for a team of programmers to work together on a project because they don't have to spend a couple of hours trying to decipher another programmer's methods. Everyone does everything the same way. This is not good for an artistic medium. As artists, we want the ability to develop our own distinctive style and we want flexibility. One of Perl's mottos is "There's More Than One Way To Do It" (TMTOWTDI, pronounced 'Tim Toady'). It's a very flexible language that allows you to choose from a variety of different methods for doing the same thing. It basically just depends on how you want it to sound. For these reasons I believe, quite firmly, that artists interested in exploring computer programming as a medium should learn Perl first.

Without executing MICROCODES in a graphic user interface you force the viewers to reflect on your practice at the most basic level of the code before being able to have any visual pleasure: Don't you think this way of working excludes the average Internet-user, who hasn't got any knowledge about code?

Not necessarily. The codes have an abstract visual quality to them, especially the very brief ones. They can be taken in at a glance and the form created by the indentation becomes a bit iconic while the mixture of strange characters and familiar English words has a certain visual aesthetic to it. I've been exhibiting some of these as framed prints where I include colored syntax highlighting, which makes them even more visual. The fact that these strange mixtures can actually be interpreted as instructions by the computer makes them even more intriguing. What I hope might happen is that people will find these interesting enough that they will make the effort to gain some sort of understanding of them. There are a number of ways in which they can do this. They can look up the functions on the Internet to find explanations or they can mess around with the code to see how their changes might

affect the outcome. If they do this and produce interesting results, they can even upload their version to the Microcodes site.

More and more artists are producing artworks through code, and although very few of them see any reason to make the code central to an appreciation of the work the very fact that code is being employed to produce art makes it relevant. There is meaning to be found within the codes regardless of what the artists themselves might say and the only way to emphasize this is to make the code central to an appreciation of the work. To put viewers in a position where they have to acknowledge the code and interact with the work at the code level before they are able to appreciate it at any other level.

We live in a highly coded world. Many of our day-to-day activities involve interacting with code at some level. There's code in our computers, our phones, ATMs, our cars … it's all over the place. Anything that becomes such a huge part of our daily existence is obviously going to be relevant to the arts and the fact that this code that

we're constantly interacting with is seldom revealed to us, might suggest that it's up to the artists to bring it into the limelight.

Why did you decide to publish a mediative and deeply explanatory text[2] about MICROCODES on mailing lists and other communication channels?

I'm averse to the inclusion of lengthy texts that are meant to explain what I'm trying to do with my art projects. I want people to experience them on their own terms. However, in this case I understand that it might be easier for people to understand the Microcodes on their own terms, with a little bit of general background information on programming code. The document is written in a way that makes no attempt to teach the reader how to program but focuses rather on how to read code. To me these are very different things. Knowing what purpose a function serves is far less complicated than knowing how to apply it. The guide doesn't go very far in explaining things. It merely points out a handful of methods used in the Microcodes, provides a brief description of them and then

suggests where the reader might find more detailed information.

I think the biggest hurdle in getting people to attempt an understanding of code is nothing more than an irrational fear of the unknown. In publishing this guide I wanted to help ease that fear so that people might see that programming code isn't really as complex as it looks. Most of it is just basic English applied in a very specific way.

The conceptual artist Ian Wilson claims that he presents "oral communication as an object... all art is information and communication. I've chosen to speak rather than sculpt."³ Does the same go for you with 'scripted' communication?

Absolutely. Over the years I've become increasingly aware of the significance of the code in my work. One and a half years ago I wouldn't have dreamed of releasing work that consisted only of textual code. Yet I had, for some time, been open-sourcing and releasing the code behind my work, because I felt that there were certain conceptual aspects of the work that couldn't be sufficiently communicated otherwise. At first it didn't really matter a whole lot to me whether or not people actually looked at the code and picked up on these semi-hidden aspects, but I felt that it was important to make them available. However, as my work progressed it did begin to feel more important to me that people should be aware of the information within the code. I designed a system that I called Code Chat (2007), which I could run my source-code through and it would generate a Web-based, threaded discussion format where people could actively discuss specific lines of the code. It attracted a bit of attention when I first launched it with some code from a project of mine titled On Everything (2006), but the discussion rapidly evolved into being more about the Code Chat system and the idea of making the code a part of the art-experience than about the information within the code. It was during that initial discussion that I actually agreed with the artist G. H. Hovagimyan, who claims that producing art work that only consisted of code would be a bit ridiculous and far-fetched. But the thing with art is

that when an idea appears absurd someone has to try it. So I did. But I truly think that if you look back through the evolution of my work and my writing over the past ten years, doing this makes perfect sense. It is the logical next step in effectively communicating my ideas to others.

There are so many allusions to art history within Microcodes: modernist monochromacity, the portrait, readymades, time-based Conceptualism, even Land Art. Which precursors do you primarily follow with your art?

I follow a number of them. I don't think that, overall, one stands out more than others. I look at the whole of art as a sort of living, evolving entity. Things don't emerge suddenly. They emerge very gradually, slowly evolving out of and building on things that have already been done. Certain types of art carry stronger general references to certain artists, but to me every work of art is a sort of reference point to everything that came before it in the same way that we humans are a sort of reference to our entire evolutionary chain.

That being said, the most obvious and direct 'precursors' for the Microcodes in particular would be the conceptualists such as Sol Lewitt and Lawrence Weiner (and all of the baggage they bring with them) due to the text-based, instructional nature of the codes. On the other hand, my background, before I started making art with computers, was in painting and drawing, which is why I like to reference painters such as Kandinsky (Untitled composition (2009)), Malevich (White on White (2009)) and Yves Klein (Active Monochrome (2009)). To me, doing this serves as a sort of positioning of what I do within the realm of the arts. It's sort of like the very experimental jazz musicians who throw in a standard jazz cover every now and then to remind people that what they're doing in their more experimental work is in fact jazz. But doing this also serves to highlight the differences between what you copy and what is your own. With the Microcodes I'm presenting code as an artistic medium and my references to other work serve to position the work in the same general realm but at the same time to highlight the newness and unique character of the medium.

The arrangement of the material—in your case it is the code—shows how a certain interplay of artistic form and content is responsible for the understanding of our world. How would you define the political aspects of your work apart from the social activism as known from many other Internet-based artworks?

I don't know what other people think but I don't see much of my work as being either political or having anything to do with social activism. I have produced a couple of mildly political pieces but they never take a particular political stance. They might draw attention to something but leave it up to the viewer to decide which side they're on. But, to tell the truth, I don't really think about art in the political sense and therefore don't have much of an opinion on it. This has nothing to do with my own, personal political views. I follow politics and easily get very caught up in issues but it hardly ever enters into my art work in any overt way. The same goes for social activism. I don't think of my work as having a potential social impact beyond awakening an interest in the work itself. If any of my work makes people

think about and take a stance on any social issues then that's fine, but it comes more from them than me. I'm not sure I would go so far as to agree that interplay of form and content is responsible for the understanding of our world, as you stated, but it does help to point things out to people. To make them aware and cause them to think about certain things. The understanding, however, comes entirely from them and whatever previous understanding or knowledge they have.

When will you go to sleep tonight?

At least five hours before I have to get up tomorrow morning.

[1] Microcodes are very small code-based artworks. Each one is a fully contained work of art. The conceptual meaning of each piece is revealed through a combination of the title, the code and the results of running them on a computer, http://pallit.lhi.is/microcodes (January 06, 2011).
[2] Pall Thayer, The Microcode Primer. A guide for non-coders towards a conceptual appreciation of code, http://pallit.lhi.is/microcodes/MCprimer.pdf (January 06, 2011).
[3] Ian Wilson in conversation with the audience, ZKM, Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie, Karlsruhe, 2005, http://on1.zkm.de/zkm/stories/storyReader$4683 (January 06, 2011).

Writing About Zeros and Ones

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In conversation with Josephine Bosma
June 2009
-

Any recommendations for a current piece of Internet-based Art worth being browsed?

My favorites at the moment are the recent works of two art groups that originate in the 1990s Net Art scene and one 'newbie'. These are first of all Jodi, with GEO GOO,[1] more specifically the first version, which was presented at iMAL in Brussels in autumn 2008. It has added an uncanny and untypical form of performance to their already unique approach. Another project I am following with great interest is etoy.CORPORATION's Mission Eternity,[2] which borderlines somewhere between megalomaniac madness and sheer brilliance. The last one is a relatively young Dutch artist, Constant Dullaart.[3] His work ranges from 'traditional' Conceptual Art and installations to what Marisa Olson might call "pro surfer"[4] art, artists who use Web 2.0 features to make art and exchange ideas. His The Artist is a Creator of Beautiful Things[5] speaks of a great sense of humor and self-criticism to me. I am very curious as to where he will go from here.

You have been writing about Internet-based Art since its early beginnings in different formats such as radio documentaries, reviews, interviews and essays. What changes has the criticism related to it gone through during the past fifteen years?

I love the fact that you file my radio documentaries under 'writing'. Recording is of course a form of writing, of inscription. We have developed new ways of sharing knowledge, and not everybody recognizes them. The most important change in Net Art discourse is directly connected to this. There was always the fear that Net Art would become institutionalized to the extent that it would die as a vital art practice. This did not happen, even if the field has been extended into some major art institutions such as the Tate or the Guggenheim. What was underestimated in the mid-1990s, however, was the way Net Art would be picked up by academia.

The academic system is largely made up of paper. It does not recognize any digital publication as a source.

Online discussions and publications were the most important form of discourse around Net Art for a long time. Even if there have been many good book publications in this area since the end of the 1990s, most of contemporary Net Art discourse still happens online (of course). It is quite absurd that a quote from a paper magazine is valid whereas a quote from an online magazine is not. It creates a schism, and it distorts the field in a way that is much more influential than the Net Art activities of art institutions do. Luckily there is some restoration of the balance through the involvement of many 'cross-over' writers, people who have come from online publications and are now also working for magazines and universities and vice versa.

I have witnessed discussions about the validity of digital publications for at least ten years now, and I am very curious as to when changes will finally come. A friend of mine is engaged in a subtle protest by not sending his PhD text to his university in paper format. He has won awards for his PhD dissertation, made it available for free online, but technically he still has not been promoted. This will not happen until that pile of paper lands on somebody's desk.

We live in an age of sharp contrasts. I like the experiments with open-source writing that happen like McKenzie Wark's Gamer Theory,[6] in which the writing process was public and open for immediate comments or the project Networked—A (Networked_Book) About (Networked_Art)[7] by Turbulence.

In a lecture[8] you propagated an interdisciplinary approach to Net Art criticism that goes beyond a purely literary, Conceptual Art criticism. You were referring to a "critical blind spot" in art using non-traditional media, which is discursively crippled by a rejection of its material properties. Does this mean that Net Art criticism nowadays has to focus more on technology?

The material properties of this art consist of more than just individual pieces of technology. Net Art is an extension of the field of interdisciplinary art practices. New

technologies do pose the biggest challenge in this mesh of material properties though, and in order to avoid dealing with it I see some critics choose simply to dismiss the role of technology in the work. Susan Sontag was already criticizing the separation of form and content in art in 1962. In order to understand and describe these works, you cannot avoid looking at them in their entirety, and this can be difficult with a technology you do not really understand or you do not work with at all. This issue has many different aspects of course, some of which are absolutely logical consequences of the complexity and 'newness' of the technology involved. These aspects are relatively easy to address.

It is clear that as people become more knowledgeable about new technologies and their cultural context they will be able to 'read' more deeply into a work in which these technologies are used. As it becomes evident that art in new media is radically diverse, in certain areas 'specialists' will emerge who are able to describe and contextualize specific works profoundly,

as is also the case with art in general. This is already happening in fact. We see the development of critics who have a deep insight into Software Art, who are able to judge different aspects of code and software in an art context. On the absolute opposite side of the new-media spectrum, research and specific criticism is being developed around the phenomenon of urban screens. The work being done in these areas is incredibly valuable for the disclosure of art in new media to a larger art context.

On the other hand I have noticed a tendency to deny the specificity of new media and especially digital media in some traditional art circles, not as a way of criticizing the works but as a way of not having to deal with them at all. Such an attitude is different from critics who are willing to open up to a work of art they find difficult to read but who simply still need to find their way in. With downright hostile critics there is no profound discussion about the works in question, not even the slightest attempt at accuracy. There is no recognition of 'digilliteracy', no willingness

to be concerned with the aesthetics and context of these materials. It is a tendency that puzzles and worries me. In my lecture I mentioned Nicolas Bourriaud's open and fierce hostility toward Media Art during an evening about interactivity in Amsterdam. It is hostility without foundation, without even the slightest form of argumentation, the only argument literally being "I don't talk about Media Art because there is no good Media Art". The shallowness of such an approach should absolutely be addressed, and for me it is a reason to continue using specific terminology for art created with new technologies, such as Net Art or Media Art, instead of just art alone. I want to call out the beast of ignorance.

Is the language used to criticize Internet-based Art causing the continuing separation from mainstream art discourse?

Despite a growing number of writers who work across different contexts, criticism of Net Art is still roughly divided in two areas: that of the traditional art world and that of the online communities. I talked about the traditional art world in my previous answer.

When it comes to online Net Art criticism we are dealing with a heritage of outdated notions of Net Art, which have taken on a life of their own. They can be obstructive. One of these is the idea that Net Art is about criticizing and deconstructing the Internet. Another one that is related to this is that Net Art is anti-institutional.

There was and is of course a big overlap between the interests of media activists, hackers and artists: they all want as much freedom as possible to explore and use a medium. Pursuing the freedom to create a work of art and keeping control over it (or not) within the context of the Internet is a very interesting undertaking, and not just from a technical point of view. Yet this challenge has come to be perceived as the central issue in Net Art, even the only issue for some critics. The biggest mistake they made was declaring Net Art dead when it would not live up to their ideological projections.

The truth is, however, that Net Art practices are incredibly diverse. I called it radically diverse in my talk. There

is not one true way to make Net Art. The Internet, or new media in general, is used in an abundance of ways in all kinds of art practices, often creating amazing crossovers and interdisciplinary wonderlands. Reducing Net Art to an ideological routine or by claiming it is browser-based (another extremely limiting view) obscures and neglects a huge range of art out there.

You claim that nowadays not only the artwork but also the art discourse has become deeply interactive and unstable—what do you mean by a statement like that?

In the same way as newspapers and television have found competition and additions to their work in blogs and other Internet platforms, so art institutions and art magazines have also been confronted with a whole range of critical and opinionated voices online. This takes some time getting used to, and I would not be surprised if the digital-versus-paper divide also hinders a full realization of what this extension of the critical debates outside of the regular art publications means. Some

traditional art magazines and institutions have opened their websites up for audience discussions. As I have shown at my talk, however, the websites of traditional art institutions and magazines still tend to be constructed as islands, whereas online magazines will be linked to a larger network.

Why did you recommend the three pieces of Internet-based Art at the beginning of our interview?

The works I mentioned all make me curious for more. With Jodi it seems as if they have started to apply the same scrupulous and almost psychedelic deconstructive approach they used on software and the Internet to a much broader experience of being networked. After first including the street with Webcra.sh (2008), they have zoomed both in and out with GEO GOO (2008). This project connects the weirdness of Google-mapping the planet with an over-sensitized yet depersonalized body. It seems to add a very subtle layer of anxiety, which I have not seen in their work before.

Mission Eternity (2007) deals with death, but is not frightening at all. The basic principle behind it, the so-called 'Angel Application', is still under development, but is already incredibly strong as a concept. To have files replicate and migrate themselves is an amazing idea in the context of personal and cultural heritage. The use of freight containers as a kind of network standard is also very good. The containers seem at the same time to symbolize the confinement of cyberspace and its ubiquity. I think etoy. CORPORATION is one of the most daring art groups around, and I admire their stamina. It is not easy getting support for a (very) long-term project like this one, which includes anything from code art to installation and performance.

Constant Dullaart is of a totally different order. In some ways he still has to prove himself, certainly compared to the other two. Many of his Internet works, and also some of his installation works, are made up of very simple gestures. They seem like sketches, finger exercises, random but smart experiments. It is fascinating to see how easily he switches between media and roles (curator, artist, even critic maybe). Combined with his eye for detail this makes him someone to watch.

[1] Jodi, GEO GOO (2008), http://www.imal.org/GEOGOO (July 01, 2009).

[2] etoy.CORPORATION, Mission Eternity (2007), http://www. missioneternity.org (July 01, 2009).

[3] Constant Dullaart, http://www.constantdullaart.com (July 01, 2009).

[4] Marisa Olson, Lost Not Found: The Circulation of Images in Digital Visual Culture, in: Charlotte Cotton and Alex Klein (eds.), Words Without Pictures, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2007, http://wordswithoutpictures.org (September 18, 2008).

[5] Constant Dullaart, The Artist is a Creator of Beautiful Things (2004), http://www.constantdullaart.com/site/html/old/preface. htm (July 01, 2009).

[6] McKenzie Wark, GAM3R 7H30RY, Version 1.1., Institute for the Future of the Book, 2006, http://www.futureofthebook.org/ gamertheory (July 01, 2009).

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A Practice Without Discipline

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In conversation with Helge Mooshammer and Peter Mörtenböck
January 2009
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What are the smallest and the broadest networks you are engaged with?

Networks are highly complex assemblages that enmesh our feelings, thought and action with speculation about an ever-expanding elasticity in terms of cultural involvement, ranging from intimate exchanges to globally orchestrated forms of articulation. From one-on-one networks to the worldwide social movements of our time, each of these networks is presumed to be able to expand or retract in accordance with the urgency of any given situation. So due to an inherent element of myth and fiction and due to the multiplication of such currencies by network actors the absolute size of networks is indeterminable. In many respects, our research on relational structures and our own engagement in a variety of networked spatial practices has equally remained unconcerned about the empiricist doctrines of determinable quantity and scale. This disregard of determinate dimensions can be traced back to the very nature of the structures and the kinds of practice that have been

at the heart of our activities in the first place: emerging networks in the field of art and the wider cultural, political and intellectual ecologies they are embedded in.

That said, it needs to be noted that the breadth of any type of organisation is not necessarily linked to the complexity of the actions it can perform, nor does it reveal anything about the quality of communications that help to sustain it. If we look at globally dispersed corporate organisations, for instance, their logistics and the globalising connectivity they bring into action may differ significantly from environmental groups or human-rights activism operating at a similar degree of pervasiveness. This has to do with the fact that, for networks, form is not a given. It is a retractable instantiation of what could be or what could be done at any moment in time. This form is best reflected in the potentiality produced by a variable and instantaneous grouping together of different interests. Such is the flexible shape of informal trade routes or the recent upheaval and rioting of

citizens in the centre of Athens. Their protest does not draw on a finite and localised number of contributors but on a translocally disaggregated potentiality, which it has been possible to re-aggregate and to force into action because of the shock of distinct events.

As perpetual transformation is a key characteristic of network structures, it has become part of the politics of most networks not to reveal their actual ultimate strength. What many people find so attractive with regard to network organisation is precisely this clandestine character: the way networks disseminate information, the way they obfuscate the ins and outs of participation, the way their operations change direction and new forms of cohesion suddenly arise. All this can be attractive for many different reasons. One reason of course is that it allows for a widening of the sphere of cultural participation. And this is not about a range of choices that are on offer. It is about the way in which the lack of centrality and clarity—in other words a high level of structural and content-

related indeterminacy—makes it possible to take part on one's own terms.

A case in point is the network that originated around the Lost Highway Expedition in 2006—an experimental gathering in which several hundred people participated and that brought together a multitude of individuals, groups and institutions in the nine different regions spanned by the expedition along the unfinished Highway of Brotherhood and Unity in former Yugoslavia. The idea of the self-organised, collective undertaking was to reclaim the conflict-ridden territory of the western Balkans as a platform for new cultural practices. When we participated in the expedition as part of our research, none of us felt obliged to collaborate or stay together for any length time, and yet dozens of projects have emerged and new connectivities have been created. Undoubtedly, this form of participation differs from the way one can participate in the more purpose-oriented networks we are involved in, such as the European Biennial network, which connects a range of ten European

biennials of diverse profiles, or the Curry Stone Prize fellowship, which aims to promote design projects or innovative ideas that contribute positively to living circumstances for broad sections of global humanity. Still, one can find a whole gamut of indexed moments in which the potentiality inherent in one network structure crosses over to a different network and certain registers of participation become compatible with one another. The potentiality embodied by an individual and the impregnable potentiality of a thought thus never cease to spark off aberrations and odd penetrations of order. They always constitute what one might call 'potential networks'.

In the book NETWORKED CULTURES you describe the network, among other things, as "the digital age's ubiquitous object of desire" promising "a flexibilisation of our relationships and an expansion of our possibilities." Is this still utopian?

It would be easy to argue that the utopia of the network, just like any other kind of utopia, has been doomed to failure as it has been corrupted by the regimes of postmodernity or the aggression of late capitalism or other global currents and everything that comes with them. But instead of dismissing the frail concept of utopia completely, we could try to reroute and align it with the potentiality embedded in the present, amidst the everyday manifestation of social and cultural phenomena. In this way utopia would be rendered less the idealised product of a distant future than a form of communicative praxis that draws on the potentiality of the present. Of course, this brings up the question as to how we actually handle our objects of desire: what happens if desire suddenly turns into fear? If, for instance, the buzz created around an object of desire is taken hostage by an enemy or when it gets detached from its initial arena of signification and moves on to a less consensual field of societal activity, to do with disease, crime, catastrophe or terror? Such shifts highlight the ambivalences of utopian ideas, rendering them far more contradictory objects of both desire and contention.

The treacherous nature of utopias is perhaps not due to the poor conception of their original ideas but rather to the finality of the reality resulting from such shifts of political and cultural esteem. In particular, the manner in which the centres of late capitalist power have perceived the network has changed. Once viewed as a tool of trouble-free control, it is now feared as a source of uncontrollable danger. In this regard, networks have replaced the most powerful figure of modernity: the threatening figure of the masses in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Elias Canetti's concept of the masses as a symbol of being touched by the unknown has given way to a trope of being connected with the unknown. Increased mobility, accelerated contacts and the declining relevance of spatial distance—as an expression of our sense of proximity and distance—have allowed new parameters to emerge and generated not only a new connective quality but also elements of uncertainty and fear: fear of the unchecked spread of global epidemics, fear of terrorist networks and fear of a profound social, financial and governmental crisis in the old centre of world power.

The network has become a diffuse symbol of the enemy, one encrusted with fears—just as diffuse—of disintegration, transmission and contamination. In the widespread talk of a 'war on terrorism', the network has become a useful tool to give fear a place. Of infinite scope, this place can be experienced everywhere—which is why it must also be reorganised, monitored and protected everywhere by political leaders.

Fear has become the ultimate mobilising principle in a 'global' society without overt political struggle. The use of the 'network' concept and the myths of its all-pervasiveness thus cleverly disguise a global policy of expert administration that attempts to control network dynamics on the one hand but must provide space for its expansion on the other to uphold its mobilising powers and to achieve its own goals.

Networked Cultures treats Media and
Internet-based Art in the same way as it
deals with Architecture, Visual Arts and
social projects. Is the idea to integrate
different artistic practices with the aim of
expanding the space paradigm or does the
choice of projects arise from the topics
you are dealing with?

Our point of departure is the spatial
logics maintained by the realities of a
post-national world as they are produced
and lived out on the ground. Architects,
artists and media practitioners are some
of the actors in this convoluted field,
where they are joined by many other
actors and interests. Through what they
produce they act as catalysts of possible
configurations of space, substance,
people and communication. They disclose
possibilities for alternate sets of relations
to evolve. This is why, amid the claims for
a global sphere of connectivity between
multiple incompatible domains, art plays
an important role in positing new horizons
and in opening up a world for meaningful
cultural engagement. So it is essentially
these practices and projects themselves

rather than their conceptual framings
which expand the paradigms of spatial
production and experience.
Today, an ever-growing percentage of
cultural production takes place outside
the officially designated channels—
outside the institutions, protocols and
technologies that have been developed
and authorised as a way of productively
engaging in culture. Of course this is not
an isolated phenomenon. It is happening
in response to the growing instabilities
and deregulation in society at large,
in response to a climate in which new
forms of economic, societal and state
organisation are evolving and spreading
globally to an extent to which each of us
is affected by these changes in their own
forms of embeddedness.

We are not dealing here only with an
expanded realm of artistic work or with
the overlapping of different sectors of
creative spatial production. Something
else is at stake: a vital characteristics of
our 'globalised' world. This world does not
exist in a single form. It is a proliferating
set of conditions, furnished with all sorts

of spatial products that make up parallel worlds with different territorial demands, conflict zones, relays, intermediaries, strategists, boundary regimes and so on. Any encounter between these different worlds could nurture opportunities for cooperative engagement, but the difficulty lies in finding the right instruments to maintain these unstable spaces of mediation.

On closer examination, though, what is provoked on many different levels by what we term 'networked cultures' is nothing less than a range of circulations between different practices that do not refer to one another through centrally authorised categories—a well-grounded discipline, a solid institution, a common history, a particular geography or the concept of the nation state—but through the way they collaborate to address real urgencies and create platforms of participation in the sphere of culture. Here it is the flow of interactions and not some legitimising point of origin that puts something in place to gradually gain momentum. In that way, networked cultures shift our

attention in critical spatial practice from constituting categories to processes of constitution, from stable spatial characteristics to emergent properties of spaces, from the production of objects to the production of relationalities.

One of the dilemmas of (socio-)politically motivated forms of art is the fact that it rarely addresses those who should be addressed. Do you think that the shift of the presentational form of projects—combined with an aesthetic value for the spectators—could lead to a broader distribution and mediation of the contents?

The vision articulated by this extended field of architecture, art and media practices cannot but bring to mind the whole spectrum of collectivised civic engagement aimed at counteracting the logic of global capital and its political back-up—urban social movements or human rights activism, to name but two. The conflation of these realms is not only potentially productive for either side, it is also transformative. In very broad

terms, art can be seen as a laboratory landscape in which one can invent all sorts of self-produced devices: tools for communication, tools for inhabitation, tools for representation. However ephemeral or vulnerable these tools may seem, they are highly instrumental in adding provisional support, creating sudden discontinuities or yielding unpatterned forms of access. Such acts of de-normalisation are an important disposition to loosen the boundaries of knowledge in a world centred around an insatiable politics of inclusions and exclusions.

The Paris-based Campement Urbain collective is one of several practices that have successfully managed to induce a mix of art, propaganda, city policies and social relationships in the landscape of urban normality. Manipulating the context prescribed for urban renewal, their long-term Je&Nous project breaks down the boundaries between the inhabitants of a multi-ethnic district, local authorities and planners, not just by advocating a transgression of planning routines on the zero level of politics but by jointly exposing

the risks and possibilities of building a communal structure: Who decides on its design? Who controls access? Who takes responsibility for its maintenance? Rejecting singular logics associated with the perfect organisation of such a place, Campement Urbain encouraged the myths and fictions that enable a community to emerge and those in which a community continues to exist. Importantly, work on this project has not been contained by the confines of its physical location in Sevran-Beaudottes near Paris. It has been presented and discussed at many international events and exhibitions, thus raising awareness of the collapse of top-down policies of containment, as well as offering a model for self-authorised participation and citizenry.

One of the most memorable aspects with regard to changing perceptual regimes is that networks do not simply represent an environment but actively create it. Armed with instruments of change, they excel in projecting and multiplying webs of continual communication. The Je&Nous project has been put into circulation on a variety

of different levels, including continuous discussions and gatherings of residents, a multitude of collective actions, the project's crucial contribution to the Venice Biennale and Jacques Rancière's reference to the project in his lecture/essay on <u>The Politics of Art and its Paradoxes</u>. Each of these levels offers a variety of interdependent entry points for contributors, which is why changes at one level may affect the anatomy of organisation at another level. This is the space of transformation, the space of chafed stratifications, the space of unforeseen externalities that cannot be realigned. And it is precisely here, at the point where this space—in a constant reshuffling of alignments—opens up to multiple logics that the aesthetic value of a project such as <u>Je&Nous</u> is both generated and disseminated.

<u>Reasoning the "linguistic turn" from the 1970s, is your project settled within the so-called "spatial turn", which took place at a global level at the end of the 1980s? Where is the theoretical basis for your research on the multiple phenomena of PARALLEL ARCHITECTURES AND THE POLITICS OF SPACE as formulated in the subtitle of your book?</u>

Widespread recognition of such cultural turns and their interpretative strategies, whether they are linguistic, spatial, educational or participatory ones, has always effected a flood of attempts to define the ins and outs of these particular turns, furnishing the horizon on which an engagement in culture takes place with all sorts of rules and imperatives and emulations, instead of aiming to keep up the active moment created by unregulated critical engagement. That is why we are a bit wary of attempts to categorise our work with regard to such frameworks. Locating network structures in the arts as a mode of engagement in the world that cannot be anything but political, a key challenge for them today is the way in which they negotiate their role in the development of new forms of cultural participation.

Our theoretical approach is thus less committed to the confines of a particular turn than to the workings of an ungrounding that lies at the heart of these

very practices. In other words, it is along the lines of network practice itself that our research is oriented towards disruptions, interventions and fragmentations and towards the emergent properties that arise from the interactions of various network components. We also try to take on board the fact that these components are likewise highly unstable and shaped by the interactions they are immersed in. Most of all, as our research aims to participate in building up unsolicited networks that design their own processes, the conceptual and analytic tools have to be developed in close exchange with this building process. Of course one has to do a lot of spadework oneself, but the real benefit of opening up research in this way lies in developing a shared basis through practice, which might allow for more differentiated views on the production of theoretical frameworks.

When engaging with creative practices we are particularly keen to find out if and how they not only reflect back on existing networks of governance but how through their work they produce minor transgressions and mutations that shake up the existing order and create something new. Much of the discourse in the western art world in the late 20th century has been caught up in institutional critique, but these kinds of critical intervention are now felt to be too narrow, given that today's field of intervention accrues from transnational challenges operating outside the boundaries of institutional frameworks. We are rather faced with the interaction of an array of incomplete and provisional systems that increasingly bypass the vertical links around which institutions previously tended to be built. The most important question is: how do such networks manage to mark out a socio-spatial process whose properties emerge from a situation rather than being solely tied to local or historical restrictions?

Having a background in architecture and theory, you describe your working methods as "a practice without discipline". Aren't the discourse and the context you are pushing ahead with the discipline itself?

Certainly, one of the challenges of our endeavour lies in producing an account

of a subject in formation without either formalising it through particular framings or allowing it to escape any form of critical evaluation by naturalising it. What follows is that the space constituted by the discourse, of which our project itself is a vital part, needs to be subject to critical interrogation as are all the entities populating this space. This is not an easy task, especially when you need to make decisions that affect different lines of action, and one has to maintain a certain level of awareness of the risks of such an approach.

Trying to operate within the dynamics of network formations instead of analysing networks from outside, our working method is a parallel process of cultural practice and analytic reflection, and perhaps this parallelism also reflects a degree of concurrence in our present cultural climate. What really strikes us as the pre-eminent characteristic of our contemporary situation is an all-encompassing elasticity of cultural belonging. Most notably, cultures have become subject to a shift from a universal

rootedness in territories, disciplines and institutions to a more performative set of socialities and spatialities, which are only loosely interlinked yet are continuously overlapping and obscuring one another. The boundaries that normally provoke and regulate the collective production of critical work have become fragmented to a degree that it is now impossible to distinguish between inside and outside in traditional binary terms.

This is not to be confused with axiomatic erosion and weakening of boundary regimes. The realities we experience are in fact infused with an active obfuscation and concealment of power structures; they are transformed by an increasing dematerialisation and flexibilisation of the various apparatuses managing spatial distribution and production. So there is a real urgency to develop new vocabularies and new forms of articulation that match the complexities of the new organisational matrix of our lives. Under these conditions the production of 'artistic devices', as Brian Holmes has called the elaborate experimental settings through

which contemporary art practices act as catalysts of unforeseen relations and possibilities, offers a form of access to the changing modalities of societal formation: self-organised camps and expeditions, informal gatherings, autonomous education programmes, makeshift architectural structures, counter-summits and cultural networks are the corresponding contemporary tools. They are focal points that temporarily create spheres of a collectivised critical engagement.

In a situation where the predominant mode of production is not division and confinement but multiplication and mobilisation, these artistic practices propel a multiplicity of entanglements at different levels. They complicate the existing structures rather than abstracting a purified model. What this entails, though, is that not only the artistic position but also the position of everyone and anyone becomes highly unstable, raising the question of how we can draw upon network resources and network capacities to create zones of autonomy within an all-consuming culturalisation of the global economy.

Both of you are not only researchers but also part of the different networks you are theoretically dealing with. Isn't this a problematic role with too much involvement? Or is this practice integral part of your research?

Drifting in and out of various roles is a crucial mode of interaction for participants in networks. The drift allows you to explore different opportunities and epistemic constellations as you experiment with a changing set of relational structures. In this way the creation of alternate relationship patterns provokes the evolution of knowledge, which would not happen otherwise. The same goes for academic research, which in a situation of radical ambiguity actively seeks to provoke opaque operations to reveal themselves. Rather than using the network as a testing ground for a priori assumptions, you interact with the network in order to learn about its potential.

Coming back to our previous example of the Lost Highway Expedition, participants in this collective investigation were

deliberately left to define their own projects, plan their own time and make their own contacts. The concept of swarming perhaps best describes the way in which knowledge of the expedition spread, the way the vaguely defined groups moved from section to section, converged again and subsequently disseminated the knowledge generated during their journeys in different and only partly interconnected projects—exhibitions, seminars, workshops and publications. What enabled the socio-aesthetic experiment to become more than a self-referential group experience was the space of action that was generated by the collaboration of the project's initiators and that absorbed new actors and formulated an expanded political space. The artistic projects produced during and in the wake of the expedition form archives of knowledge that in turn allow for an extension of the expedition beyond those involved in situ.

While an external observer of this process would have struggled to grasp the dynamics of how transient alliances were formed around project ideas and

how these ideas developed and spread along the route, direct involvement in the expedition made it possible to gain first-hand experience of all the minor moves and nudges, the tacit knowledge and the emergent results of local interactions. This kind of knowledge production does not limit its own scope by opting to apply the most elaborate and consensual methodological canon. It favours the principle of good enough, which is in fact a common protocol of software and systems design to enable a system to evolve and gain complexity as it goes along. Despite potential inaccuracies due to one's own involvement, the benefit of this approach lies in focusing on what is gained in a network process rather than contemplating its formal weaknesses and failures.

Technological Mimesis

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<u>In conversation with Marius Watz</u>
<u>April 2008</u>
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<u>What is an algorithm for you—the
narrowest way you can think about it?</u>

Narrowly defined, an algorithm is a
recipe—a series of clearly defined steps
through which a result is reached.

<u>Apart from a technological point of view,
how far does Generative Art today differ
from generative practices that scientists
and technologists started to develop in the
early 1950s?[1] Do you see any conceptual
progress and where is it located?</u>

There is a definitive link between the two
movements, but the cultural background
and conceptual frameworks are quite
different. The essential aspect of formal
exploration through rule-based systems
is constant, but the current generation
is informed by a lot of influences that
weren't around in the 1950s-1960s, such
as electronic music, cyberculture, the
demo scene, the open-source movement
etc.

I believe that the scientific principle of
complexity is a crucial influence on the

current scene, providing a departure
from a reductionist understanding of the
world. Complexity also provides a model
for parametric systems, where minimal
changes to the parameters can produce
wildly different results. Another major
influence is the digitization of media and
the mediation of experience as flows of
digital information, such as the Internet,
mobile communications etc. This leads to
an understanding of the world as divided
into the physical and the virtual, both
parts equally real but the latter accessible
and moldable through the manipulation of
software.

<u>One of the paragraphs from the text
FRAGMENTS ON GENERATIVE ART you
compiled for the magazine VagueTerrain
is entitled OH NO, THE AUTHOR DIED
AGAIN. You are writing about critics and
enthusiasts of Generative Art who have
both claimed that within this broad field
the artist disappears from the work. Can
you explain why you don't agree?</u>

In defining a generative system, the artist
sets up its basic processes as well as the

boundaries for whatever parameters it uses. This means that there is a direct causal link between author and output, even if the output is created autonomously by a machine through the use of random numbers. One of the privileges of Generative Art is that the author can easily be surprised by her own creation, but that doesn't mean that the output wasn't brought into being through her agency.

Most current Generative Art doesn't address the notion of authorship. That ground has already been covered in the work of artists such as Sol LeWitt, whose wall drawings were created as textual descriptions of how to execute the image, separating the artist from the creation of the artwork. A more interesting aspect is the understanding of form as a function of process, where each image is merely a single instance of an infinite series of possible outcomes.

With regard to the first use of computers for the artistic production of images, Frieder Nake, one of the pioneers of Computer Art, writes the following about the changing role of the artist: "The traditional artist deals with the one drawing. The programmer describes the schema of all of the drawings."[2] Are you looking for some kind of transcendental or metaphysical nucleus?

Some artists may be drawn to generative systems by their metaphysical aspects, such as Brion Gysin's Dream Machine. But that is not my personal interest. A 'god' model of Generative Art is tempting, but like the idea of an authorless image I think it's a fallacy. Nake is correct in his distinction, but an algorithm still only describes a single family of possible drawings, not a Platonic idea of drawing as such. The artist might use such algorithms to investigate essential principles of drawing, but I'm not sure that the results are necessarily transcendental. On the other hand, I think that generative artists are attempting a form of technological mimesis. But instead of trying to draw a naturalistic image of the world they are focusing on details that normally go unseen, such as physical processes and kinetic models of behavior that underlie

everything in nature. There is something transcendental about this approach, as it tries to look at the invisible structures behind what we perceive in the world.

Another statement of yours says that Generative Art is concerned with complex systems and that this vision of complexity transports its viewers, hinting at the sublime between the ones and zeros. What do you mean by addressing 'the sublime'?

In art, the sublime refers to an experience that is beyond human ability to measure or describe, such as the presence of God or the beauty of nature. The task of addressing these experiences has traditionally fallen to artists, who provide aesthetic solutions. Art also has the potential to be sublime itself, the "Stendhal syndrome"[3] being the extreme case where 'great' art causes a physiological response in the viewer due to its short-circuiting of her ability to formulate an intellectual response.

In Generative Art the idea of the sublime can be found in the inherently infinite nature of parametric systems. It also applies to the non-verbal quality of the interaction between viewer and work, that critical moment of perception when a system goes from being simply a set of numbers to becoming a structure perceived by the viewer. This process takes place on a sensory level and is beyond verbal description. The op artists saw the image as a kinetic event taking place in the eye without being processed by the brain. Generative Art typically enlists the brain as a pattern-recognition device, relying on its ability to detect complex structure and behavior in the immediate image as well as in its development over time.

Some practitioners of Generative Art argue that it is not the output that is considered to be art but rather the input, the concept, the algorithmic code per se. Where do you see the artistic value of environments such as Ben Fry's and Casey Reas' PROCESSING or Chris Coyne's CONTEXT FREE ART: in the simple fact that those environments have been developed or in their use?

Processing and Context Free were not created with the intention of being artworks, they are programming tools aimed at artists and designers. A better example of software as art object would be Auto-Illustrator by Ade Ward, which is simultaneously a drawing tool and an artwork in itself. The Software Art movement looks at software as a cultural and political object, critiquing code and interfaces and their role in our world. Generative Art uses software as a material from which work is constructed, but rarely critiques the nature of software as such.

A common question is why artists don't exhibit their code along with the work, based on the assumption that seeing the code is essential to understanding the work. This is not true in most cases. A few audience members might be able to read the code, but for everybody else it would remain a techno-fetishistic object, essentially obscuring the work itself. I'm more interested in the problematic relationship between the 'live' software, which is capable of outputting an infinite progression of possible results, and

the need of the artist to pin down the output as a definitive original work. This is a dilemma in the logic of the art world, where value is typically constructed through scarcity.

Do you think that generative practices should necessarily be placed within the system of art? Or could they be described more generally as a cultural phenomenon, regarding strategies like the visualization of information, design, games etc.?

Whether a generative work should be understood as art or not obviously depends on the intention of its creator. The explosion of activity around generative systems is only to a certain extent due to their use in artistic practices, it stems just as much from technical experimentation or applications in architecture and design. Also, many Media Art projects may have generative aspects even if the intention of the work is not to be understood as part of the generative canon.

I would restrict the term Generative Art to describe works that deal explicitly with the

creation of aesthetic output through semi-autonomous systems. In many ways, the current use of the phrase to describe any aesthetic system based on computation is too broad and does not examine what the core interest of the artist is.

An interesting special case is the practice of information visualization, which has been highly popular with audiences and theorists alike. On the surface, visualizations are intended as designed objects with a utilitarian value, but in reality most viewers perceive them primarily as aesthetic objects. As a result, Ben Fry's visualization work has been shown at the Whitney Biennial, despite his constant refusal to describe his work as art. It seems that information visualization in this way is re-contextualized almost as a form of 'outsider art'.

The aesthetics of your own work is mostly organic, sometimes mechanical. Is this fact based on your personal vision of a synthetic utopia of a 'better world' and is there a political demand in what you are doing?

My work is abstract in nature, and as such does not explicitly address anything outside itself. But my reference points when I started working as an artist were cyberculture and the excesses of early electronic music, with its deeply individualistic focus on physical experience mediated through technology. These influences can still be found in my work, hinting at techno-optimism and a belief in progressive hedonism. But I would stop short of articulating a truly utopian vision; the world is a much darker place today than it was in 1993.

On a personal level I am trying to communicate a sense of form as process, shaped by rules that are simultaneously organic and mechanical. I would like the viewer to experience the spaces I construct on a physical rather than intellectual level, so that there is always a duality between the classic perception of a two-dimensional image and the promise of a 'real' space.

My current work with digital fabrication, 3D printing etc. is an attempt to break

through the screen and present my structures in physical formats, with tactile and architectural qualities.

<u>What is an algorithm for you—the broadest way you can think about it?</u>

In the broadest sense, an algorithm can be a description of any kind of process, whether natural or artificial, scientifically rigid or possessing the 'fuzzy logic' of everyday human decision-making. In this sense Fluxus instruction works like La Monte Young's <u>Draw a line and follow it</u> or William S. Burroughs' cut-up techniques qualify as algorithms, despite having no technological component.

My first experience of wanting to articulate a complex algorithm came when I stood as a child under a street light in heavy snowfall. Looking up at the constantly shifting spirals formed by the snow falling, I had the sense that it must be possible to describe the forces causing those chaotic yet recognizable forms. That sensation of being just on the verge of understanding is always there when I try to create new work.

[1] See Christoph Klütsch, <u>Computer Grafik. Ästhetische Experimente zwischen zwei Kulturen. Die Anfänge der Computerkunst in den 1960er Jahren</u>, Springer, Vienna/ NewYork, 2007.

[2] See Wulf Herzogenrath and Barbara Nierhoff-Wielk (eds.), <u>Ex Machina. Frühe Computergrafik bis 1979. Die Sammlung Franke und weitere Stiftungen in der Kunsthalle Bremen</u>, Deutscher Kunstverlag, Berlin, 2007.

[3] From Wikipedia: Stendhal syndrome or Stendhal's syndrome is a psychosomatic illness that causes rapid heartbeat, dizziness, confusion and even hallucinations when an individual is exposed to art, usually when the art is particularly 'beautiful' or a large amount of art is in a single place. The term can also be used to describe a similar reaction to a surfeit of choice in other circumstances, e.g. when confronted with immense beauty in the natural world, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Stendhal_syndrome (November 13, 2010).

Indecisive Contexts

Your collaborations with
SOCIALMEDIAGROUP (2002-2007),
your solo works and your texts show very
heterogeneous approaches to artistic
expression. In pieces such as WARS
GRIND THINGS TO A HALT (2007)—a
more conceptual piece of Media Art,
collaborative works such as EXCAVATE:
COHABIT 02 (2006) or your partly very
personal but nonetheless substantial
writings–there always seems to be
some connecting path. How would you
personally contextualize your works?

When I started really getting into
making art I still wanted to retain what
I always loved about it—uninhibited
experimentation. The problem I had in
art school was that the institution was
always trying to fit artists in little boxes
almost as a marketing strategy of sorts.
This artist paints little pictures of birds;
this artist paints abstract imagery etc.—
totally modernist crap. It took me a while
after I left art school to regain a sense
of childhood play that I always enjoyed
in art—obviously though, I now became
aware what I was doing was more serious

than just 'fucking around'. To answer your
question, I just have these ideas in my
head that I just can't resist. I basically use
my personality (Mark Edward Grimm and
megrim.net) as an online portfolio site to
highlight any work I'm currently doing or
have completed.

Socialmediagroup, on the other hand,
materialized as a need for working as
an artist collective with my wife Amy
Cheatle and others who wanted to be
involved—friends, collaborators, family
etc. We were looking to create a self-
funded, autonomous system of art where
we could run a multimedia business as
Socialmediagroup in order to fund our
artistic endeavors.

Many of the ideas come from Amy's
research into ecology and environmental
systems. Socialmediagroup has really
become the prime method for us to create
large-scale installations. Because there is
a ton of work involved in these projects
(especially Excavate: Cohabit 02, where
we had to enlist people to dismantle an old
fruit barn) we really needed a way to get

many interested collaborators involved, and Socialmediagroup was a good, semi-anonymous way to do this.

The writing I'm doing lately has been just another method for art creation. There are visual works that we can see as in a gallery but also written works that can have just as much of a cultural impact. In this area I was really influenced by the surrealist writer André Breton, the Situationist Guy Debord and of course the philosopher Gilles Deleuze. They showed me how writing can be just as much of an art form as anything else and just as legitimate as an artistic 'piece'.

It really took me a very long time to learn to write, and it was something that I think I will always struggle with—especially to be actually coherent! I think visual thinkers tend to think in a very non-linear manner; writing is such a linear process—there is always a beginning and an end at least in a traditional sense and not including recent literary endeavors that are taking place on the Internet with hypertext. To finish answering your question—yes, I

do feel that there is something that ties everything I do together, even loosely. The computer has the potential to create a real gap between artists—those who work traditionally and those who work electronically. This is a real shame— Contemporary Art (cutting edge art) seems to be relying more and more on electronic environments.

What I have always understood is the similarities between these materials that are looked at as being very different— physical material and electronic materials. When I teach, I try to teach artists who have been grounded in traditional materials that there is really nothing but similarities! The computer (code, images, video, graphics) is just another material that can be manipulated in the same ways as physical materials can be manipulated. You have to know what you are looking to do, you have to know the tools you need to do what you want to do, and then you just have to do it! 1) It always has to start with a concept—no matter how simple that concept might be. 2) There is always an experimental aspect of realizing that

concept, where you discover something you did not know before, through the intimate processes of working with something new (or old for that matter). 3) There is that act of completing these processes—at least in the idea that one takes a work as far as they are willing to take it. 4) And then those ideas that are learned and the created 'piece' that is generated emerges into new concepts and ideas that must be tackled.

Writing for me is a very similar process. What is seldom understood right away is how time-consuming it all is!

So, to put your work in a tiny little box again: would you say this approach could be subsumed under the term 'hacking'? And if so, is hacking an essential modus operandi for artists nowadays?

Yes. I do rather like the term 'hacking'. I enjoy the ambiguity attached to it. Artists understand it in a positive light—to take what is available and 'make it one's own'. But we cannot forget the subversive qualities attached to the term either! The term is twofold: it is at once the practice of alterations—to hack code, to hack education, to hack a material, to hack a social organization and the knowledge that those alterations can have a potential cumulative effect that specifically targets the dominant organizational methods of top-down homogeny in favor of more heterogeneous elements.

I think artists really have the potential to interject using creative methods (hacks) in many other places and areas traditionally not associated with the art world, per se. This is a new quality of the contemporary artist, because we are not as bound to the image as we once were. Artist interjections or 'hacks' become the artworks themselves and can now be documented via the digital image and text, subsequently displayed on the Internet. The gallery is pretty useless in this regard, because it only gives some final results at an end-stage and seldom documents the processes that were involved (mental, physical) and the struggles that ensued (economics, social pressure, networks of collaborators etc.) which are all very important.

To finish your question—yes I do think that hacking is an "essential modus operandi for artists" today. I would love to teach a class on the artist as hacker in the university, but I'm not sure how well that would really fly locally. The larger the organization the longer it takes to change, and in the area I live in, art, unfortunately, is still considered in a traditional sense as something that is made and displayed rather than the often complicated processes involved in even the most modest of alterations or 'hacks'.

Quoting from an essay by Mirko Schaefer: "A community, which we consider functioning as collective intelligence (Pierre Lévy), can be much more productive and innovative than a company's research and development department."[1] Speaking of institutional methods—can there ever be something like a 'hacking class'? Isn't the structure of an institution completely different to the methodical organization of 'hacking'?

Yes. I agree with you that there are particular problems associated with the juxtaposition of seemingly conflicting

organizational methods such as the institution or 'hacking' in the same location/territory. Let me just clarify really quickly that there are many variations of institutional organization. Educational institutions vary greatly, as do governmental organizations, corporate organizations and even community organizations: all have desirable as well as undesirable traits associated with how they function within the larger assemblage. Here I'm assuming we are really talking about education institutions of higher education.

When we talk about 'hacking' in terms of under or within these institutional structures we are really talking about emergent organizational methods at the micro level that have the inherent ability to modify top-down structures, even at very subtle intensities, from the bottom-up—sort of like bubbles emerging from the bottom of carbonated beverages. This doesn't mean that these 'hacking' methods don't exist or shouldn't exist within more traditional institutional structures such as higher education, it just means that these emergent methods have been historically

repressed in favor of a top-down structure for the last century or so.

We can already witness forms of 'hacking' that are—and have been—available in education that are often overlooked. An example of 'hacking' classes that are already in existence, even at the primary and secondary levels, although obviously not defined as such, might be found in high schools across America. Shop classes or even classes of home economics usually fit in this category. There have been some teachers of shop classes, for instance, who are teaching students how to run diesel vehicles off of alternative fuels. This is definitely an engine 'hack' because it takes something that is available, something that was commercially produced, and creates something new from it—a car that can run off of alternative fuels, which it was not specifically designed to run from. Through these processes of manipulation, students begin to learn acts of modification as well as the properties of energy and energy consumption—for me the modification part being the most interesting. In home economics, for another example, students

are taught how to create and cook food. They are learning properties of creation rather than those of consumption and they are also learning about energy transference—energy for creation, energy for consumption and energy renewal. These methods for learning are strategic in learning about micro-levels and the ability to retain autonomy over other areas of learning, which prepare an individual for the larger economy of scale.

I think what I'm trying to say is that there is and there should be a place for 'hacking' classes in the institution (there always has been and there always will be) but we cannot have a specific hope that there will be some quick and drastic change in organization, because of the slow response time that is inherent within these organizations. Any class in 'hacking' as such will always have to be called something else. I'm pretty prone to say that an 'Art 101' for non-art majors can be an interesting experiment because there is no preconception in the student to what art or 'hacking' actually is! But even within other subjects there are opportunities

to learn from the 'hacking' community. Hacking is experiments and experimental processes in creating something new out of something that is already in existence. Right? Let's maybe make slow changes in how a student can create and evolve materials and code through experimental processes rather than just simply studying what has already be learned and taking a test on it. Students need to be able to take something, a material (biological, chemical) or a piece of code and change it just a little—alter it and make it their own. I think this approach has the ability to alter top-down hierarchical structures such as 'the institution' from within and from the bottom-up—through emergent processes at the micro-level and not through the economic interest of external sources.

Other than at institutional levels, I think that you are right with your Levy quote in that communities themselves have a lot of fluidity and ability for self-organizational and self-education. Obviously we cannot rule these out, but we also have to make sure that the community and institution can have a proper relationship and that

the artist can create interjections that allow these formations to evolve and new organizations and relationships between organizations to emerge.

The concepts you are talking about seem to mix the ideas of 90s Relational Aesthetics (Nicolas Bourriaud) and a post-millennium DIY approach. What do they mean to your current development as an artist, especially under the influence of the economic pressure that emerging artists (and not only they) have to bear?

Yes—and we could also say that this is a flashback to the 1960s. Hippy commune culture, craft movements, punk-rock—these can all be traced as historical lines of flight that diverge and converge in various ways forming the exoskeleton of, as you say, the new 'post-millennium DIY' aesthetic, hacker culture, etc. Yet there is a distinct difference I think in what this 'neo-DIY' attempts to 'do' (and I stress the word 'do' as in Gilbert Ryles difference between "knowing that" and "doing that")[2] ... it is much more material now comparatively to the 1960s, which were

for the most part very ideologically driven, at least in this country, with its drop-out cultural aesthetic and experimentation with individuality (LSD, psychedelics etc.) rather than understanding social ecologies in terms of assemblages, such as Deleuze and Guatarri[3] understand it and more recently Manuel Delanda.[4]

Punk moments had similarities in that they still retained a sense of ideology that was really grounded in cultural aesthetics (rock music, images, T-shirts, graffiti) but also brought in the political function of anarchism rather than the politics of 'autonomatism' found in the 1960s. This was a kind of forceful action that had the properties of bleeding into general populations (in a different way than 1960s counter-cultural trends) through a kind of viral infection, which was forced from the inside to the outside through radical acts—volume, violence, DIY, ripped jeans, whatever … obviously I'm lacking complete detail here but we should have a vibe of history before we can analyze the present … to any extent.

What has emerged recently (post-millennium? 9/11 is a pretty good political and social event reference point) in philosophical and artistic thought, which I think is new and very different from past movements—and I mean different in a sense that past movements were not failures—but we have definitely learned what works and what does not. Artworks do not necessarily have to be bound to any form of visual or cultural aesthetics (clothing, music), nor do they have to be territorial (clubs, galleries, public markets), but instead can function at a distance, through distance in the form of networks—either temporary and short in duration to very long term. The teaching of children can be a long-term artwork for example—especially if the children are your own! Children are extensions of ourselves and must learn to create through everything that they do rather than conform or submit to any type of pre-conceived societal standard. Is the teaching of our children not a great artwork? Children will grow and ideas will eventually replicate themselves through new networks of

social relationships. There are long-term consequences—meaning an artwork continues to evolve through a system many years into the future—an artwork that is never completed but is continually in development. My question is—how is this (education) legitimized as an artwork? Does it need to be? How can we utilize research methods in order to document this form of art and create legitimacy for it? Does it really even need to be legitimized under some sort of institutional/academic pretense?

Actions can have aesthetic properties— although the aesthetics are projections (projectiles) that do not necessarily result in an image—for example. What we must do as artists is to shed the ideological constraints of some hidden essence of an image or 'aura' and begin to replace it with the aesthetics of material manipulations and processes. This does not necessarily mean the manipulation just of art materials as in an installation or video but the manipulation of the materials of social bodies, the materials of nation states, the materials of networks, the materials

of culture, the material of electricity and energy, the materials of biology, genetics.

I think there is a lot more going on here than just mapping (visually) these movements of materials or even a traditional understanding of DIY, because I think there is much more to it. Rather we are trying now to understand (conceptualize) the artist as having the ability to manipulate these materials in direct/indirect, conscious/unconscious ways that may or may not have direct and immediate outcomes resulting in some final moment—a painting on a wall, an installation.

I think the arts must sustain themselves economically but can do this by moving beyond the institutionalized professions of art to explore the infinite amount of materials out there. Can an artist become a biologist? Can an artist become an economist? Can an artist infiltrate a foreign system (even slightly) from the outside to the inside? Can artists be politicians? Lawyers? Mercenaries (let's not pretend all artists are good)? Can artists become 'the

other' as Nietzsche[5] might say? What keeps an artist in the discipline of art? Comfort? Friends? Common interests? Does border crossing from one discipline to the next make one any less of an artist? Economically, the institution of art is too established, specific and at times very impenetrable. For me, artists need to look for alternative economic systems to grasp, infiltrate and consequently redefine and alter. This may be a disciplinary change!—but I really mean that there are other systems for us to involve ourselves in and other mechanisms to creation and material manipulations that can eventually emerge to have extraordinary impacts—viral impacts that are much different I think than just the idea of drop-out autonomy or punk and/or 1990s DIY.

[1] Mirko Schaefer, Made by Users: How Users Improve Things, Provide Innovation and Change Our Idea of Culture, http://www.scribd.com/doc/2409129/Made-by-Users-How-Users-Improve-Things-Provide-Innovation-and-Change-Our-Idea-of-Culture (January 07, 2011).

[2] See Gilbert Ryle, The Concept of Mind, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1949.

[3] See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1987.

[4] See Manuel Delanda, A New Philosophy of Society, Continuum, London, 2006.

[5] See Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy & The Geneology of Morals, Anchor Books, New York, 1956.

versatile m[c]o[mmunication]dality

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Some language theorists argue that the particular use of grammar, semantics and other linguistic categories is immediately related to the way the speaker thinks. Do you believe in such a determinism and where do you see the general influence of language on our minds and accordingly on our society?

...on the 1 hand i'm prodded by my institutionally-modded persona which [cmd]prompts me 2 answer:
Linguistic Determinism reads as plausible given the restrictions of the scientific method [artificial illusions of repeatability/predictability] eg the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis/Axiom [i used 2 b intrigued by this in my undergrad days].

it's mammothly n.triguing 2 assume that words sculpt>limit a purrson's experiences + that this is the defining boundary of possible behavioral ex[out]p[ut]ressions; _1984_'s "Newspeak"[1] is a great example + reflects in part how nu_fascist western governments have [s]in[is]te[rly] grated such collusiv[t]e[rror-able] war terminology.

...then my nekkid-without-any-temptation-2-present-as-learned-or-sophisticated-self answers: this type of determinism is fairly narrow in it's scope + doesn't fit snugly in2 my formulation of how language impacts. Linguistic Determinism is prefaced on manifest word[verbi]age + squashing of the experiential along a monochannel axis, as is most scientific/literary theory... all about rigid definers trapped in definition walls. there's no flux; no trans[in]ference of the tactile, the context or environmental carry-overs [currents of glance + chemicalness]. language resides within a complex interlocking of the s[v]e[rbal]nsory, a comparative acknowledgement of non-sapient communication + of interplays of adaptation + inflection. i[nside] mag[ination]e/consciousness/internal monologue tracery is all under[mined] valued in deterministic definitions.

[there's p(p)layers that live their lives happily tra(mber)pped within a pre-defined, canon-ratified, historicized-inflated society|reality - economic rationalists, competition puppets dressed

in academia/institutionalised garb, racial>gender>species>label-perpetuators, all intent on compartmentalizing + categorizing. i _try_ to resist it (c the previous sentence ftl) + instead construct an everyday communic(l)a(nguage)tion predicated on flow + integration(odes)].

<u>With mezangelle² you have created your own language of artistic expression. It is highly complex and consists of a dense and continuous chain of signs and letters, which results in semantically concentrated but syntactically not fixed texts. How can one imagine the process of creation, the way you are working on it?</u>

i dreamt about this question the other nite: appropriate really...
dreamt::phase-changing³ micro-moments shifting thru exte[c(ute)ha]n[nelle]ded realities
dreamt::horr[l]o[ve]r.all rolled.around.
my.trailing.motion.fingers
...on waking i began teasing apart the mezangelled process.
1. a trigger is in[itially.e]volved [could b ph(r)ase/code strings, a sensory cue, +/ or information spark(s) via aggre(p)gation trawling].
2. a syn[es]t[ling]ax [dr(p)a(rsed)wn from my data absorbing at that time] then w[b]ra[nches]ps around the trigger.
3. then come the mechanisms employed 2 diffuse the impulse 2 use a [self]conscious authorial voice 2 construct the work.
they include:
/music [l(em)o(tive)ud]
/fracture-tasking [like multitasking but demanding a type of staggered attention between consciousness projecting + an intense bombarding of stimulus: eg game.system.flitting or focused.stimulus.expansion+conTr[ee]action via data absorption].
[if i let myself create in my primary authorial voice via focused/conscious attention normally associated with the creative process, all i'd produce is source code or dam(b)a({n}d{a})ged poetry].
[regulati(c)on(trol) of whe(n)re i'm creating is also a plus: this can be internally moderated (i tend 2 have outrageously expressive idea_channelling whilst trying to block out annoying passengers on long-range train trips, tho this could have

2 do with music pumped @ ear-bleeding lvls;)].
4. then comes the compiling: pie[r]cing 2gether via a streaming process of gen erating>constructing>analysing>re[m({h}ash)ix]constructing>m[f]ixing>optimizing etc blah until it has some type of internal consistency.
5. my wurks r never really finished; they kinda hang together in a faux_fixed state, rdy.4.the.next.incarnation.

Your work has been reviewed by literature scholars, technology journalists and classical newspapers as well as by the Visual Art and Net Art scene. Where are the boundaries and the frame setting of your work? Or do you rather agree with Roland Barthes, who argues that interdisciplinarity begins, "when the solidarity of the old disciplines breaks down [...] in the interest of a new object and a new language"?[4]

#boundaries = accept[raditi(can)on(ic)al]ed definiti[c]on[ception]s of wot comprises knowledge. #frameworks are the values assigned 2 keep knowledge in an acceptable [status quo] range.
it's an incredibly interesting time 2 b culturally active with all that's occurring with the immediacy of inform[edia]ational_ change + the subtle b[g]r[adual]eakdowns of institutionalised structures [watch the RIAA flail!] [see bands (radiohead, saul williams) release music unshackled from the bloated major_label infrastructure!] [see the courts acknowledge bloggers as journalists!]. these incremental_ changes inform m[e +]y wurk more than heightened proclamations of wot makes interdisciplinarity possible. i'm concentrating more on a type of reality_flexing than substant[rad]i[c] ally altering established disciplines. i [seek 2] contribute but in a micro_ format designed 2 reflect my expressive concerns rather than some grandiose overarching resistance. i don't demand a type of polaris[blank]e[t]d coupling 2 the new|future or against the old|past.

Your work has been compared to that of William Shakespeare, James Joyce and Emily Dickinson. Who are your idols in Literature and/or the Visual Arts?

i'm not big on id[oll]ealisation or ego
viewed as an exclusive housing of
talent. so instead i'll give u a list of
influences>tools>inspirations [by no means
complete]:

#kimba the white lion + astro boy [manga/
anime + not the bastardised disney
versions].
#david cronenberg [earlier visceral works,
specially _dead ringers_: "gynecological
instruments for operating on mutant
women"!!].
#consolidated [specially the album _
friendly fascism_].
#jesus christ sculptures|pictures [as a
kid forced 2 go 2 mass + observing them
+ the red+gold t(sp)a(ce)pestries while
trapped in droning.freezing.cathedrals].
#giacometti [both alberto + diego].
#horror [j horror, b+z-grade, splatterpunk,
romero, craven etc - not gorno tho].
#new order [before gillian left + the
inscriptions on the vinyl i had as a
teenager] + joy division b4 them [poor
ian:/].
#MUDS.
#_screamadelica_.

#dr who [jellybeans + the multicoloured
scarf!].
#donkey_kong [game boy bleepage].
#frida kahlo, sylvia plath, virginia woolf,
stevie case [4 wot - in various degrees -
not 2 become].
#_ghost in the shell_ [1+11].
#cindy sherman.
#non-euclidian geometry [thanks gina].
#john wyndam [triffids! triffids! 1 of the
1st books i never wanted 2 end].
#snapper [a duck i had when i was about
8?] + tahnee [my 17-yr old border collie]
[both taught me² respect].
#unix [shelled + otherwise].
#narnia.
#altered states of consciousness [in many
forms].
#_nevermind_.
#_aeon flux_ + _the maxx_ [_MTV
oddities_ ftw|wtf!].
#_1984_ [(book) scar(r)ed the shite outta
me at 13].
#h(tr)ip_hop [the herd, M.I.A, regurgitator,
saul williams @present].
#seasons [wonderment, still, @the
changing].
#bill burroughs.

#ReBirth RB-338.
#_DOOM_ [+ _Quake_, but mostly _DOOM_].
#sci-fi + cyberpunk [specially j ballard, charles stross, bill gibson (minus _all tomorrow's parties_ + _spook country_) (eww)].
#LaTeX [+ LaTeX2e].
#_raw like sushi_.
#sociology [2 that kooky lecturer who's name i've since forgotten, i say thx:)].
#koko [the gorilla].
#_ren & stimpy_ ["it's loggg-ogg, logg-ogg, it's big, it's heavy, it's wood"].
#anything at all by dennis potter [even with the potential misogyny].
#a broken stereo i had when i was 16 [scratching/remixing/altering the single _subculture_ without realizing].
#sam coleridge [_kubla khan_ + _rhyme of_, obviously].
#LittleDog + BigDog.
#_sin_.
#lars von trier.
#_jabberwocky_.
#kathy acker.
#viewing competition>power as destru[addi]ctive.

#_doolittle_.
#systems_theory.
#integer.
#_brazil_.
#the complexity [+ difference] of emotional "intelligence" + comparative psychology.
#_house of leaves_ [but *not* _only revolutions_: wot a try-hard overblown disappointment that was].
#permaculture.
#max headroom.
#adam jones.
#mozilla.
#_ Aenima_.
#alex [african grey parrot].
#silence, solitude, risk, curiosity, collaboration, humor, connection [+ wot can result].
#_THX 1138_.
#situationist internationalists.
#wakamaru.
#curve, pnau, bloc party, radiohead, tricky, underworld, NIN, the shamen, billy bragg, aphex twin [i'll stop there].
#phoenix + frogger [hrs-long arcade gaming @the local takeaway when i was 12. with.salty.chips, yes pls].

#_tetsuo_ [1+2].
#netwurki[mave]ng [the range is huge but mostly soc_nets/rss atm].
#the value of chimera [freaks ftw!]
#theatre of disco.
#perl.
#academia [learning the limitations of it].
#libraries [in all senses of the word].
#_brave new world_.
#post_structuralism [duh].
#the concept of ARGS [still unrealised in terms of potentiality].
#david lynch [dj_ing drunk @a _twin peaks_ party].
#dreams [perpetually].
#peter greenaway [_the cook the thief etc_].
#richard kelly.
#python.
#chris cunningham.
#_duke nukem[3D]_, _half life[1+ 2]_, everquest [1 only] & _world of warcraft_.

<u>In an interview for the frAme-journal[5] you mention that your "prime n.spiration [for the creation of mezangelle] was reality_shifting ... of constructing a new m[c]o[mmunication]dality + m.bracing net.</u>
<u>worked shifts + m.mergent practices in the online medium". Where is the point of departure for your texts and where do you want them to end up: in a critical online discourse about the Internet?</u>

there isn't really a discernable begin+end point 2[or 4] my txts|wurks as they're not linear or static but exist in an artifically_induced finishing state. i do enjoy overlapping theory with(in) creative>channelled>versional output, but even then the more [r]e[gular]xpressive wurks end up operating as a type of hybrid.theoretical.discourse anyway. much of my present output questions the concepts of "reality" + "virtual" + their systematic definition crumbling. i'm exploring how this disintegration may lead 2 a continuum approach of the real<—>virtual + how this may shake equating virtual participation with distinct otherness via branding it escapism. i'm currently invest[l]i[vin]gating wot lies in the cross_ ovas of these reality_states + the layered interactions that result. 4 eg in the MMOG World of Warcraft i'm intrigued by the interactions that occur there via:

*proscribed/in_built game narratives
*NPCs [non-player characters] +
*players/characters/toons/avatars
*the variance that results when
players decide 2 subvert pre-set game
conventions
*variables involved in recording/
maintaining such interactions
*the transcriptive results
/VOIP such as Vent|Skype|Teamspeak
/video recording software such as Fraps
/meatspace contact including physical
encounters etc
/the waves of resulting engagements +
clustered behaviours
[see: _/t ha[rm.a]nd.deep.in_].[6]

...this instance [i hope those in the WoW-
kno will 4give the pun;)] illustrates my
type of practical|creative critical discourse
in action. in terms of where my wurks
"end up"...they'll exist in their present
state[s] 4 as long as ppl choose 2
access>search>engage>add-or-subtract
2/4rm them.

Instead of alternative media and
technology systems you are using popular
facilities such as blogger accounts, the
Snap Preview feature or Wikipedia entries
for your artworks. Asked provocatively:
don't you care about the "Google
controversy" or are you entering the
system to crack it from the inside?

i make use of + s[ub|consciously]
cavenge 4rm _everywhere_ + i'll adapt
contemporary software projections until
they lie @the cusp of [f]u[nction]sab[le]
ility. i'm all about spiking in the cultural
flow but also about knitting 2gether the
unexpected [which includes cobbling
2gether proprietary+open_source+copyleft
fodder]. i do present certain alternatives
in terms of advocating open_source
where i can *but* i also happily employ
wotever software reson[fluctu]ates. i will
test>embrace>apply woteva [da]t[a]ool
seems 2 fit @ the time.

The Wikipedia entry for mezangelle was
put on a list of articles for deletion.[7]
Do you care about the fact that the
'producers' of the actual Internet culture
don't care about the artistic approach to
what is happening around them?

after my dispute with wikipedia re: deletion of the mezangelle article + the inherent irregularities it hi-lighted in the wikipedia system, u'd assume i wouldn't feel comfortable using it as a source of information [cf above links]. howeva, the potentiality + specific c[lustering] ontributions r far more important than its hierarchical-mimicked structure that allows for unchecked participation by ad hoc editors. those editors [+ those like them] that choose to ratify information via [a chaotic=inconsistent] traditional academic|historicised route in an attempt 2 define how cultural landscapes lie [both online + off] really don't gel well with my positioning. they're regulators of culture who replicate dynamics carved within expressive confines out-of-step with the n.credible rewriting of hub_networking or flattening of creators|absorbers|audiences [think: Facebookers, (micro)Bloggers + Twitterers]. soc_net infoclimates r redefining m[eme]odes 2wards anything _but_ the predicated + mite just b rewriting the market|canon via a removal of the exclusivity of function according 2 individual creator labels [such as an artist,

definer, teacher]. i pay significant attn 2 ppl who ca[wo]n't label wot they do.

<u>Your work has been shown extensively in exhibitions and on different Internet platforms. How can you imagine being displayed in the museum space? Would you like to see your work in this context or do you think this would be an inappropriate way of presentation?</u>

it's been extensively tried tho not successfully so far [then again i haven't seen most of the white_cubed display of my wurks so I can't really judge adequately]. as i'm not really classifiable as an Artist [with the capital "A"] + prefer ch[d]a[ta]nnel_mixing via – 4 instance – commercial MMO's + proprietary software, the output isn't exactly a viable|displayable "art form" as such. there's no preddy u[gly]ncomplicated video|snaps or manifestations either that can be easily commodified|recorded|monetized + perpetuated. i imagine these channel_[re] mixes rn't going to make it 2 any white-cubed walls anytime soon:)

if, howeva, someone could capture: *echos of soc_net n.teractions eg Facebook profiles that expose a new type of psychology|self-portrait through unc[micr]onscious narratives [playing out thru actions such as updating status msgs, whos removes groups + adds t[w] he[n]m, who edits their profile + when, who chooses to display status indicators etc].

*my idea of player-entities as _ charavatars_: ie a mix of a fictionalised character concept that actualizes in terms of a projected persona [ie a mechanical|visual shell that houses ego (via imagined transmission)], character encoding [in the code page|charset sense], and the willing suspension of disbelief required 4 seamless avatar adoption rather than the mainstream ideal of avatar-as-basic-ego-projection via a similar geo-physical|psychological skin.

*a type of MMOE's functional architecture [including server setup + performance, actual manifestation of the world's descriptors|modifiers|engines used|usability|scalability + reliability of it's "reality" flow] ie it's _fauxtecture_.

...+ translate those in2 a gallery/museum setting without losing any genuineness, then feel free to get in contact.

[1] From Wikipedia: Newspeak is a fictional language in George Orwell's novel Nineteen Eighty-Four. [...] Orwell included an essay about it in the form of an appendix in which the basic principles of the language are explained., http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newspeak (April 07, 2007).
[2] From Wikipedia: mezangelle is a poetic-artistic language developed in the 1990s by Australian-based Internet artist Mez Breeze (Mary-Anne Breeze). It is widely recognized as a central contribution to Codework and Internet Art., http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mezangelle (April 07, 2007).
[3] From Wikipedia: A phase transition is the transformation of a thermodynamic system from one phase or state of matter to another., http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phase_change (April 07, 2007).
[4] Roland Barthes, From Work to Text, in: the same, Image Music Text, Fontana Press, London, 1977, p. 155.
[5] Simon Mills, Mez, in: Simon Mills (ed.), frAme: Online Journal of Culture & Technology, 1995-2004, http://www.framejournal.net/interview/11/mez (April 07, 2007).

⁶ Mary-Anne Breeze, /t ha[rm.a]nd.deep.in (2007), http://netwurker.livejournal.com/104638.html (April 07, 2007).

⁷ From Wikipedia: This page was nominated for deletion on 16 March 2007., http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Talk:Mezangelle (April 07, 2007).

Live Cinema—
Language and Elements

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Live Cinema is a quite new experience you sometimes separate from VJ-culture. Do you think there is a gap between these two, comparable to the gap between 'high' and 'low' art?

Actually, Live Cinema has a long trajectory if we understand it as audiovisual real-time performance, it just lacks a comprehensive written theory and history. So I don't understand Live Cinema as something that has developed from VJ-ing even though the tools for both practices were the same. Many Live Cinema works continue the long tradition of Visual Music, which is closer to real-time visual composition than real-time visual montage.

I think that VJ-ing and Live Cinema practices mainly differ in their goals as VJ-ing is attached to club culture and Live Cinema is not. Still, VJs can do Live Cinema and vice versa, just as DJs can make music and musicians can be DJs. To answer your question, I don't think VJ-ing and Live Cinema practices can be divided into high and low arts, as this separation may be outdated anyway. If the creators'

goals are artistic, i.e. the content has thought and personal expression, then the output could be called art, even though it would be presented in a nightclub. It's just a matter of context. On the other hand, the question of what is art seems to be time-based as nowadays we don't ask ourselves if photography is art, as it used to be questioned some 30 years ago.

In your thesis you write about 'elements' and 'language' of Live Cinema. Thinking of a live performance, do you believe you are using a language with fixed grammar and rules?

Maybe not fixed grammar and rules. Anyway, I would like to know what the grammar might be … Imagine the grammar of dreams: how do you know you're 'just' dreaming and not awake? I guess we know that the dream language is a bit different from the 'real life' language so that we don't get confused … at least every day … but what is that language based on? If we think of cinema, it has certain basic rules, like the 180 degrees rule, which was developed in order to make the movie

more comprehensible for the audience. For example, if the cinema maker wants the audience to understand that two people are having a conversation, facing each other, this rule comes in handy. Actually it could also be understood as a tool rather than a rule.

So I would like to imagine this kind of toolbox for Live Cinema artists too: if you want the audience to get excited, what kind of rhythmic composition you could use, how quickly should the image sequences change and how long, what colors make people react in the way you would like them to, would zooming in create that kind of emotional feedback you're looking for? These kinds of tools would not affect the content, rather they would act like grammar in language, like question marks and dots do in order for us to understand the context.

In cinema, for example, the blur effect tells us that a dream/memory sequence is starting. Does Live Cinema work with these kinds of techniques too? Is there narration?

Most of visual rules are based on human perception, and Live Cinema is very much created for a live human audience. I guess the biggest challenge for Live Cinema is to be stimulating for its audience, whether mentally, emotionally, physically or metaphysically, to make the audience go home feeling like they have caught something during the performance.

Is Live Cinema closer to theatre than to cinema? Is it more about performance or more about visual impressions?

It seems that Live Cinema refers to making cinema (static) live, like practicing live montage. Live theatre would sound kind of funny, also as many Live Cinema performances are not very performative (physically), although very audiovisual, so in the end the experience for the audience may resemble cinema more than theatre. On the other hand more and more Live Cinema artists are collaborating with theatres and some software, such as Isadora, has been programmed for dance theatre rather than for clubs. So lets say that Live Cinema can be a mixture

of both theatre and cinema. Using the term 'cinema' is also controversial, as it could/should also be called live video performance. Henry Warwick uses the term 'performance cinema,' so it appears that the word cinema seems to have stuck, probably because cinema still creates magical connotations in our minds and Live Cinema sounds better than real-time audiovisual creation. Also it fits nicely as the continuation of Expanded Cinema. During the silent movies the orchestras that played in the theatres were sometimes referred to as Live Cinema, this tradition actually still continues, with the Russian State Symphony Cinema Orchestra for example. Even the Dogma cinema movement has been referred to as Live Cinema.

Live Cinema is strongly connected to music. How do you think this symbiosis will develop?

There are facilities such as SAT in Montreal who are pushing forward the idea of surround audiovisual environment. This sounds logical, as real-time image has faithfully been following in the footsteps of real-time audio ... soon we might have visual 5.1 systems.

How important is technology in doing Live Cinema? Do you think it is crucial to have some knowledge of particular tools in order to become a 'Live Cinematographer'?

I suppose knowing your tools is important in every art/craft. In the real-time visual world knowing what digital video/material is made of forms the basis of the work. I would say that skilful compression and optimization of the material is essential. Processing video in real-time is one of the most exhausting jobs for the computer so the creator has to know how to optimize the material without 'losing quality'. Also there is special software for real-time creation, such as Max/Msp/Jitter, Puredata, Modul8, Isadora and Processing, just to name a few. Each software has its own interface, which also defines what kind of work can be created with it. Open architecture software, such as Max/Msp/Jitter or

Puredata, offers the widest range of options, from interactive installations to creating real-time 3D-spaces, while Modul8 is more VJ-oriented, offering an easy interface in which using layers is the method of working. Actually most Live Cinematographers have a wide spectrum of knowledge: they are movie makers, video artists, editors, camera operators, post-producers, video processors, interface designers, programmers, promoters and performers—sometimes all in one person.

How important do you consider theory for doing Live Cinema performances?

I consider talking about the content equally important as talking about technology. Personally I get easily bored talking about the tools all the time. In technologically driven creative fields the creators are often so in love with their tools that the output seems like the scenes from the fairytale The Emperor's New Clothes. Everything should be cool just because a lot of technology has been used to produce it. So in this kind of environment I find theory and criticism kind of refreshing.

What are the main points of interest of the theoretical debates about Live Cinema?

It is starting to happen. I guess now when the first wave of (Digital) Live Cinema avant-garde has passed, creators are starting to ask themselves why they are doing what they are doing. Many artists have passed similar thresholds. First they started to do visuals and played at clubs for the joy of it, then they got tired of it and started to create audiovisual performances with musicians and from then on searched for their own unique expression. And at this point discussion comes into the picture. One of the main questions, at least for me, is how to unite real-time with a story/narrative of some kind? What are the real-time narratives and mythologies?

During 2006 several books on VJ-ing were published, including The VJbook edited by Paul Spinrad and Ve-Ja edited by Xárene

Eskander. Even though VJ-ing has been going on for decades, it seems that this is the first time publications like this were popping up. This might be a turning point for real-time audiovisual culture, as more and more creators are getting interested in it. Many visual creators and movie makers start to do real-time performances as they have noticed that they can express themselves in this way without the drag of having to find huge budgets for movie production. This may also say a lot about visual-culture production in general.

Talking about spaces: is there a perfect physical space for Live Cinema, such as the White Cube for the Visual Arts for example?

I can imagine that a space that allows a spatial set-up of the projections is closer to a perfect space than a place where that is not possible. I have just done visuals in Monkey Town in New York, which had a projection on each wall. It was possible to create an ambient, rather than cinematic screening situation, which worked out fine. I hope that one day we won't need projectors anymore but will have affordable canvases or different kinds of materials that could be directly connected to the computer or imagine 3D-projections in the air.

Possibilities in Locative Media

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In conversation with Jeremy Hight
February 2006

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Do you think that technology is an
essential part of Locative Media? What
role does technology play in this art form?

The most important aspects of the form
are the ways it opens a new sense of
interaction with space, with layers of
information pre-existing in a space,
of measurement and movement and
with a new way to make a narrative
that exists and works with the actual
physical environment, be it city or
open spaces. The main lineages are to
Land Art, to Happenings, to elements
of the Situationists but also to land
interpretation, mapping and explorations
of spatial data. The potential applications
are vast and go far beyond what is
currently being explored. The field is still
in its arguable infancy. The technology
simply allows these things to be possible
because of what it works with and can
do. We built 34 North 118 West (2003)
with a 100-dollar laptop and a 40-buck
used GPS unit bought off e-bay. The
technology is advancing and this simply
allows more possibilities in terms of
speed, ease, data and spatial interaction.

The danger is in seeing this as a field
of high-tech exclusion and in working
with its preliminary set paradigms and
subsets. The need is to keep pushing its
boundaries, its conceptual capabilities,
the depth of information and creative
content and to see new expansions and
possibilities as opposed to a narrowing
aperture. The avant-garde history often
comes alongside experimentation, with
new tools or new tool combinations.
My concern is not that the field will
become exclusionary, too technologically
sophisticated for entrance or (as some
are concerned) will allow itself simply
to be consumed by commodification
from big tech business and the bottom
line. My concern is that the field must
keep expanding, pushing its possibilities,
challenging itself, working with
deeper content and interactivity, both
informational, narratively horizontal and
vertical.

Speaking about technology in Locative
Media means at least having access to
it. To put it bluntly: is Locative Media a
phenomenon of affluence?

No. It is seen by some as such and the tools can seem intimidating and quite socio-culturally stratified. The important thing is that work can be made with GPS units bought for almost nothing, older computers, older technology, inexpensive newer technology. The tech divide is a big concern and I am also deeply passionate about grass-roots fundraising for what I termed 'Locative Dissent'. The technology is available for immediate, organized protests to be held at key symbolic or high visibility locations as well as dissent as a signal to pick up in locations of tragedy or oppression that can circumvent the media and its under-reporting and non-reporting of dissent and certain information that must be known. The paradigm of protest is unchanged in many decades and the time is now to change that. The Smart Mob concept a few years ago was a fad of people being able to instant-message each other and all show up at a donut shop at once, kind of absurdist street theater, but this has massive potential as immediate dissemination of information and organization. The wireless signal can also be used to trigger phones at

the actual locations of underreported or forgotten incidents and injustices, this can reach many people beyond the scope of news or publications. This can also be made available to those who can't afford the technology if we work at a grass-roots level to raise money for equipment that can be made available.

So, compared to projects like THE WORLD'S BIGGEST IF (2002), would you say that Locative Media needs to address more sociopolitical issues?

Absolutely. The potential is so huge, so potentially powerful, galvanizing. Dissent and socio-political information dissemination, analysis and study in spatial navigation can all benefit from Locative Media, as the works can be more immediate, give voice to place and events and avoid the primary media and its bias. The tools of Locative Media and how it creates a narrative archaeology (ability to 'read' a place and information by direct spatial navigation) have applications in education, history, art, narrative and architecture, but also essentially

creating a way to link injustice, brutality, corporate crime, environmental abuse and class discrimination in gentrification to their location as chronicle, memory and commentary. The field has created tools and paradigms but has not dug deeply into socio-cultural applications for dissemination, awareness, education and creative commentary.

Coming back to your own work, how would you define what you are doing? Is it art or do you see your work more in an activist context?

I have been working in Locative Media for several years now and increasingly see how it has such great potential to elevate awareness of history, of unknown or forgotten information, people and events and of dissent. It is art, it is narrative but it can be so much more. My two latest essays deal with the need for the field to expand its limits in terms of depth of information and use of elevation to see how it changes in perspective (Floating Points)[1] and how it must be used for a more immediate, organized and effective dissent (Locative Dissent)[2]. Floating Points pushes questions as to why can't location be 'read' from above, from different vantage points and can't this tell much more about history, place and what is forgotten in time. Locative Dissent pushes for activism and dissent in ways that can circumvent the biased media and create both immediate organized reaction and a way to give voice to places and the truths about injustice, deception and violence. The main thing is content. It is also voice. The immediate one is for Locative Dissent. There has to be a new paradigm of dissent that is like Smart Mobs but also has the ability of Locative Media to bring sound files, text, video and mixed media to specific locations to give voice to what must be known. I am in a country that currently is led by an administration that wire taps and spies upon its public and openly bullies reporters who do investigative pieces. The level of control of information is obscene. There have been several massive protests in the last few years that have been vastly underreported or ignored. I once saw open bias on a major national news show

during the beginning of the war, which was a sequence of ra-ra jingoistic images and then an image described as "and here are some people protesting the war in Los Angeles" and then the camera swung to across the street and people waiting to take the citizenship test, to which the reporter said: "and these people just want to be Americans." The message was inferred with an ugly semiotic clarity: the dissenters were 'un-American' and not appreciating what they had by voicing dissent. I am an artist and writer but increasingly I feel that the activism in my work that before was among many layers (partially out of wariness of this administration) is now essential to the core of my being and gives me a sense of something a lot of us here have little of lately: hope for change.

But dissenting through narration and getting the vision of life as a complex arrangement of perspectives across to the people seems to be somehow 'slow' compared to the 'fast' media you're criticizing. Some people argue that, according to the speed of the information interchange and the globalization, a change can only be done fast. Don't you believe in revolution?

Good question. I need to clarify that this is three pronged. There have been large-scale protests organized and directed by Smart Mob messaging globally in the last few years in parts of the world. This needs to become a standard and be used here in America and other places that still cling to older paradigms of protest and dissent and it needs initially also to include more information within the first word of oppression, injustice etc.

It can be, say, 3:00 o'clock that the news feed (RSS for example) goes out about what just was revealed. By 3:30, word can be out to thousands and discussions can be underway on what to do and where. Say the majority of these people work 9:00 to 5:00 ... by 5:00 it is set where to go, why, in what organizational form and for what symbolic protest (blocking traffic, blocking access to a place, standing en masse in front of a symbolic location).

This is prong 1. It is fast. It is very fast. It also has already subverted the larger media and its role of disseminator/ intermediary as word has gotten out to many at a grass-roots level and with the speed of technology.

Prong 2. Initial documentation. People at the protest at say 6:00 can capture images, video, do interviews and all with many points of view to both give more information and to prove by number of its valid real numbers and existence to counteract it being ignored or unreported or to make that moot. The images can go to Flickr that day, the videos to YouTube and that alone immediately gives it voice to millions who view those sites daily and communities online that have a worldwide membership. This now is a new media and documentation.

Prong 3. The connection of voice to place for longer-term permanence. This is the slower part but also an extremely important part. The protest is over. The physical entity lasted a short while/ is ultimately ephemeral. Any traditional media coverage, if at all, is over. Now the information on what happened, its first-hand accounts, images and video can be placed in the location so that for years it will organically simply be fused to where it happened, so the injustice cannot be forgotten. The actual place of what occurred (the initial event) will have information of what happened that must be remembered fused to it in a locative work or works that tell of the injustice in detail. The other part is that the protest can now also be fused to the location by a locative work or works, so important protests will still exist and be active over time, also not to be forgotten. The saying went: "The revolution will be televised." Now it is to be: "The revolution is information and voice."

Looking at the past, dissent practices often have been assimilated by structures of power. How do you think would it be possible to avoid being integrated or ideologized?

One of the key things is that this is not tied to a manifesto, a specific doctrine,

something tied to a certain ideology to be spun back negatively, but is a way to connect key things that already exist (dissenting voices, fast technology, alternate media and dissemination networks, Locative Media). The range of protests and scope is vast and all could benefit, as could the thousands and millions who feel powerless against a climate of information control and the problems with negative spin of traditional protest and its semiotics (fictionalized, non-immediate response, easy to counteract by ignoring, misinformation, counter spin etc.)

This is kind of like the implementation of eating with a fork, in the sense that it is a purely utilitarian basis of a concept yet also has vast implications and new speed and effectiveness. The alternate dissemination of information has long existed, but more unfortunately as a forced 'preaching to the choir' while now it is so easy to connect information to vast numbers of people with technology and new senses of community and communication. The use of locative

technology will allow a way of purely documenting facts that would otherwise be ignored, lost in time as the public sees news in such shards that have a shorter and shorter life span before dropping off the radar. In America it is increasingly more like we must mourn the days when investigative journalism was commonplace and part of the pop culture/daily vocabulary (Watergate today would surely be a fraction of the story it was and thus would not have the same meaning and import as a crime).

The overall concept of what you described seems like the continuation of some paths in late 1990s art discourse—the concepts of site specificity and the discussion about interventionistic practices in art. Both seem to be merged and somehow taken further here. How important is theory in your work?

Very important. The lineage goes back to Land Art, Happenings, Installation Art, site-specific theory and the older desire for art to be able to be out of the gallery system and its semi-feudalistic

semiotic (blank walls in a space for viewing something chosen as of a specific value and culture and thus different than something outside this space and of the day to day—the same issue with a text being 'published' as opposed to a pile of potential and paper). I was incredibly honored when a panel in Leonardo recently selected my essay Narrative Archaeology[3] as one of the four primary texts in Locative Media alongside the Land Artist Robert Smithson. He was a huge influence on me since I was a teen in both his works and his amazing connected theory and discourse.

I originally studied independently to be a research meteorologist and do field research, develop models of hypothetical weather events and try to get a better understanding of things like sprites and jets (huge bursts of plasmic electricity into the outer atmosphere from the tops of thunderstorms … amazing). Over my younger years I studied writing, painting, Concept Art, critical theory and philosophy and on my own always messed with things like mathematics as

a kid (computational symmetry in number strings and contradictions), etymology, graphic design and typography and ways that language functions just like meteorology as a complex system (full of flux, interconnection, decay, shifts and a beautiful complexity). It isn't as scattershot as it may sound, as all of the things have always seemed simply shadings of the same thing. I think it is really unfortunate that art and science are taught as such different disciplines. This is not true. A poem is like a chemistry lab: you have a comparison or experiment, you make a hypothesis, you ask and answer questions in sequence that branch out to greater complexity and then you pull it back into a conclusion.

A former professor at Cal Arts said I "juggle spheres". It is an apt analogy. The curiosity ties to research and pondering to process, to experimentation to ideas and discovery, to hypothesis, to work given form, interactivity and use of technology and playing with flux and cohesion. When I need a break I compose electronic music or work with concepts and form

and experiment with sound art but with a different use of critical theory than the other work. It works just fine. People always say that one needs to just do one thing and do it well (if I had a dollar for every time I was told that …). This is fine for some, but how can you work in hybrid forms? How can you connect dots if you only do one thing?

Narrative Archaeology came out of an epiphany and works alone as an essay, but it was also simply documenting all that was so exciting that went into my work on 34 North 118 West. Academic speech is just a gear shift in language as is poetry, prose and speech on a phone; the great thing is that work can incorporate these things and address ideas and concepts, yet not in a way that is the hammer on the head, condescending or adrift without the concept at the ready. Not that I have never done anything that unintentionally drifted into that realm for some … that is why I love the 'death of the author' concept and that the viewer is the ultimate author as they experience a work on their terms, expectations, mood, temperament

and interpretation of symbol and inference at the time of interaction.

What is your personal experience with the work you are doing—how are people reacting to it?

In regard to Locative Dissent my experience is that it varies. Some people are so embittered and beaten down by the way things are that they greet it with skeptical interest and a sort of "sounds nice but nothing positive can happen anymore." To them it is too much a flesh world/real world version of Orwell now. Many others have reacted like I did when I began putting these things together. They see it as logical, simple and yet complex and potentially far-reaching, like the fork comparison I made.

I have lectured about my other locative work at MIT and other universities and it is studied in courses at universities but that was about a new form of spatial interaction, artwork and narrative possibility and a way to inform and agitate history that must not be lost and other

information of spaces. My work with my project for the International Space Station and seeing the great potential of shifts in perspective in locative reading of spaces has had a pretty good reaction, as it questions the field and a deeper possible way of informing and interpreting a space.

The general reaction to locative dissent has been more immediate and visceral. This is exactly how it feels to me so that is really heartening in these times. The best reaction is the most common one so far which is: "Of course, why the hell don't we do this?" That is the thing about it, it is nothing radical in its components being something so new, it is of them being used together and not as something isolated. The radical part is the idea of it all together and what it can do, and unfortunately that it is dissent in a time that is Orwellian more than any time in recent memory and the idea that it could be a blueprint of something.

You refer to forms and methods of alternative culture in what you said above. Do you think it is possible to influence

the broader public with those practices in paranoid times like ours?

Yes. One can only hope. It is something so radical but something so simple. The brutal fact is that the traditional protest is increasingly problematized by the fact that it can be downplayed, ignored, spun as a bunch of bleeding-heart liberals who are disorganized and from some alternate world of patchouli and images of 1968. The thing is that we as a culture are so ignorant of many massive potentials of technology and the increasing speed and interconnection of our world. The speed of instant messaging, of news feeds, the grass roots dissemination of blogs, the potential for spatial data and amazing amount of mobile information and communication in many forms on cell phones, the immediate dissemination of information to mass numbers on the Internet, the alternate communities forged online; these are all huge leaps but are mostly used as entertainment and convenience. The 34 North 118 West project was profiled in an article in Wired. Did it get picked up from the article in the

Los Angeles Times? The description in the Washington Post? Nope. The interviewer found it on a blog, and this is three to four years ago and well before blogs were perused on CNN and acknowledged as a news medium. That really is what it is about. A magazine distributed to millions and at newsstands all over the place picking up something from a small blog in the early days of blogs.

[1] Jeremy Hight, Floating Points—Locative Media, Perspective, Flight and the International Space Station, http://www.fylkingen.se/hz/n8/hight.html (January 12, 2010).

[2] Jeremy Hight, Locative Dissent, 2006, http://www.sarai.net/publications/readers/06-turbulence/06-turbulence (January 12, 2010).

[3] Jeremy Hight, Narrative Archaeology: Reading the Landscape, http://web.mit.edu/comm-forum/mit4/papers/hight.pdf (January 12, 2010).

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