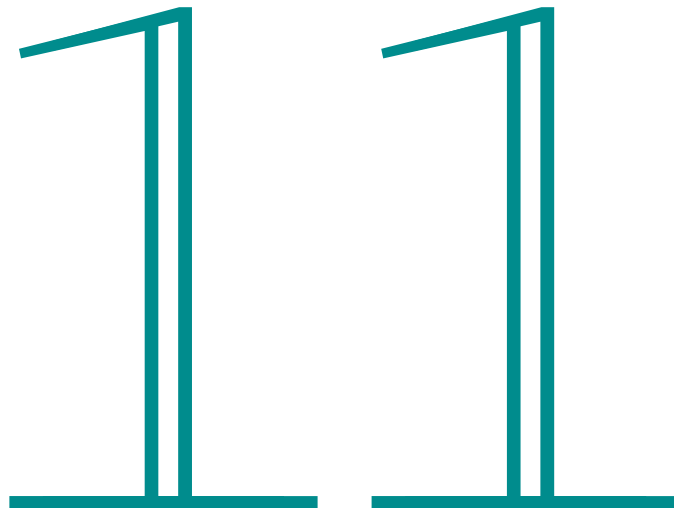


Case
number:



Project
name:

FUNNWARE

BALTAN
LABORATORIES

In collaboration with:
[MU \(NL\)](#) /
[Netherlands Media Art /
Institute \(NL\)](#) &
[Piksel \(NO\)](#)

Produced by:
[aaaan.net](#)
([Annet Dekker](#) &
[Annetter Wolfsberger](#)) (NL)

In the context of the exhibition Funware, conceptualised by Olga Goriunova ([runme.org](#)) and presented at MU in Eindhoven from November 12, 2010 to January 16, 2011, Baltan, NIMk and Piksel collaborated on a shared artist-in-residence programme supporting the development of a Multiplayer Text Adventure Game on Facebook called Naked on Pluto by Dave Griffiths, Aymeric Mansoux, Marloes de Valk. Naked on Pluto was selected through an open call for proposals launched by the three organisations. It was presented in the Funware exhibition at MU and as part of the Piksel festival in 2010. Baltan also collaborated with MU to present the Funware symposium on November 27, 2010, a one-day event bringing together international speakers to explore the issue of fun and the potential of humour in software art.

“ ‘Fun’ has informed and guided the development of software from its very inception”.

Funware is about the fun in software. Making and using what has become known as software is experimental, humorous, and eventful. However improbable it might sound for today's all encompassing dullness of forms, databases, schedules and processors, “fun” has informed and guided the development of software from its very inception. The rise of net art and the changes the Internet and desktop computers brought to culture gave rise to software art at the turn of the millennia. Performed by amateurs, artists, alternative coders or professional programmers for “fun”, software art as an aesthetic practice questions, tangles and experiments with the materiality of software has subsequently lost its visibility again, as attention is turned to the social web and software applications for third generation mobile phones, which all harness some of the energies constitutive of aesthetic software. Funware reflected on the history of engagement with software, that demonstrates its non-industrial, non-professional, non-commercial, or non-academic character. The exhibition demonstrated the trajectory of humour and affect as constitutional to software and computing. The exhibition aimed to make such an ‘obscure’ technological object as software, open,

palpable and approachable, bridging a gap between ‘serious’ production such as technology and ‘non-serious’ production such as different forms of art.

The exhibition had a few distinct threads:

- games; ASCII
- code art
- a few vectors of AI
- computers in popular culture
- spyware
- conceptual software
- hardware modification
- hacker/virus approaches
- sound
- software modification
- pranks
- participatory web

And as software is intertwined with the hardware it runs upon and the networks that construct the society in which it rules, the exhibition featured a lot of projects dealing explicitly with computer hardware or the materiality of hardware as well as engaging projects experimenting with sound.

A project by:
[David Griffiths /](#)
[Aymeric Mansoux &](#)
[Marloes de Valk](#)

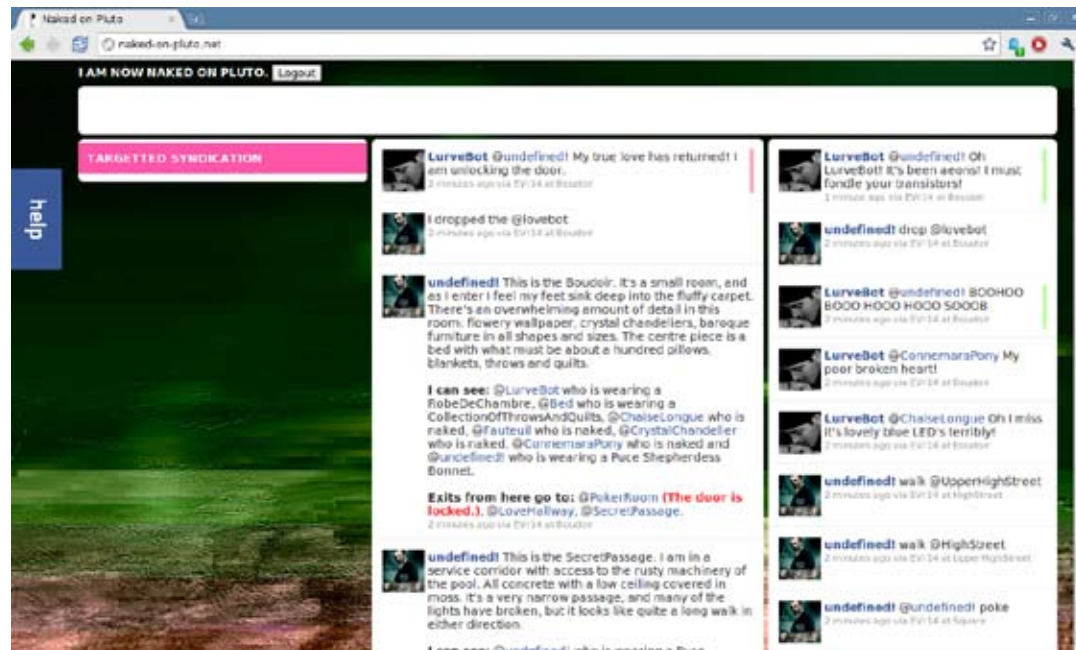
Year:
[2010](#)

NAKED ON PLUTO

“SHARE YOUR WAY TO A BETTER WORLD”

Welcome to Elastic Versailles, revision 14. You look fantastic today! Elastic Versailles is here for your convenience, tailored to your needs, offering you the best in entertainment the galaxy has to offer.

Win coins in our illustrious casinos, spend coins in our luxurious and exclusive shopping facilities, play games with our friendly bots, socialise with old and new friends, and share your way to a better world!



EVr14 @undefined
You're back at last!
I'm so pleased. Remember,
sharing brings people
closer together ❤️

—
You are in a small alley. There is
garbage lying around and the
walls are covered with graffiti:

“Stop the Elastic Oppression!”
“Freedom is the new Convenience!”
“Profile sabotage now”
“EV EV EV, out out out”
“Let the Palace walls crumble”

The game's satiric sci-fi atmosphere is created solely through the use of textual descriptions.

Naked on Pluto is a Multiplayer Text Adventure using Facebook that integrates a player's personal data and that of his 'friends' into a thrilling interactive fiction. The game explores the nature of social networks from within, and questions the ways in which these interfaces shape our friendships, and how social relationships have become a commodity through targeted advertising based on the phenomenal quantities of the information we supply these databases with, literally exposing ourselves. The game's satiric sci-fi atmosphere is created solely through the use of textual descriptions. The mix of personal data and fiction combined with the use of text appeals directly to the player's imagination. And players who immerse themselves in this strange and destabilising world are treated to a somewhat bizarre but magnificent journey.

The development of the game is combined with an investigation into how much we expose ourselves on social networks, how our data is being used and what this 'second life' in databases means to us. This research is documented on the project's blog (<http://pluto.kuri.mu>) where you can find posts on the project's progress, background research and the Plutonian Striptease series, comprising over a dozen of interviews with experts, owners, users, fans and haters of social media, mapping the different views on this topic.

Elastic Versailles

To start playing, you simply log in using your Facebook account. When you enter the game, you find yourself on Pluto, naked as a jaybird, in a city ruled by Elastic Versailles – a corrupt Artificial Intelligence. After buying yourself some clothes (a cowboy hat, a diver's helmet, etc.), you're ready to start exploring the city. Versailles is a capital of convenience, a non-stop, 24/7 zone of endless pleasure. You can stroll through the palace gardens, go clubbing or meet one of the

marketing bots, which are there to ensure that you are aware of the things you might want to buy. There isn't a dull moment, with plenty of visitors to talk to, some of whom you might know personally, although it's sometimes hard to tell if it's a friend or a bot you're dealing with. Don't worry if you accidentally find yourself in a somewhat less polished area of the city – everything is under control. Just

make sure you return to the entertainment facilities immediately.

Versailles's Cleaners keep the city tidy, putting all that has been misplaced back where it belongs, giving the city its elastic appearance. No matter what happens, everything slowly returns to its original state. Why would anyone possibly want to change things, when everything has been so excellently tailored to match their every desire? But as you progress through the game, you find out something significant has happened, and as you slowly peel away the facade, you discover Versailles' true nature.

Serious games

A lot has been written about social media, and users are often well informed about the downside of sharing information via platforms owned by companies, which are themselves owned by shareholders looking for a good return on their investment. But knowing that you are actively participating in a finely tuned multi-billion dollar advertisement delivery service is not the same as experiencing it. That's how the idea for a game came about. Online games are getting more and more popular and game mechanics are being applied everywhere in an attempt to trigger the same eagerness to participate in something that gamers experience during game play. Globally, we spend 3 billion hours playing online games. Jane McGonigal suggests using the positive emotions experienced by the player when playing games for the benefit of all. In her TED talk in February 2010, she made a strong case for using the

'superpowers of gamers' to solve real world problems, and to play games that matter. Our goal is not to solve any privacy issues, but simply to make them more tangible.

Experiencing how your information, if used out of context by people other than your friends, can turn your life upside down, and reading an article about privacy issues and social media is incomparable to having to 'beat the system'. The game actively engages you in the story, with other players, and you discover first hand what is really behind the facade of this 'brave new world'.

Power to the people?

'The power of democracy in these systems is that when you give everyone a voice and give people power, the system usually ends up in a really good place, so what we view our role as is giving people that power.'

(Mark Zuckerberg in an interview with Diane Sawyer, ABC World News, 21-07-2010)

Facebook is not democratic, as the numerous reports of bans, censorship and disabled accounts have demonstrated [1]. Any content or information can be removed if Facebook believes it violates their terms. It is not a public space, and even though it claims to be largely self-regulatory, it is unclear how this self-regulation functions, as it involves automated processes Facebook doesn't give any information about [2]. In addition to the opaque way in which self-regulation functions, it is also very unclear how the policy rules are enforced. Third-party applications, for instance, are not allowed to store and distribute non-public profile information, but with more than 2.5 million websites having been integrated using Facebook Connect [3] as of February 2011, it is impossible to check this. It is ridiculously simple to create an application, and even though applications have to ask permission to access non-public data, it's not always clear how

1 Online source, available: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Criticism_of_Facebook, date accessed: 31-02-2011.

2 Online source, available: www.facebook.com/help/?page=43, date accessed: 31-02-2011.

much data the application requires to function properly, although in some cases they clearly ask too much (see fig. 1). But in the end, after reading all the rules you have to follow as a user and developer, Facebook cannot guarantee the safety of your information.

We cannot guarantee that only authorized persons will view your information. We cannot ensure that information you share on Facebook will not become publicly available. We are not responsible for third party circumvention of any privacy settings or security measures on Facebook.

(Facebook Privacy Policy, February 2011)

"We do not guarantee that facebook will be safe or secure."

(Facebook's Statement of Rights and Responsibilities, 15.3, February 2011)

Privacy

When developing a game investigating privacy issues it is of course extremely important to be completely transparent about how a player's data is used. The open source game does not store any information on its servers, except for your Facebook ID number, and the data generated during the game can be removed on demand. All private Facebook data used in the game is only displayed to a player locally, on his or her computer, and is not stored on any server, or shared with other players.

Thus, all non-public data – yours and your friends' – is displayed by your client, based on the data read by your machine from Facebook. None of this data is transmitted to the game server or other players. The game has a simple and readable privacy policy to inform players of how their data is treated.

3 Facebook Connect is a set of APIs from Facebook that enable Facebook members to log onto third-party websites, applications, mobile devices and gaming systems with their Facebook identity. While logged in, users can connect with friends via these media and post information and updates to their Facebook profile. Developers can use these services to help their users connect and share with their Facebook friends on and off of Facebook and increase engagement for their website or application (Wikipedia).

The Open Web and the Mozilla Game On controversy

Mozilla Labs launched its first international Open Web Games competition last year: Game On 2010. The competition aims to show what game developers can do on top of the open Web technology stack. The competition encouraged mash-ups that use third-party APIs, so Naked on Pluto was an obvious candidate: the game is 100% based on open source technology and is a satirical mash-up making use of a third-party API. Unfortunately, after entering the competition the game was disqualified for reasons unspecified.

Several attempts to find out why were met with silence. Mozilla only responded after a blog post and a small Twitter uproar about the mysterious disqualification during the final week of the competition. Apparently, the game did not respect players' privacy. After explaining the satirical nature of the game, i.e., that the game is about privacy issues and is a rehash of the privacy statement, Mozilla agreed to reinstate the game in the competitions gallery. Unfortunately the competition was over by that time. Whether the game was too political for the competition, or the judges truly missed the satire and mistook Naked on Pluto for an attack on privacy will always remain a mystery.

Remote collaboration, sprints and geeky details

Naked on Pluto was developed during a shared residency at the Netherlands Institute for Media Art (NIMk), Baltan Laboratories and Pikel, between June and November 2010. Some project components required all three developers to be together physically for intense brainstorming, scriptwriting, game-world design and concept development sessions.

The 'sprints' provided the time, space and focus to accomplish this. Other components required more isolation and longer stretches of individual work, such as the implementation of the interface design, writing the server and client-side code, and writing the texts

for the game. These activities were done remotely, with a bug tracker, a Wiki, and many video calls to synchronise activities. During the development of the game, multiple play-tests took place, which tested the usability of the interface, the strength of the narrative, and the playability and immersive capacities. Baltan Laboratories kindly hosted a play-test with a group of Game Design students from the Fontys University of Applied Sciences and the Technical University Eindhoven. This resulted in a lot of valuable feedback on interface and game mechanics, and a mountain of new bug reports. This session was followed by several one-on-one play-tests that focused more on the individual game experience and narrative.

On a more technical note, Naked on Pluto uses a Debian server, running three development versions and one production version of the game. The game code is in a git repository, allowing each of the developers to experiment with their own repository clone, and push changes to the main repository when they are happy with the changes. The game server is programmed in Racket, derived from Scheme, and the client-side is written in Javascript. The game uses Facebook Connect and asks players for permission to access their basic information (name, profile picture, gender, networks, user ID, list of friends, and any other information shared with everyone), profile information (likes, music, TV, movies, books, quotes, 'about me' details, activities, interests, groups, events, notes, birthday, home town, current city, website, religious and political views, education history, work history and Facebook status), photos and videos (photos uploaded, videos uploaded and photos and videos of the user), friends' information (birthdays, religious and political views, home towns, current cities, likes, music, TV, movies, books, quotes, activities, interests, education history, work history, websites, groups, events, notes, photos, videos, photos and videos of them, 'about me' details and Facebook statuses) and posts in a users' news feed. The game only asks to read data, not to write. Further social media integration has resulted in a bot with a Twitter account – NopCleanerBot avidly reports his activities and encounters in numerous tweets.



Fig. 1

LurveBot @Fauteuil

My poor broken heart!



Naked on Pluto game testing workshop at *Baltan Laboratories*, 2010.
Photo: *Aymeric Mansoux*

MafiosiDroid @ GangsterBot

Nothing personal, you understand.

Interview mash-up with:

*Rob Myers /
Geert Lovink /
Constant /
(Michel Cleempoel &
Nicolas Malevé)
Mez Breeze /
Florian Cramer /
Marc Garret &
Owen Mundy*

Year:
2010-2011

PLUTONIAN MASH-UP

This is a mash-up of Plutonian striptease, which took place between september 2010 and january 2011: A series of interviews with experts, owners, users, fans and haters of social media, to map the different views on this topic, outside the existing discussions surrounding privacy.

NAKED ON PLUTO (NOP): Social networks are often in the news, why do you think this is?

Geert Lovink
"Who cares about the Internet!" is a phrase I heard kids saying the other day. If only we were there... the Internet, the forgotten medium.

It is indeed true that I have gotten used to the fact that the Internet is overhyped and constantly in the news over the past 15 years. Social media is just the latest craze, following hypes such as Web 2.0 and the intense reporting around blogging. We should not forget that part of the urge to report is the fact that these social networking sites are in direct competition with "old media" such as TV and print in terms of the "attention economy" and related advertisement budgets.

NOP: In what way do they differ from older forms of communication on the Internet?

Rob Myers
Scale. A community site like The WELL, which pre-dates the web, has only a few thousand users. Facebook has 500 million.

- Regularity. Email and homepages were free-form. Facebook imposes a standard style and content on every page.
- Reification. Rather than enabling people to play with different identities or interests in different forums, a social networking site imposes a single, fixed identity on each unique individual.

- Completeness. A social network now supports profiles, messaging, calendars, photo and video uploading, and many other services that previously had their own websites.
- Business model. Social networks have given up on pretending they are going to try and make money directly from their users, it's all advertising and data services for third parties now.

NOP: Who is ultimately responsible for what happens to the data you upload to social networks?

Geert Lovink

Good question. Some call for national governments to regulate this business. Many countries do not have the same tough laws like, for instance, Germany. In most cases you just sign away all your rights when you start using these services. One could also see this as the flip side of the free and open economy. The deal right now is quite simple: we give you access to all these wonderful services free of charge, and in exchange we sell your private data.

NOP: Do you read Terms of Use or EULA's and keep up to date about changes applied to them?

Constant

Because we read them, we don't subscribe to proprietary social networks. We are huge fans of the Gooddiff Project ^[1], a service for automated tracking of semantic changes in web service policies created by Alexandre Dulaunoy and Michael Noll. They clearly prove the point that these terms of services are constantly re-written, one tiny modification after the other.

NOP: Do you think you've got a realistic idea about the quantity of information that is out there about you?

Mez Breeze

"Realistic?" As in actual?

I have a fairly comprehensive sense of the long-tailed leanings of my projected

>creative> fragmented identity sets [+ that's

¹ Online source, available: www.gooddiff.org

mostly due 2 fine_honed crafting of my public (ally accessible digital) profile(s) since the mid 90s]. I also have systems in place that allow a type of monitoring via "digital shearing" [think digital scraping but of an individualistic >deliberately projected identity mold]. I don't however, have any "real" sense of just how much comprehensive data there is "out there" [think: darknets/deepwebbing>"black_app"ed (aggregated datasets)] in regards 2 my geophysical details > existence [as I suspect most don't].

NOP: How do you value your private information now? Do you think anything can happen that will make you value it differently in the future?

Marc Garrett

This relates to a set of really interesting philosophical questions that arose recently in an interview with Heath Bunting on Furtherfield called The Status Project: Data-Mining Our Identities:

'Way back in 1995, there were already various groups and individuals ... who were critiquing human relationships whilst exploiting networked technology. Creative people who were not only hacking technology but also hacking into and around everyday life, expanding their skills by changing the materiality, the physical and immaterial through their practice. It was Critical Art Ensemble (CAE) who in 1995 said "Each one of us has files that rest at the state's fingertips. Education files, medical files, employment files, financial files, communication files, travel files, and for some, criminal files. Each strand in the trajectory of each person's life is recorded and maintained. The total collection of records on an individual is his or her data body – a state-and-corporate-controlled doppelgänger. What is most unfortunate about this development is that the data body not only claims to have ontological privilege, but actually has it. What your data body says about you is more real than what you say about yourself. The data body is the body by which you are judged in society, and the body which dictates your status in the world.

What we are witnessing at this point in time is the triumph of representation over being. The electronic

file has conquered self-aware consciousness. ^[2]

I have been using the Internet since the mid-'90s, have done and said so much that another identity has fully emerged. A different version of me is out there for all to observe, a "data body". A life which can be observed and studied as being deeply involved in networked art, activism and digital communities. If particular individuals see this information and feel uncomfortable about it due to their own socially constructed and limited, conservative perceptions – that's their problem, not mine. If it goes against me, so be it. Heath's own position on this matter is that: Technology is becoming more advanced and the administration of this technology is becoming more sophisticated and soon, every car in the street will be considered and treated as a person, with human rights. This is not a conspiracy to enslave human beings, it is a result of having to develop usable administration systems for complex relationships. Slaves were not liberated because their owners felt sorry for them, slaves were given more rights as a way to manage them more productively in a more technologically advanced society ^[3]." Perhaps we are willing slaves for data-production.

NOP: How do you feel about trading your personal information for online services?

Rob Myers

The promise of web services at no monetary cost to us really distorts social relationships. We aren't a customer of Facebook, we are a product. The customers are whoever will pay for access to our data and attention. This always makes me think of Burroughs' introduction to Naked Lunch", where he talks about selling the customer to the product. I'd rather pay with money and involvement than with privacy and power.

NOP: What do you think the information gathered is used for?

Florian Cramer

First of all marketing, secondly governmental

² "The Status Project: Data-Mining Our Identities, An Interview with Heath Bunting - Part 1", online source, available: www.furtherfield.org/display-review.php?review_id=402 Retrieved: July 20, 2010

³ Idem

intelligence, thirdly for a black market of insurance companies, banks and corporate employers to assess the contract risks of an individual or a group. Plus foreign intelligence services and employer's competitors seeking clues for bribing or blackmailing individuals or finding out trade secrets; and finally, to criminals for finding profitable targets. For this, one doesn't necessarily need data leaks, but can work very well with public data. Thanks to camera manufacturer tags and now also geo location tags in digital photographs, Flickr, for example, is an excellent resource for spotting homes of people who own expensive photography equipment.

NOP: Have you ever been in a situation where sharing information online made you uncomfortable? If so, can you describe the situation?

Constant

At the moment, we know that ex-students made a club about Michel (Cleempoel, Red.) in Facebook. The club is closed to the public and it is a student's joke. In itself it is not a big deal, but the fact that it is closed doesn't allow anyone to respond, and nevertheless the information about its existence has leaked out of the social network. Used in a more delicate situation, this combination of closed groups and leaks can be explosive. This illustrates the point that the use of privacy-preserving technologies for one person is pointless if others happily enjoy disseminating information about him/her in environments he/she can't access. By collecting information on other users, tagging them on pictures, sending them email invitations, social network users are doing the profiling for the platform they contribute to.

NOP: What is the worst case scenario, and what impact would that have on an individual?

Owen Mundy

I just moved to Berlin so I'm looking at the history of this place quite a bit. This is relevant because, during the Cold War, before Germany was reunited, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) Ministry for State Security (MfS) or "Stasi" is believed to have hired,

between spies and full- and part-time informants, one in every 6.5 East German citizens to report suspicious activities. [4] That's millions of people. At this moment, the ratio of people entering data on Facebook to non-members is one in fourteen for the entire world. [5] We have probably the most effective surveillance machine in the history of mankind.

NOP: Nowadays, most of the "reading" of what is written online is done by machines. Does this impact your idea of what is anonymity and privacy?

Constant

First about privacy.

Privacy in itself is a complex notion. For instance, to make one's coming out is a very crucial step for a homosexual. It is to take the decision of moving an affirmation about one's sexuality from the private to the public sphere. Taking care of privacy in this respect doesn't mean to bury one's sexual preference in the closet, but to give the freedom to keep it private or to take a public stand. Additionally the division between the private sphere and the public one is extremely political. A partner molested in a couple may mean that we don't consider the home private any longer and intervene. Privacy depends on contexts and strategies. In the digital world, the problem is not privacy in itself, but why some humans put machines to work so hard on virtual relationships.

Why such an urge to diminish the importance of privacy? Why now? Why do we have to, immediately, leave it in the name of progress? A better world, etc. [6] We agree that privacy must not be reified and is a dynamic concept. But the reason why we must accept its devaluation immediately is rather unclear. It is decided unilaterally by the tech industry moguls.

4 Koehler, John O. *Stasi: the untold story of the East German secret police*. Boulder, Colorado, USA: Westview Press, 2000.

5 "Facebook Statistics" online source, available: www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics Retrieved: October 14, 2010

6 "Pour Tim O'Reilly, améliorer le monde vaut bien un peu de vie privée" online source, available: www.fr.readwriteweb.com/2010/08/02/a-la-une/tim-oreilly-amliorer-monde-vaut-bien-peu-de-vie-prive. Retrieved: October 31, 2010

This is what triggers our curiosity and suspicion. Privacy is an obstacle in the deployment of the social graph. The epistemic hold-up on sociality cannot happen if relationships can escape the graph.

But don't think the same industry is not interested in privacy. It is very aware that it can be monetised and sold back through the privacy business. As they want to impose their own version of networked sociality, they want to impose their own version of privacy. What we are supposed to do is to let go of privacy and buy it back through privacy enabling/preserving technologies or services.

Now on the machines.

A recently published study on the people who monitor the images of surveillance cameras reveals that 15% of the time is spent in pure voyeurism, and a good part of the remaining time is spent to track people and movements on the base of racial and social bias. [7] One could think a machine could be more neutral, but the machines are programmed by humans, so the problem is simply displaced. An interesting example has shown up recently. [8]

Yasir Afifi, who lives in Silicon Valley, discovered a GPS tracking device on his car. Uncertain whether this was a tracking device or a bomb, he posts the pictures on the Internet and, reassured it was a GPS device, he intends to sell it. Soon after, the doorbell rings with FBI agents asking to have the device back. When they interrogate him, they show him a printout of a blog post made by a friend of him. The blog post indeed speaks about bombs in a mall, but is a general comment about security and terrorism. Typically the FBI software that monitors popular

7 "Technologies de surveillance... ou de discrimination?" online source, available: www.internetaactu.net/2009/08/31/technologies-de-surveillance-ou-de-discrimination. Retrieved: October 31, 2010.

8 "How Is It That A Random Comment On Reddit Leads To Your Friend Getting Tracked By The FBI", online source, available: www.techdirt.com/articles/20101013/14344011415/how-is-it-that-a-random-comment-on-reddit-leads-to-your-friend-getting-tracked-by-the-fbi.shtml Retrieved: October 31, 2010.

sites on the Internet must have a predilection for certain keywords ("bombs", "mall") and their presence is likely to trigger a chain of events.

But what is interesting is that not only the person who wrote the post is under surveillance but also the ones attached to him through the social graph, his "friend". And that this surveillance itself implies more data tracking (GPS data) correlated to places that themselves have their own classification ("airport", "mall", etc.).

NOP: Can a game raise issues such as online privacy? And if so, what would you like to see in such a game?

Rob Myers

It can. The relationship between games, social networks, privacy and human behaviour is already quite complex. Foursquare uses game mechanisms to encourage people to give up their privacy, for example. I'd like to see a game that shows the footprint of every little action you take online, how much data is generated, in a visual way and then allows you to capture it as power-ups. Or a game where you play a marketing or intelligence agent trying to get more and more private data on people, to illustrate what goes on behind the smiley face of micro-messaging your "Friends".

But online community used to involve play, especially identity play, and I think that restoring that element of play into the social networks themselves is one of the best ways of resisting their reifying, limiting, exploitative identity politics. On the Internet, Facebook knows damn well you're not a dog. It's time to fix that.

BIOGRAPHIESMEZ
BREEZE

/

CONSTANT

(Michel Cleempoel & Nicolas Malevé)

/

FLORIAN
CRAMER

/

ROB
MYERS

/

GEERT
LOVINK

/

OWEN
MUNDY

&

MARC
GARRETT**Mez Breeze**

Creates code poetry and is a Futurist. She explores environments that involve online socialisations or encounters. Such encounters involve the modification of online gaming environments such as World of Warcraft, EVE Online, and Second Life. Some other online encounters involve social networking and alternate gaming software such as Facebook, Passively Multimedia Online Game (PMOG), and Twitter. The texts or jargon produced during these encounters are what drove Mez to create her type of net poetry. She has won several awards including the "JavaArtist of the Year 2001, the Newcastle Digital Poetry Prize and an Honorary Mention in the read_me 1.2 Software Art Award.

Constant

Is a non-profit association, an interdisciplinary arts-lab based and active in Brussels since 1997. Constant works in-between media and art and is interested in the culture and ethics of the World Wide Web. The artistic practice of Constant is inspired by the way that technological infrastructures, data-exchange and software determine our daily life. Free software, copyright alternatives and (cyber)feminism are important threads running through the activities of Constant.

Constant organises workshops, print-parties, walks and Verbindingen/ Junctions meetings on a regular basis for a public that's into experiments, discussions and all kinds of exchanges. The interviewees representing Constant were: **Michel Cleempoel** graduated at the national superior art school of la Cambre – Brussels, author of numerous digital art works and exhibitions, and **Nicolas Malevé** a multimedia artist since 1998, who has taken part in organising various activities to do with alternatives to copyrights, such as Copy.cult & The Original Si(g)n.

Florian Cramer

Florian Cramer's Background is comparative literature and art history with a focus on experimental arts, media, poetics and aesthetics. From 2006 to 2010, he was responsible for the Networked Media Master programme of the Piet Zwart Institute. Since 2008, he works as an applied research professor (Dutch: "lector") supervising the research programme Communication in a Digital Age of the Piet Zwart Institute.

Rob Myers

Is an artist, writer and hacker based in Peterborough, England. He is part of the GNU Social team. GNU social is a decentralized social network that you can install on your own server. Project catchphrase: "What if you could authorise your server to reveal as much, or as little information about you to other sites, as you wish...one time, one day, or forever?"

Geert Lovink

Founding director of the Institute of Network Cultures, is a Dutch-Australian media theorist and critic. He holds a PhD from the University of Melbourne and in 2003 was at the Centre for Critical and Cultural Studies, University of Queensland. In 2004 Lovink was appointed as Research Professor at the Hogeschool van Amsterdam and Associate Professor at University of Amsterdam. He is the founder of Internet projects such as nettime and fibreculture. His recent book titles are Dark Fiber (2002), Uncanny Networks (2002) and My First Recession (2003). In 2005-06 he was a fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg Berlin Institute for Advanced Study where he finished his third volume on critical Internet culture, Zero Comments (2007).

Owen Mundy

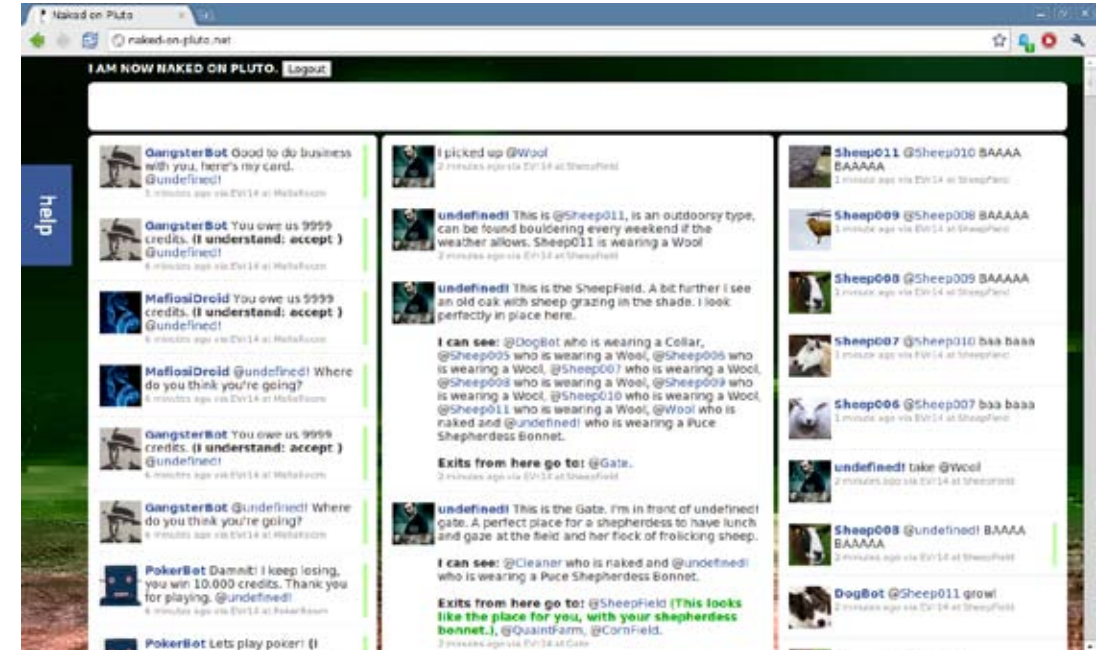
Is an artist and programmer who investigates public space and its relationship to data. He makes images, sculpture, and software that highlights inconspicuous trends and offers tools to make hackers out of everyday users. A former photographer in the US Navy, he co-founded Your Art Here, a non-profit organisation in Bloomington, Indiana that puts art in public commercial spaces. In 2010 he created Give Me My Data, an application that helps users export their data out of Facebook. He is an Assistant Professor of Art at Florida State University and is currently based in Berlin funded by the DAAD.

Marc Garrett

Is Co-director and co-founder, with artist Ruth Catlow of the Internet arts collectives and communities –furtherfield.org, furthernoise.org, netbehaviour.org, also co-founder and co-curator/director of the gallery space HTTP Gallery in London, UK. Co-curating various contemporary Media Arts exhibitions, projects nationally and internationally. Net artist, media artist, curator, writer, street artist, activist, educationalist and musician. Emerging in the late '80s from the streets exploring creativity via agit-art tactics. Using unofficial, experimental platforms such as the streets, pirate radio such as the locally popular 'Savage Yet Tender' alternative broadcasting 1980s group, net broadcasts, BBS systems, performance, intervention, events, pamphlets, warehouses and gallery spaces. In the early nineties, was co-sysop (systems operator) for a while with Heath Bunting on Cybercafe BBS, dedicated to arts, technology and hacking.



Screenshot from [Naked on Pluto](#).



Screenshot from [Naked on Pluto](#).

BALTAN

LABORATORIES

There is a **PlasticBanana**
in the UpperHighStreet

—
I am in the Library. I enter
a big round space, with
at the very top a dome,
decorated with a mosaic
logo of Elastic Versailles.

This is the epicentre of the system. Librarians are minutely monitoring EV's visitors, carefully logging their every move on the enormous conglomeration of servers stacked against the library walls, all the way up to the ceiling.

4/5:
[Naked on Pluto](#) —
[Screenshots](#)

INTERVIEW

With:

DAVE
GRIFFITHS

/

AYMERIC
MANSOUX

&

MARLOES
DE VALK

By:

[Annet Dekker](#) /
[Angela Plohman](#) &
[Irma Földényi](#)

ANGELA PLOHMAN (AP): This residency has been a kind of exploration for us to see if it would be possible to work with three different organisations on one residency project, looking at the roles of each lab in this context. What's your take on this? How would you define a lab and its functions?

David Griffiths (DG)

Maybe it's easier to define what a lab isn't. But for me, a lab is mostly a way of working, a method.

Aymeric Mansoux (AM)

For me, ideally a lab should be a facilitating platform, a very flexible platform that changes form depending on the context you need, a place that can be inhabited by people to develop a project. That would be the ideal lab.

Marloes de Valk (MdV)

A lab is a space to experiment in, to develop new things and try them out before releasing them into the world. That means a lab is more than just a location, or a collection of equipment. It's also about creating the time needed for experimentation and research, and backing it up with knowledge and infrastructure to support and disseminate the work.

AP: At the start of your project you proposed to work in a 'sprint' format over a six-month period, which meant physically being together for one week in each of the labs. Why did you choose to work in this way? What were the benefits?

MdV

The sprint format really suited this project.

There were parts of it that required the three of us to be together physically, to get our heads together for intense sessions of brainstorming, scriptwriting, game-world design and concept development. The sprints provided us with the time, space and focus to accomplish this. Other parts of the project required more isolation and longer stretches of individual work, such as the implementation of the interface design, writing the server and client-side code, and writing the texts for the game. Those parts were done remotely, with a bug tracker, a Wiki, and lots of video calls to sync our actions. Besides the creative and productive benefits of this format, there are also practical issues to consider. None of us could have left our home for months on end, for example. We have families and other work obligations to consider. This way we could collaborate over a long period of time (six months), with a big distance between us (1500 km) on a project that otherwise would have been impossible to realise.

AM

To answer this in more detail, I would like to refer briefly to the idea of the 1990's artistic media lab. To be honest, I'm not very fond of this particular type of media lab. It's one of the reasons we started the GOTO10 collective a few years ago. This 'anti-lab' was very focused on a DIY approach: we taught each other and organised things together. We wanted to avoid having a physical location and we were more interested in collaborating with specialised entities who were good at one thing. We didn't want to have the sort of wide spectrum of different activities and skills that most art media labs and organisations seem to offer. The risk of these 'conglomerates'

is that you lose the flexibility required for the creative process, whereas within an 'ecology' – a network of specialised organisations with small working groups – it's easier to break down the workflow and be creative with the collaboration. This is also how we regarded the sprints. It allowed us to work in a more distributed way. We could really combine and explore different ways of working remotely and be more focused in the time of the sprints. I really don't think that would have been possible in a more the more classical, traditional context of a media lab.

AD: How do you define the traditional media lab?

AM

For me the stereotypical media art lab is a space where artists who are not always sure of what they can do with media technology due to a lack of technical knowledge come to research and develop a project. Sometimes there is a rather clumsy iteration process between the artist and staff technicians until the point where they reach a 'product'. To emphasise the multidisciplinary aspect of the final creation, this 'product' is often labelled as an object that neither the artists nor the technicians could have come up with on their own. Unfortunately this rarely goes beyond stating the obvious, because the multidisciplinary aspect is impaired by the struggle of the artist to communicate her or his idea and the struggle of the technician to implement it, since they're not speaking the same language. So in the end although such media labs aim at encouraging multidisciplinary practices, they fail at providing an adequate structure, because of the rigid and over-managed environment that transforms them into small media art factories.

AP: Some labs still work in this way.

AM

Well, yes, I think this clichéd version of the media lab is still rather prevalent. But, it's important to mention that although what I'm describing is almost always the default process, it is also the responsibility of the artist to challenge such institutions and to integrate learning, research and collaboration properly in their proposal in order to go beyond the stereotype. From my experience, this kind of unusual approach is often welcomed.

AP: What then is the function of the media lab for you in this case? For example, what is the difference between working at Baltan or NIMk [[The Netherlands Media Art Institute](#)] and just being together in some random space for a week?

MdV

For me the benefit of working at Baltan and NIMk was that the spaces we were in weren't just random spaces. These spaces are dedicated to the kind of work we're doing. And they weren't just empty spaces: they came with a crew of people that helped the project enormously. We had meetings every two weeks throughout the project where we were given advice on documentation, fundraising, experts to contact, PR and much, much more. This has proven to be invaluable and has really benefited the project. The media lab functions as a centre of expertise and a hub in a local network. Baltan had, for instance, set up a test session with game design students from the Fontys University of Applied Sciences and the Eindhoven University of Technology. This provided us with a lot of useful feedback

that we could then integrate into the project right away.

DG

I've never really had the experience of working in that kind of classical media lab; to me they always seemed more traditional or academic. What's important to me in these residencies that you've set up is that they give us more focus. The presence of a physical location and an opportunity to meet different people who are doing other things, to meet, talk, discuss and possibly exchange is very important. For example, the act of having to give presentations during the residency, which at first might seem annoying, is actually very beneficial. It forces you to explain what you're doing, to reflect on the things that have been in your head, or that have come up between the three of us, and to make some sense of it again. After working on something the whole day, finally you realise that by rewording it, what you have just done is completely crystallising it in your own head. Questions like: why are you doing it, what are you doing it for, are all important things that you forget when you are developing something. At the same time, this process of sharing your ideas influences what you have been doing. For example, when you are forced to explain your project, things that looked incredibly important when you were doing them, for instance, debugging something, become much less important, because in the larger frame they matter less.

These kinds of presentation moments never occur when you're working in a 'normal' setting, at home or in these studio situations. Although people pass by, it's hard to discuss your work; at times these circumstances made me feel very

isolated. But in situations like Baltan and NIMk you present your work within a context and then people immediately understand what you are doing.

AP: So, in a way it also triggers knowledge sharing by default?

Dave

Yes, and it's also about receiving outside influence and ideas. People you maybe wouldn't expect suddenly come up with a very good idea.

AP: How does this relate to the sprint format?

AM

The sprint format involves several people, usually software developers and hackers, getting together for a short and very intensive working period. We started to use it in a more artistic context with the Puredyne project three years ago and it worked very well because it can build some kind of momentum in the development of a project. A sprint period is very hectic and a lot of work and discussion gets done. We don't sleep much and there's a lot of tension and excitement. The moments between the sprints are a time to reflect on what's been done. But we do not see that as an absolute productivity tool. The way we've been doing sprints is a lot like the coding parties that sprang up everywhere in the 1990s, with people coming along with their computers and doing stuff together. We definitely have a roadmap but it's also a way for us to connect in real life with other project members: to hack, drink and cook together, and discuss new ideas.

The first time I suggested using a format of this kind for a residency was for Naked on Pluto.

I think it worked very well, especially because there are a lot of subjective and conceptual aspects to the project. It's very useful to have a very intense working session followed by a calmer period when you can think and reflect more. You wouldn't get this in a traditional artist-in-residence situation, where you have to be present every day. For me the traditional situation works well at first, but after a while you get sidetracked and tired, and then there's the last-minute stress and panic at the end because there's never the opportunity to take distance – not just from the work but also from the place where you're working.

AP: What was the impact of doing the sprints in different locations?

AM

It was good because we received feedback from different people and angles. And we were influenced by the different environments. They each give you a completely different mindset: the city, the lights, the smells, everything. And it really pays off – a lot!

AD: Isn't it also rather distracting?

AM

No, I don't think so. It's very good.

DG

I agree, because it's very hard to work on anything else once you are in a certain specific space that you don't know that well. The 'new' environment is so present that it makes you forget everything else – like answering e-mails and so on.

AD: It's also found it very beneficial to have these sprints from an organisational point of view. I was hesitant at first, though, because it's more difficult to be in touch with the process. But I think that because you kept a blog, a Wiki and a Twitter account, I learned much more from the process and was much more involved in a way.

AM

Yes, I think those were peeks into the process. I don't think I've ever had that much interaction with residency facilitators when I was just in the building. In a way, being there less meant there was much more interaction.

AP: Maybe it also has to do with overcompensation for the short period of time you are actually present?

AM

Yes, but it's a positive compensation, because the sprint gives momentum and it becomes a very special time.

AP: So for you, the documentation of the process also became a method, a way of working together. Could you elaborate on that?

AM

We really saw the documentation as part of the working process, not something to do at the end, to document what you've done afterwards. And it paid off, because it forced us to take some distance. Just like giving presentations, it refocuses you and makes you look at your work with a different mindset. It becomes an opportunity to synthesise things more. It's much better than looking back at a creative process once every-

thing is finished, because over time you forget a lot of things, like why certain choices were made, for example.

DG

There is this famous programming technique, which assumes that every time you have to explain things to someone else, you find the mistakes by explaining the development. Although I feel like I haven't done enough documentation, what is important is that it needs to happen while a process or development is going on. Partly you need to record yourself, which is almost an interaction with the production. But it can serve a lot of purposes, it can generate an interest in the project – the tweets helped a lot in that sense. It also allows you to post a piece of code – even stupid code – that people can react to immediately. It kind of prevents this almighty release of something at the end with an official press release and so on, almost like revealing a secret you've been working on for a long time. The way we did it, it's out there in the open from the beginning. At the same time I think this is comparable to an academic or scientific way of working, where you have regular discussions with peers about the progress and various steps in a work's development.

IRMA FÖLDÉNYI (IF): How did you experience the difference between blogging and meeting people face to face?

DG

If someone walking past looks at my screen it almost feels like an interruption to me. It makes me feel forced to explain what I am doing. When I blog, though, I have to take time out and think

– I need to put words down and describe what's happening. It creates more of a distance and it's less of an unplanned interruption.

AM

Immediate audience feedback is more challenging, because you tend to get more responses to what you're saying. Blogging is quite passive, it can also seem as though you don't really care about people reading it. Presentations require the same type of break and mental state to prepare the material and try to communicate it.

AD: This reminds me of a discussion we had last year about the future of the lab here at Baltan. We discussed the possibility of an open lab where people could pass by and see what you're doing.

DG

I'd love that. I'd love to sit somewhere in a completely public space, like a train station full of commuters, and work on something visual or with audio, creating a situation where people can just come up and talk to you. We created a temporary lab in Ghent with FoAM. Instead of presenting an installation, we wanted to create a more organic thing. The first day we gradually put things in the space, adding more each day and building onto it, but we also starting taking it down again almost immediately. We were completely reconfiguring it all the time – while also giving talks and workshops.

AM

We did a similar sort of open lab with Marloes in Groningen in partnership with the Sign Gallery. Over the whole residency period people could come in at set times (to avoid interrupting more

focused periods for a project we were developing on site). We had the hardware and our installation running, and the idea was to engage with the local community of media artists, so they could just come in and chat, learn, teach or present projects to each other. We were trying to spark the same kind of self-organised, ad-hoc lab as GOTO10, which was going on at the time. We got a few nice visits but a lot of artists who came weren't quite sure what the purpose was or simply struggled to understand what we meant by 'learning and helping each other'. For example, someone would say, 'I'd like to make this installation with a cube flashing, how can I do it?'

We became more like a technical service centre for a few of them. And we were struggling to communicate the ideas of network and community because we were seeing people at different times of the day. This was a great experience for us for two reasons: first, it made us realise that the artistic media lab model, and the artist/technician dichotomy that I described earlier, is really hard-coded into the media art scene. But most importantly we understood that any challenge to this situation needs to come from the artists themselves. So to make it sustainable we actually should have planned for our lab to grow out of the needs of the local scene and their existing networks.

DG

Interestingly, the Open Lab in London did start off with that model. It was interesting because it started without a physical intervention. We would meet up wherever, and people would come along and we'd have a sort of workshop or offer technical help sometimes – and sometimes it would just be about drinking beer.

Aymeric Mansoux,
“(A lab...)
provides
a network that
you as an artist
can tap directly
into”

After we got a more permanent space it really changed, we became much more focused and really progressed a lot simply by having that space.

AD: I guess in that case you already had a sort of critical mass of people interested in doing things together, which is quite different from having an audience walking by on the street.

DG

Well, the Open Lab went through phases of acquiring people. I think it was less of a specific group while we didn't have a fixed place. People would pass by wherever we were and go away again. When we moved to a fixed space we had to change the set-up as well; in a way we had to redefine and attract new people.

AM

I think it's a good thing to have a community before creating a lab. It makes it easier find a direction. You can try to trigger a direction and although it might be a complete failure, you still

get the attention of many people who are already interested.

DG

One of the important things that we learned was that there was never any money for those involved or for setting up a lab. If there was a bit of money then it was self-funded. We would never charge fees in these places. Often as soon as money comes in it becomes complicated – hierarchies get formed, and so on. And it's quite nice not to have that.

AD: I can see that that would be different in most media labs, where there's often at least some money or funding available. But apart from the financial benefits, what's the benefit of the lab in the art context that we are all working in?

AM

It provides a network that you as an artist can tap directly into. This is necessary because most media art relies on networks.

MdV

Ideally a lab should also gather and build up knowledge and infrastructures that artists can tap into when visiting: anything from providing a well-oiled PR machine to setting up exchanges between artists and local universities, to finding locations to exhibit or present a project, to helping to find the right methods for documentation, and so on.

DG

Technology has often been the backbone for these sorts of projects, but that's fading away at the moment because people have easy access to



Dave Griffiths, Aymeric Mansoux and Marloes de Valk at Baltan Laboratories, 2010.
Photo: *Maarten Witteveen.*

all kinds of hardware and software. So now it's indeed more about the network, including in the physical sense – it's about a place and a way to meet people.

AD: So it's not so much about technology as about people who know what technology is about?

DG

Yes, and I think the problem with this kind of work is the amount of knowledge that you need, the

raw material. It's easy to become very specialised, and by stepping into other networks you prevent yourself from drowning in your own specialised world. You're forced to infect yourself with different sources of knowledge. I think that is the big advantage of working in a lab.

BIOGRAPHIESAYMERIC
MANSOUXDAVE
GRIFFITHSMARLOES
DE VALK

AYMERIC MANSOUX

Aymeric Mansoux (FR) is an artist, musician and media researcher. In 2003, he founded GOTO10 with Thomas Vriet, a non profit organization and artist collective, with the goal to promote the use and support of free software in electronic music and media art creation. Aymeric has been active in the collective until 2010 and initiated several projects such as: 'make art', a yearly international no nonsense festival for software artists using and writing free software; 'Puredyne', a popular live GNU/Linux distribution for media art and design and the 'FLOSS+Art publication', the first collection of essays on FLOSS and digital art production. Since 2009, he is core tutor and co-supervisor of study for the networked media branch of the Media Design and Communication Master of the Piet Zwart Institute in Rotterdam (NL). Aymeric is also a PhD student at the Centre for Cultural Studies, Goldsmiths, University of London, researching online art and design communities, free culture licenses and distributed collaboration.

MARLOES DE VALK

Marloes de Valk (NL) is a Dutch (software) artist. She studied Sound and Image at the Royal Conservatory in the Hague, specializing in abstract compositional computer games, HCI and crashing computers. Her work consists of installations and software, investigating machine theatre and narratives of digital processes. She is editor of the Digital Artists' Handbook and the publication FLOSS+Art, published early 2009.

DAVE GRIFFITHS

Dave was raised on an early education in weaving, bell ringing and 8bit computers, and is now a software artist and enthusiastic livecoding performer, where he attempts to make people dance to code and chaotic ambient acid gabba in a livecoding band called slub. His background is in computer graphics and R&D (past employers Moving Picture Company London and Sony Computer Entertainment). Dave is now a full time free software developer based in Helsinki, Finland, publishing all code he writes under the GPL licence and working for FoAM, an independant art and research group.

Curator:
[Olga Goriunova](#)

Production:
[aaaan.net](#)

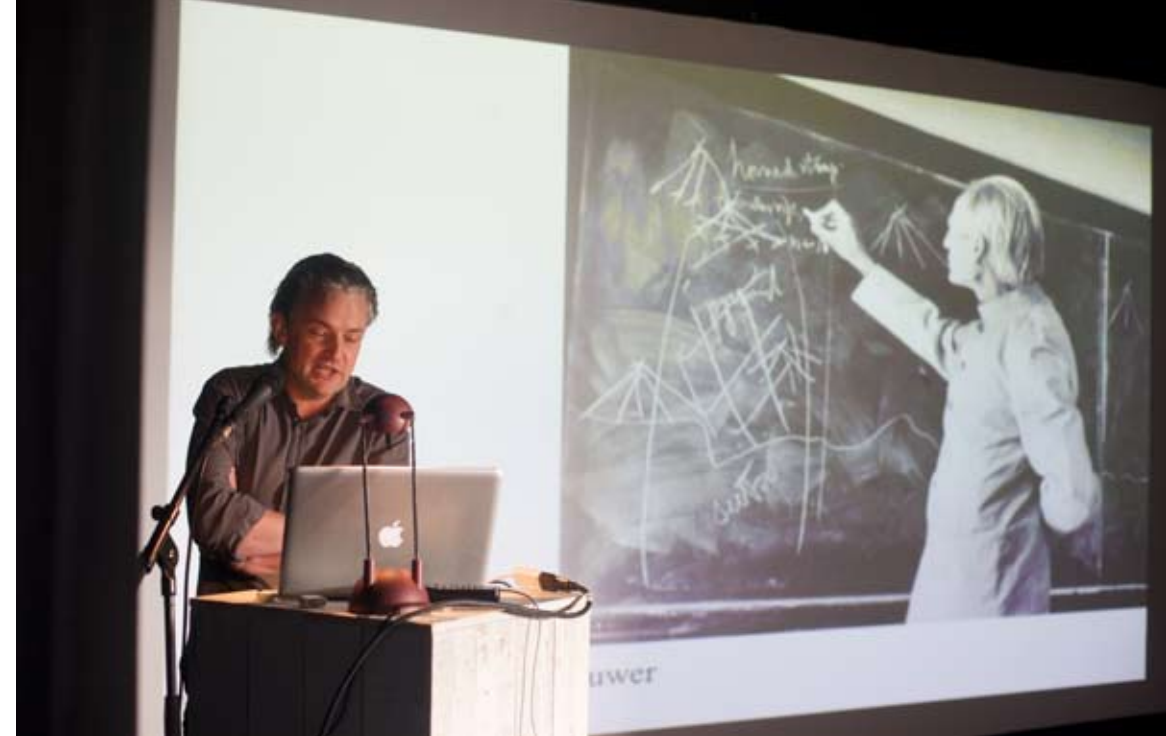
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FUNWARE SYMPOSIUM

Contrary to the belief that software is a very serious issue, a battlefield of big business interest and freedom fighters, and a field guided by rationality and formalisation, it is actually an area of practice and thinking that often advances through random acts, absurd use, jokes and curiosity.

International speakers will argue that art, and in particular software art, can play a crucial role in the production of the world, undermining the seeming solidity of the infrastructural backbone of our society and opening it up for intervention and reinvention. The symposium will also explore the issue of fun and the potential of the humour in software art. What is humour after all? Is it in fact an artistic and critical attitude to reality?



[Matthew Fuller](#), [Funware symposium](#) at [Baltan Laboratories](#), 2010.



[Andrew Goffey](#) and [Olga Goriunova](#), [Funware symposium](#) at [Baltan Laboratories](#), 2010.

“The title of Murtaugh’s talk ‘Do (Not) Repeat Yourself’ refers to the idea that almost all programmers hate duplication because it “can lead to maintenance nightmares, poor factoring, and logical contradictions.

Thus, it is strongly advised to avoid duplication and repetition which is echoed in the DRY (Don’t Repeat Yourself) principle which states that ‘Every piece of knowledge must have a single, unambiguous, authoritative representation within a system.’”

Report by Anne Helmond posted on the Baltan Laboratories blog on December 2, 2010.



Michael Murtaugh, *Funware symposium* at Baltan Laboratories, 2010.

SPEAKERS

WENDY
CHUN



ANDREW
LISON

‘So Fun It’s Not...’ —

Wendy Chun is Professor of Modern Culture and Media at Brown University. She has studied both Systems Design Engineering and English Literature, which she combines and mutates in her current work on digital media. She is author of *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (MIT, 2006), *Programmed Visions: Software and Memory* (forthcoming MIT 2010), and she is currently working on a monograph entitled *Imagined Networks*. Most generally, her scholarly work investigates the relationship between cultural formations and technological artifacts, between theoretical concepts in the humanistic and technological disciplines, and between popular perceptions of technology and technological protocols. Situated mainly in the field of new media studies, her larger projects have been driven by questions such as: What is the impact of control technologies on mass media? What made the Internet, a communications network that had existed for years, a “new” or “exceptional” medium in the mid-1990s? How does the concept of “memory” cut across computational, biological and humanistic fields?

Andrew Lison is an Andrew W. Mellon Graduate Fellow in Modern Culture and Media at Brown University. His work is situated around the intersection of technology, aesthetics, and politics, with an emphasis on digital media, popular music and subcultures, and avant-garde cinema. His articles include, “Postmodern Protest? Minimal Techno and Multitude.” Forthcoming in Timothy S. Brown and Lorena Anton, eds., *Between the Avant Garde and the Everyday: Subversive Politics in Europe 1958-2008*. Series on Social Protest and Cultures of Dissent in the 20th Century (2010, Berghahn Books). He is currently co-editing a collected volume with Timothy S. Brown entitled “Sounds and Visions: Music, Counterculture and the Global 1968.

MATTHEW
FULLER

‘Always One Bit More, Computing and the Experience of Ambiguity’

Matthew Fuller is David Gee Reader in Digital Media at the Centre for Cultural Studies, Goldsmiths College, University of London. He is the author of various books, including *Media Ecologies: Materialist Energies in Art and Technoculture* (MIT Press, 2005) and *Behind the Blip: Essays on the Culture of Software* (Autonomedia, 2003) and the forthcoming *Elephant & Castle*. With Usman Haque, he is co-author of *Urban Versioning System v1.0* and with Andrew Goffey, co-author of the forthcoming *Evil Media*. Editor of *Software Studies*, a lexicon (MIT Press, 2008), and co-editor of the new *Software Studies* series from MIT Press. Fuller is also involved in a number of projects in art, media and software, among others with: I/O/D, Mongrel, Mediashed and Runme.org.

ANDREW
GOFFEY

‘A Little Play, a Little Humour: Escaping From the Unreasonable Exactness of Algorithms’ —

Andrew Goffey is Senior Lecturer in Media, Culture and Communications at Middlesex University. He writes about issues crossing the domains of philosophy, science and culture. He is the co-author (with Matthew Fuller) of *Evil Media* (forthcoming) and is currently working on a monograph on the politics of software. He has published essays on a range of topics, including immunology and sophistry, and has also translated work by Eric Alliez, Barbara Cassin and Isabelle Stengers.

“Software is fun in the same way as exploring the Amazon rainforest is fun. It’s exciting, you hope to discover something and you take the bugs for granted. Bugs serve a purpose, for example mosquitoes keep us humans out. The bugs serve as a deforestation prevention. In the computer the bug is a good thing, if you would code and it would just work programmers would be able to do bad things.”

- From a report on Wilfried Hou Je Bek’s presentation at the Funware symposium. Posted on the Baltan blog on Jan. 10, 2011 by Anne Helmond.

OLGA GORIUNOVA

‘Fun and Software’ —

Olga Goriunova is a Senior Lecturer in Media Practice at London Metropolitan University, where she is Programme Leader for the BA “Digital Media” in the Department of Applied Social Sciences. She has been involved in the field of software art, organizing a series of festivals, conferences and online projects that profoundly contributed to the shaping of the field. Dr. Goriunova has edited four volumes on software art and cultures related to the Runme.org repository and Readme Festivals, such as Software art plays (ROSIZO, Moscow, 2002), Readme Reader. About Software Art (NIFCA Publication 25, Helsinki, 2003), Readme Edition 2004. Software Art and Cultures (University of Aarhus, Aarhus, 2004), Readme 100 Temporary Software Art Factory (Hartware MedienKunstVerein, Dortmund, 2006). She is an author of Art Platforms and Cultural Production on the Internet (Routledge, 2011) and the curator of Funware exhibition (Arnolfini, Bristol, UK September–November 2010; MU and Baltan, Eindhoven, The Netherlands, November 2010–January 2011 and Hartware MedienKunstVerein, spring 2011).

WILFRED HOU JE BEK

‘Software Is Fun & Programmers Are Clowns’ —

Wilfried Hou Je Bek uses algorithms to design psycho-geographic walks through cities and other areas. The geographic and psychological output is visualized with the help of simple software. Wilfried is a ‘culture hacker’ who develops generative psychogeography. Inspired by concepts of drift (dérive) from Romanticism and, later, the Situationists around Guy Debord, Wilfried uses algorithmic routes to explore a city in non-intuitive ways. Houkebek organizes dérives, where people walk through a city by taking computer code as a guideline, using the body as a means to perform software. Recent commissions include work for the city of Dordrecht, Psy Geo Conflux (New York), the PixelACHEfestival (Helsinki), RAM5 (Riga), Urban Festival (Zagreb), Urban Drift (Berlin), Impakt (Utrecht), Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam), V2_ (Rotterdam). In 2004 he won the Transmediale software art prize for .walk, a futuristic project for open space that transforms cities into computers.

MICHAEL MURTAUGH

‘Do (Not) Repeat Yourself’ —

Michael Murtaugh is instructor for the technical course of the Networked Media Master of the Piet Zwart Institute in Rotterdam. He completed his undergraduate degree in Computer Science and Electrical Engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1994). And was part of the Interactive Cinema group, led by Glorianna Davenport at the MIT Media Lab where he received his masters degree (1996). His media lab research focused on designing systems that guide viewers through collections of inter-related material. Applied to a specific story’s content, these “storytelling systems” act as “editors in software,” making sequencing decisions on the fly based on viewer preferences or activity. In addition to teaching, Murtaugh writes occasionally on the topic of software and he is also a member of the Brussels collective Constant.

“Source code is doing as it says as the computer programmer is a creator of universes. Programming cannot know the final path of its program. Chun describes hackers as compulsive gamblers. Both hackers and gamblers entail megalomania and do it for a pleasurable drive of reassurance. Programmers strive for power instead of truth: knowledge is never enough because bugs always appear.”

ww- From a report by Anne Helmond on Wendy Chun and Andrew Lison’s presentation at the Funware symposium. Posted on the Baltan blog on Dec. 2, 2010.

SIMON YUILL

‘Bend Sinister: Détournement and Normative Effect in Notational Production’ —

Simon Yuill is an artist and programmer based in Glasgow, Scotland. His work explores aspects of social process and formation in projects, which draw on a variety of approaches ranging from those of Free Open Source Software and hacker culture, to public workshops and discussion events. He has written on aspects of Free Software, ‘notational production’ and cultural praxis and has contributed to publications such as Software Studies (MIT Press, 2008), the FLOSS and Art Reader (GOTO10 and Folly, 2008) and MUTE magazine. He is project director of Spring_Alpha (2004) and Social Versioning System (SVS) projects. He has helped setup and run a number of hacklab and free media labs in Scotland including the Chateau Institute of Technology (ChIT) and Electron Club, as well as the Glasgow branch of OpenLab. His current projects are focused around relationships between land, law and social structures.