

NETescopio

NETescopio is an online archive, developed by the MEIAC since 2008, designed to preserve works of art generated for the web. The museum's server functions as a back-up and stores mirror copies of net art works which are online on their creators' sites and also of those which, for different reasons, are no longer available. Thus, the MEIAC is positioned as the first museum in the world to generate a file with these characteristics, and is moving ahead with a view to expand its activities beyond its physical space.

This selection of works, all belonging to the NETescopio archive, emerged from a reflection on the processes that led artists to their development, rather than from an analysis of the formal characteristics of the works. Far from making an apology of the new medium per se, the artists confront the concept of technology as entertainment and the social stereotypes and routines that the new medium promotes as something that is habitually used in society, examining the boundaries between public and private, the notion of authorship and copyright. This traveling exhibition is presented as a "mobile lab" that seeks to redefine online art practices and to imagine their future.

0100101110101101.org Eva y Franco Mattes // Ivan Abreu // Amy Alexander // Marcelli Antúnez // Kim Asendorf // Gazira Babeli // Lucas Bambozzi // Ryan Barone // Giselle Beiguelman // Amy Berk // Luther Blissett // Natalie Bookchin // José Luis Brea // Christophe Bruno // Maite Cajaraville // Martin John Callanan // Young-Hae Chang // Azahara Cerezo // Paolo Cirio // Arcángel Constantini // Vuk Cosic // Andy Cox // Critical Art Ensemble // Minerva Cuevas // Santiago Echeverry // Vadim Epstein // Evru // Fiambrera Obrera // Gonzalo Frasca // Belén Gache // Daniel García Andujar // Dora García // Emilio Gomariz // Ethan Ham // Robin Hewlett // Steev Hise // Ricardo Iglesias // Daniel Jacoby // Sergi Jordá // Scott Kildall // Ben Kinsley // Joan Leandre // Les Liens Invisibles // Olia Lialina // Fernando Llanos // Rogelio López Cuenca // Iván Lozano // Alessandro Ludovico // Peter Luining // Brian Mackern // Miltos Manetas // Rafael Marchetti // Iván Marino // Antonio Mendoza // Ricardo Miranda Zúñiga // Antoni Muntadas // Mark Napier // Eduardo Navas // Santiago Ortiz // Christian Oyarzún // Paolo Pedercini // Raquel Rennó // Ricardo Barreto y Paula Perissinotto // Benjamin Rosenbaum // Santo_file Marco Bellonzi y David Cassacuberta // Mario Santamaría // Mark Shepard // Alexei Shulgin // Mark Skwarek // Darren Solomon // Stanza // Nathaniel Stern // Igor Stromajer // Taller d'Intangibles Jaume Ferrer y David Gómez // Philipp W. Teister // The Electronic Disturbance Theater // The Yes Men // Thomson & Craighead // Eugenio Tisselli // Übermorgen // Sander Veenhof // Angie Waller //

Colophon

This publication is edited in conjunction with the exhibition *Look into the Net. NET.ARTOGRAPHY*

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Look into the Net NET.ARTOGRAPHY

Organized by Acción Cultural Española (AC/E), the Museo Extremeño e Iberoamericano de Arte Contemporáneo (MEIAC) and the Edith-Russ-Haus, and curated by Gustavo Romano, this travelling exhibition meets the challenge of showing artistic practices on the Internet, and not solely immaterial, interactive and variable art works, but having recourse as well to multiple strategies of documentation, contextualization, reflection, and discussion.

"Blick ins Netz. NETartographie" is the progeny of the NETescopio Project (<http://netescopio.meiac.es/>), which the MEIAC launched in 2008. The choice of works and their arrangement are based on the three working lines or production strategies used since it began to show art on the Internet nearly 20 years ago:

Desmontajes (2008), encompassing online productions from the early years of the Internet;

Re/appropiaciones (2009), sampling or remixing of symbolic materials;

and *Intrusiones* (2011), interventions in common spaces such as Wikipedia or Google Maps.

With more than 70 artists from all over the world, the initiative features a large number of Spanish and Latin American artists who, quite possibly because of language barriers, are not yet well-known beyond their home cultural territories. In a context that we might dub "cyber-geographic", Spanish-speaking web art now has the chance to draw new cultural borders and establish new flows of information, generating new relational architectures.

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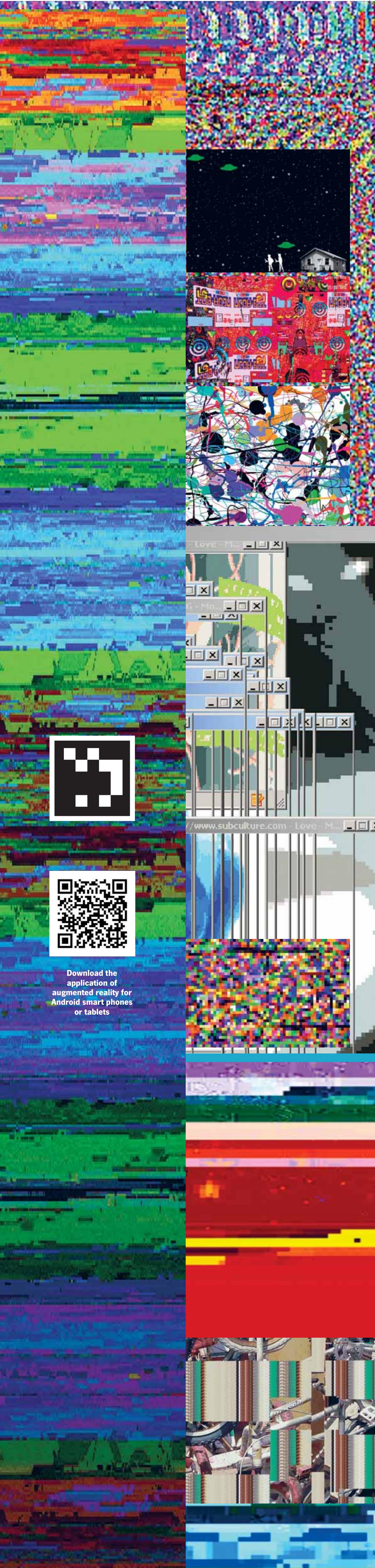


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BOTSCHAFT VON SPANIEN



DISASSEMBLING

As an initial phase of the NETescopio project, for this exhibition the focus has been placed on productions which came about during the early years of the web. Works which experimented, for the first time, with the medium and which played with its particularities in terms of interactivity, the use of interfaces or alternative browsers, the tactical use of the media, and other strategies which gradually defined the lines of activity conducted during the first years of art on the web.

From a 1.0 web of static and closed content, we have evolved to what Dale Dougherty would call the Web 2.0, with a hierarchy involving interaction and the creation of social networks, transcending the mere publication of contents for supposedly passive consumption. Under this new web paradigm, we are witnessing the appearance of another model: Net Art 2.0.

Perhaps it is time, then, to review those first works, which with a greater radicalism and with a focus on experimentation and the deconstruction of the medium, began to define those explorations which today are taken up again within a new context of production and distribution.



RE/ APPROPRIATIONS

This exhibit focuses on a recurrent practice in artistic productions on the web: the re-appropriation and reuse of symbolic materials. Unlike other technological media, digital media makes possible not just reproduction, but manipulation as well. Instead of invariability, it offers perpetual mutation. Rather than copying, remixing.

This has introduced a series of reflections not only regarding the notion of originals and copies – concepts whose meaning fades in the digital realm - but also regarding ideas such as authorship, possession and collecting. The artist's role on the web will no longer be that of a creator, but rather that of a "redirector" of information.

Disassembling INTERFACES

Code, Hacking, Navigation, Browser, User, Resistance, Content, Container, HTML, Serendipity, URL, Remix.

The advent of new technologies led to a considerable improvement in the field of communications. Their contribution, among other things, involved, and continues to involve, the guaranteed transmission of messages with the least expenditure possible, with better and wider diffusion, and with the lowest level of error in their reception.

The symbolic productions which art generates, rather than seeking the message's clarity, actually favour its opacity. In the communication system, art functions like noise. As Deleuze would say, "art doesn't communicate, it resists." Artistic production generates a space of reflection which does not seek truths, but instead sabotages language, its structure and its signs.

The different works which make up this selection adopt a viral behaviour which will be reflected in very different ways, while highlighting the clash between art and communication. The less clear the message is, the richer the works are in their meanings, and the greater the effort necessary by viewers to recodify them.

Disassembling STEREOTYPES

Camouflage, Transvestism, Media Icons, Recycling, Waste, Market, Panic, Identities, Digital Kitsch, Antiheros, Paranoia, Invasion, Tourism.

The greatest product which consumer society sells is the comfort arising from belonging to it. What matters is not the product, but how it is sold. Or, in any case, both product and sale form part of the same alluring phenomenon of seduction.

The Internet reverts the power relationship promoted by the one-directional nature of traditional media. Though not without hurdles, information begins to circulate independently of the market's advertising rules and its logic.

Through different methods, such as humour, disorder, mimicry, parody or camouflage, the pieces which make up this selection challenge the stereotypes of propaganda, understood as social, political, military or mercantile propaganda.

The process which manufactures heroes and villains in the area of the social conflicts which this propaganda attempts to impose, begins to fracture and fall apart. A system of cultural recycling is set in motion, as a catalyst for social remixing, with attitudes of transvestism, fury, disregard and impertinence.

Disassembling NARRATIONS

Non-linear, Machine, Toy, Software, Rewriting, Electronic Poetry, Author-Reader, Cannibalism, Text Processor, Labyrinth, Avatar.

The Internet is fundamentally a network made up of a collection of texts. But in this context the convention of the printed word, which is definitive and unalterable, has given way to another convention – fragile, mutable and unfinished – with an exponential capacity for expansion, dissemination and replication by reader-writers located throughout the web. This rupture of the linearity of narration is linked to other ruptures, such as that of History, the truth and the author as an omniscient narrator, all of which give rise to fragmented texts, to reading as an act of decoding, to machine-poets programmed to recite words, to the toy book and the loss of the reader-author.

Avatars, fantastic heroes, graphic adventures, virtual toys, puzzles, board games and rattles are just some of the examples which we will find in this selection of works which, like a koan, will question whether we are pieces or players. Who moves who? Who reads and who is read?

Disassembling DAILY LIFE

Technology, Self-management, Corporation, Control, Intervention, Public Space, Sabotage, Interference, Appropriation, Loss, Routine, Radiofrequency.

Certain projects on the web can be best appreciated if we understand them not as works, but as acts of participation. It's about participation in a new public space, the Internet, a place of exchange, of meetings, a sphere for personal and commercial transactions. But like all participation in a public space, the action can be camouflaged in its surroundings and the nature of artistic projects can be overlooked.

It almost seems like at the very moment in which the word "art" appears, participation is unmasked, and loses all of its danger, its edge. Fiction should meld, blending itself into reality in order to maintain its intensity and thus be able to subvert it.

In this section we will find proposals which undertake a deconstruction of daily reality, of social order, of individual routine and of the spaces occupied by protocols of personal interaction and exchange. All of this will be conveyed through irony and the appropriation of corporate strategies, or rather, by sliding into and participating in the interstitial space of interpersonal communications or relationships, taking advantage of noise, surprise and perplexity.

Disassembling THE SYSTEM OF ART

Work, Market, Original, Copy, Bits, Diffusion, Reuse, Virulence, FTP, Ephemerality, Collection, Bubble, Reification.

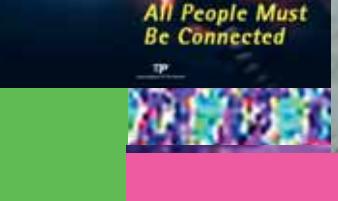
The appearance of new technological devices and the phenomenon of reproducibility have not only transformed art, but also our daily routine and our way of perceiving the world. In the works in this section, and also underlying the whole project of web art, some of the following questions are raised:

How does the market respond to the absence of goods? How does one collect a series of bits in constant flux, always appearing and disappearing?

Can we call artists programmers who showcase their skill in the use of software applied to the absurd? Or those who deceive with cheap JavaScript tricks? Or with graphics retrieved from the browser's cache? Or those who spread viruses on the web?

Has the digital recovered its "aura" through the singularity of the URL, that is, the domain name of Internet sites, which are unique and unrepeatable? Will this be what an art gallery can sell?

After nearly twenty years of productions on the web, these questions remain relevant.



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RE/MIXES

Remix, Recombination, Patchwork, Recycling, Rewriting, Montage, Recomposition.

The recombination of materials is a practice which in the visual arts has traditionally been associated with the collage, especially with regard to fixed images, painting or photography. In regards to the digital realm, however, upon including the temporal element, this practice is much more linked to the notion of cinematographic montage as pioneered by Sergei Eisenstein.

If the general public's channel-surfing has led to a kind of experimental montage creation, thanks to the power of the remote control, the television screen has now exploded, offering multiple viewing possibilities. Today, screens connect us via the Internet to infinite contents which are remote and distant from each other, not only spatially but in terms of meaning, generating with each click that "dialectic collision" of which Eisenstein spoke, now in potentially infinite directions.

RE/INTERPRETATIONS

Cover, Reenactment, Date, Reinterpretation, Free Version, Remake, Copyright.

Unlike remixes in which materials are taken independently from the narratives containing them, there are a few works which are based on the creative work of other artists and which respect their organization in the same way that a musician reads and plays sheet music. While in music or in cinema this practice is not only standard but an actual tradition, it is not as established in the area of the visual arts. Remakes, covers, free versions or even karaoke are somewhat distant concepts which are associated with and introduced from other disciplines.

Various concepts enter into play here, such as authorship, original ideas and closed works. There are also various strategies used by certain artists in order to generate a "crisis" around these concepts in the digital realm.

RE/ENGINEERING

Reappropriation, Distortion, Reengineering, Disassembly, Deviation, Reformulation, "Hacktivism", Reassignment of meaning.

Though all remixing involves a change in meaning with respect to the original work there are certain works which wage decided attacks on the ideas conveyed by the originals. We will, thus, find works undertaking these attacks with tactics like sabotage or distortion.

There are also other tactics comparable to certain living beings' survival mechanisms. The ability to camouflage themselves in their environment, for example, has been developed by species such as the chameleon and some butterflies to keep from being seen by both their prey and predators. We can also compare them to the ploy used by a legendary wooden animal: the Trojan Horse. The well-known online version of this tactic, Trojan Horses, have surpassed viruses as a threat, mainly thanks to their ability to enter our systems by hiding inside other programs. Like viruses or memes, which are reproduced through a human carrier used as a vehicle, certain arguments are patiently kept out of sight, only subsequently exploited to achieve maximum "infection" levels.

RE/COLLECTIONS

Cache, Involuntary Collections, Serendipity, Object Trouvé, Wunderkammer, Clip Art.

Towards the end of the past century a new "continent" was added to those already known. A continent made of nothing but information, and which is in constant flux. The metaphor for the Internet is that of an endless sea in which the user is like a sailor who uses bookmarks as anchors in an attempt to grant some kind of ephemeral structure to a universe with no land in sight and no stars to guide him.

This sense of randomness will be essential to our experience as travellers, an eternal act of serendipity which will take us from port to port, making us gradually forget the destination towards which we set out.

To our surprise, these accidental encounters will have unexpected results, as vestiges of our days are stored in our computer's cache.

The authors of this section's works will salvage these vestiges, these unintended information collisions, crafting unforeseen associations, circumstantial "bays" and unanticipated "lighthouses" to aid us before we continue our aimless voyage.

RE/CIRCULATIONS

Exquisite cadaver, Cooperation, Joint Authorship, Simultaneity, Recirculation, Negotiation, Copyleft, Wiki.

Information recirculation and joint authorship are not new concepts but on the Internet they have found the ideal platform in which to function. The Web's immediacy and its power to go around the world in seconds have allowed humanity to become connected at lightning speed.

In the field of art we have gone from taking turns, with exquisite cadavers for example, to the kind of instant negotiation, discussion and collaboration permitted by a "wiki."

We can define networking as the promotion of social nexuses and the creation of two-way communication tools made possible by the latest technologies. From this perspective we see that not all net art falls into this category, but rather only those works in which art ceases to be an "object" (albeit a virtual one) made by "artists" and instead becomes a kind of platform, a space, a meaning machine with parts being added constantly, depending upon the participation which it attracts.

INTRUSIONS

This third stage is focused on proposals consisting of an artistic intervention using a new public space: the Internet.

It includes projects that intervene in shared-use spaces, such as Wikipedia and Google Maps, those which parody or subvert private-use pages, and those which stealthily infiltrate users' computers and corporate IT systems.

There are also instances of individual proposals where artists play the role of spies, intruders and solitary flaneurs, as well as group projects executed by artistic collectives and productions, and which require the mass participation of viewers.

Web 2.0, Public Space, Vigilance, Flaneur, Cartographies, Hacktivism, Drift, Cyber-demonstration, Cooperation, Espionage, Glocal, Augmented Reality, Objective Randomness.

Intruders IN 2.0 PLATFORMS

Actionism, Isolation, Cartographies, Drift, Dystopias, Public Space, Metaverses, Social Networks, Virtual Relationships, Vigilance, Web 2.0

The Internet –and the web in particular– has evolved at a frenzied pace since its origins, and it has gradually shed the legacy of traditional audiovisual media, especially with regard to the emitter-receiver paradigm, which became unsustainable in a network based on a horizontal and rhizomatic structure.

These new environments and platforms, which have gone so far as to change the Web's name, pushing it toward the new stage known as 2.0 –Facebook, Twitter, Wikipedia, YouTube and even Second Life, have emerged as our new metropolis and housing developments, our new marketplaces, public squares and coliseums, where we carry out all kinds of exchanges and interactions: business, friendships, conflicts, and revolutions.

The works presented in this section make use of these platforms from a range of perspectives and with a range of purposes. Some of the proposals follow in the tradition of performance art and urban interventions, conveying them to digital environments, while others highlight the new customs and consequences of this new virtual social life, or explore notions such as isolation and virtual relationships and their specific netiquette.

Intruders IN THE PUBLIC SPACE

Actionism, Cartography, Control, Drift, Public spaces, Happening, Intervention, Sound Landscape, Psychogeography, Augmented Reality, Bait.

One of the more salient features of the so-called mobile technologies is the possibility of hybridizing the experience in "real" space with geo-localized and personalized digital information. The mobile network offers us real-time access to synchrony and allows for the speedy interaction with real elements around us.

The projects collected in this section will make use of the benefits of this hybrid reality while at the same time reflecting on its dangers and limitations. In a hyperlabelled world where no uncategorized or unlegislated areas remain, where there is no spot without coordinates, the artist offers us a shield of noise and futility against the technological reterritorialisation of the public space and the idea of efficiency.

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Intruders VIRTUAL INTRUDERS

Change, Collaboration, Cover, Drift, Stereotypes, Strategies, Gender, Inclusion, Narrative, Participation, Soundtoy, Terror, Violence.

The artists who delve into the world of videogames tend to do so from a range of angles, but they always aim to do more than simply offer entertainment.

There are those who emphasize the making and structure of the game, those who hack into existing games or who use the development of the game as an opportunity to experiment with collective creation. Others encourage us to make decisions regarding issues we had not examined before, by putting us in unknown situations or environments.

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