ETERNAL SEPTEMBER

The Rise of Amateur Culture

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Various Authors
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MASTERS & SERVERS

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ETERNAL SEPTEMBER

the rise of amateur culture

Valentina Tanni

"Nothing like a little disaster for sorting things out."
— Michelangelo Antonioni, *Blow-Up*, 1966

"Suddenly, one day some little fat girl in Ohio is gonna be the new Mozart… and make a beautiful film with her father's little camera-corder, and for once this whole professionalism about movies will be destroyed, forever, and it will really become an art form."
— Francis Ford Coppola, 1991

1. The End of Professionalism (As We Know It)

The expression "Eternal September" was coined by Dave Fischer in a comment sent to the Usenet group alt.folklore.computers in 1994: "September 1993 will go down in net.history as the September that never ended". [1]

1993 was the year in which big providers such as AOL (America Online) began offering Usenet access to all their customers. Before then most users were university students: a population that grew a little every year in September when the new intake of freshmen accessed the net for the first time. Every time another set of newbies joined the network, the community had to cope with their "net illiteracy" and general lack of netiquette; their behavior was in fact considered annoying and potentially dangerous for the quality of content and discussion.

After 1993, this influx of new users became permanent, and the "Eternal September" is still ongoing today, at an exponential rate. Internet access, now global, is constantly growing, despite the well known "digital divide" issues.

A phenomenon that has gone from being a tidal wave to an unstoppable tsunami has given rise to an enormous cultural shift.

The ultimate consequence of this scenario is also its most radical: the challenge to "professionalism", something that has been predicted by many observers since the Seventies. Gene Youngblood, for example, wrote about it in the 1982 Siggraph's catalogue:

> **"One consequence of all this will be a loss of distinction between who's a professional and who's an amateur insofar as that's determinated by the tools to which we have access. No motivation is as pure, no achievement more dignified than that of the amateur who does it for love. [...] A tool is "mature" insofar as it's easy to use, accessible to everyone, offering high quality at low cost and characterized by a pluralistic rather than singular practice, serving a multitude of values. Professionalism is an archaic model that's fading in the twilight of the Industrial Age."** [2]

A similar stand was taken, fifteen years before, by Michael A. Noll, the famous electronic art pioneer, in his essay "The Digital Computer as a Creative Medium". In that work Noll stressed the central role of the computer in the process of "creativity dissemination":

> **"This type of participation in the creative and aesthetic experience can be experienced by**

artist and nonartist alike. [...] Conceivably, a form of 'citizen artist' could emerge. [...] The interactive aesthetic experience with computers might fill a substantial portion of that great leisure time predicted for the man of the future." [3]

2. Viral Systems

"I think that copyright is the worst thing for culture. If it's illegal to respond to the ideas that surround you in culture, and you're bombarded every minute of the day with some kind of iconography or sound or some sort of mass-media sludge... Well, it should be illegal not to respond."

— Mike Kelley, 2002

"Interactivity. Many-to-many communications. Pervasive networking. These are cumbersome new terms for elements in our lives so fundamental that, before we lost them, we didn't even know to have names for them."

— Douglas Adams, 1999

Another fundamental feature of the emerging cultural scenario is the speed that characterizes the production and distribution of creative content. This hectic and unstoppable circulation of ideas and digital artifacts has prompted many critics and journalists to use terms borrowed from biology jargon: viral contents, mind viruses, contagious media. Some also refer to a controversial scientific theory, which emerged in the Seventies in the context of the genetic research boom: the so called "memetics". This theory postulates the existence of "memes", units of human cultural transmission similar to genes, arguing that replication also happens in culture, albeit in a different sense. A meme is a unit of information residing in the brain and is the mutating replicator in human cultural evolution. The meme, a term coined

by Richard Dawkins in his book *The Selfish Gene* (1969), and also used by Susan Blackmore in *The Meme Machine* (1999), is described as a "mind virus", a cultural element capable of replicating itself and taking root in our collective consciousness:

> **"Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body via sperms or eggs, so memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation."** [4]

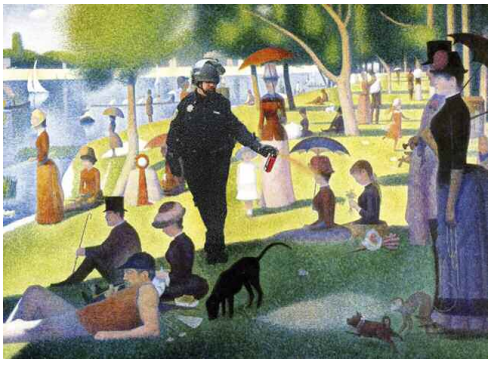
In a fast and liquid environment such as the Internet, in which any content — images, sounds, texts — can be edited in real time (by launching a program on one's personal computer) and fed back into the communication circuit (sending an email, publishing a web page or updating a social media status), the *metamorphic* nature of any cultural product increases exponentially.

The spreading process of content is extremely rapid and this feature is made possible by new technical and cultural conditions: the availability of production and distribution tools and the rise of so-called "Do It Yourself (DIY) culture". Chris Anderson, *Wired*'s former editor-in-chief and author of *The Long Tail*, an important essay on digital economics, describes this new kind of environment as a "massively parallel culture". [5]

In an era like the present one, in which image production is so advanced and refined that it can

easily be viewed as a scientific matter, the amateur look and feel of many contemporary cultural

products also seems to offer a proof of authenticity, passion and enthusiasm. This attitude is reminiscent of what happened in the early Twentieth Century, when the simplicity and spontaneity of archaic and exotic artifacts was seen as an antidote to the ennui of Western culture, viewed as decadent and artificial. Today "primitivism" rhymes with "amateurism". Non-professional cultural expressions, characterized by a low resolution, sometimes not even supported by editing and retouching, glitched, inappropriate or crude, are felt to be more "authentic". This trend, which underpins the success of that modern classic, the reality show, has taken root in all fields (film, television, publishing, art, music) and is intertwined with the emergence of a global context in which users are no longer passive recipients, but play an active role in a non-stop two-way exchange. Art images are no exception to this scenario. On the internet, they don't have any special status: they are just files among files, and circulate freely from website to website, blog to blog, facebook wall to facebook wall.



And more often than not, they circulate without any kind of credit or caption. After the "ready made revolution", modern art began to rely heavily on context to be recognized and understood. How do you

distinguish an ordinary object from a work of art, when works of art look like ordinary objects? Up till recently, context gave us a helping hand: we saw art images in museums and galleries, with captions, or in art books and magazines. Today, context for images is largely absent. The same thing also happens with quotes and any other kinds of information.

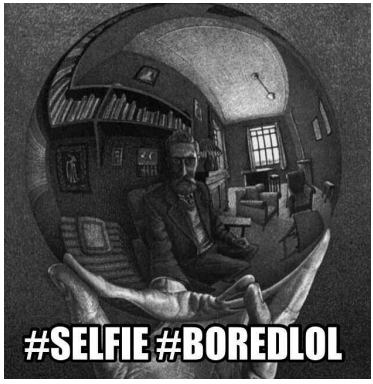
In addition to this, today people don't just "receive" content, they use it. Walter Benjamin famously said that mechanical reproducibility killed the "cultual" value of the artwork and replaced it with an "exhibition" value. Every day, people are doing what art used to do with all sorts of found material: they download images, modify them and then upload them again, resulting in a radical change of meaning. Art has turned into a victim of its very own practices: appropriation, détournement, clashhes of high and low-brow content, remixes, context switching.

3. Brace Yourselves, the Amateur Is Coming

> "Every professional performer always does the same thing at exactly the same moment in every show they do. What I like are things that are different every time. That's why I like amateurs. You can never tell what they'll do next."
>
> — Andy Warhol, 1977

Eternal September **presents a wide range of artworks, spanning almost all artistic media: paintings, photographs, videos, software art, installations, performances and web based projects. The show intentionally mixes professional artists with**

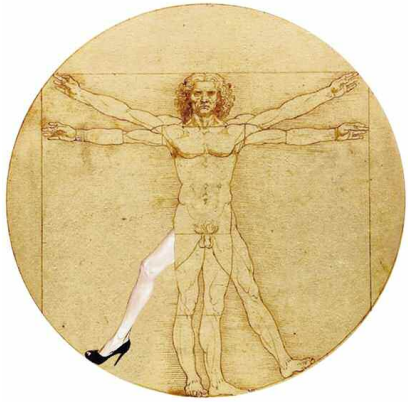
"non professional" ones, comparing images, aesthetics and languages. A great number of contemporary artists, in fact, actively and fearlessly tackle this new scenario in which the boundaries between professional art making and amateur products are increasingly blurred. On the other hand, there are countless examples of creative content that is made and shared every day by ordinary people on the Internet. In order to try and understand this new situation we also have to acknowledge that the traditional definition of "amateur" is changing too, especially in the contemporary art field. Thanks to access to information and the consequent spread of a new culture of self-learning, amateurs are often just as skilled as trained professionals – thus becoming what has been termed "pro-am"; moreover, sometimes the very notion of "skill" is hard to pin down. As John Roberts, author of the seminal essay *The Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art after the Readymade* (2007), writes in the catalogue of the exhibition "Amateurs", held at the CCA Wattis Institute of Contemporary Arts in San Francisco in 2008:



"In a post-readymade art world, where the advanced technical relations of art are available to everyone irrespective of their professional schooling, pretty much anyone can produce art that looks like advanced art. [...] In the digital world, professional skills and amateur or nonartist-artist skills have become operationally interchangeable." [6]

So what is it that defines an amateur artist and how can we tell them apart from professionals today? If skills are not a valid parameter, and neither are other factors like money (not every professional artist, especially at the beginning of his career, makes a living out of his work) or passion (too elusive and ambiguous), how can we decide between the two categories? There is only one possible answer left: the acknowledgement and support of the art world, together with the artist's conscious intention to pursue art as a proper career. But this conclusion is an unsatisfactory, frustrating one. If the real difference does not lie in the artwork itself, or in a specific ability of the person who creates it, is categorization still relevant? And who has interests in preserving it, except the art elite and of course the market? The arguments of the skeptics are well summarized in this quote from Alvin Toffler's *The Culture Consumers* (1964):

> **"The attack on amateurism, like the direct attack on the culture consumer, is based less on fact than on fear. Cultivated art lovers of long standing, treasuring their seniority like old-time members of the plumber's union, fear the arrival of the newcomer. They are told that they are an elite and that the elite is now threatened. They lash out, always careful to announce as their purpose not the retention of status or privilege, but the defense of excellence."** [7]



Our definition of art is once again changing radically, challenging both artists and viewers, two groups that are increasingly mutable and interconnected. *Eternal September* is an attempt to acknowledge the revolution that is subverting today's visual culture, a colorful, messy eruption that is rapidly sweeping away all the landmarks on the art-scape. The show does not offer any new certainties, though: it's more an invitation to get stuck in together and start figuring things out.

Notes

[1] Dave Fischer, "Weeks? hah!!", in *alt.folklore.computers*, January 26, 1994. Available online at https://groups.google.com/forum/#!original/alt.folklore.computers/wF4CpYbWuuA/jS6ZOyJd10sJ.

[2] Gene Youngblood, "Towards Autonomous Reality Communities", in *Siggraph '82 Art Show*, exhibition catalogue, ACM, Boston, Massachussets, July 26-30, 1982.

[3] Michael A. Noll, "The Digital Computer as a Creative Medium", in *IEEE Spectrum*, October 1967.

[4] Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, Oxford University Press, New York City, 1976.

[5] Chris Anderson, *The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business is Selling Less of More*, Hyperion, New York City, 2006.

[6] John Roberts, "The Amateur's Retort", in *Amateurs*, exhibition catalogue, CCA Wattis Institute of Contemporary Arts, San Francisco, April 23 – August 9, 2008.

[7] Alvin Toffler, *The Culture Consumers. A study of Art and Affluence in America*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1964.

WE STARTED A MEME WHICH STARTED THE WHOLE WORLD CRYING

Smetnjak

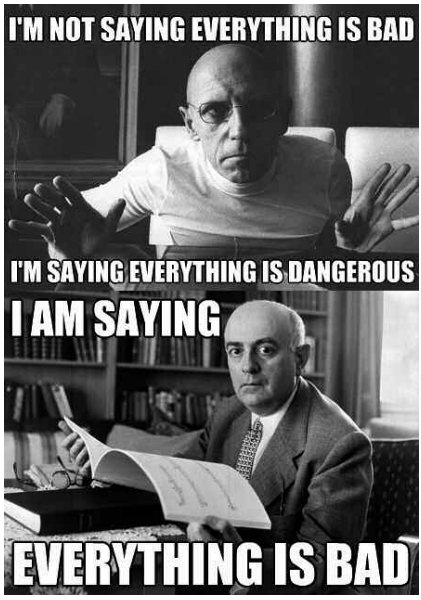
Walter Benjamin, in *The Author as Producer*, writes that a photograph – or photography for that matter – is incapable of saying anything other than "The world is beautiful." [1] He does not say that photography shows the world as it is: Benjamin is clear, the former transfigures the latter (but without changing the production apparatus). Be it a rubbish-dump, a river dam or poverty, the more barren, deserted, abject the subject matter is, the more beautiful. For Benjamin, not the most innate dialectician and the author of *The Writer of Modern Life*, this is a problem of modishness. His first proposal is that there should be a caption under the picture; basically inventing the image macro or LOLcat. In the next sentence there is an even greater break, a signature Benjamin rupture, asserting that writers themselves should start photographing. Apparently, one can't rely on photographers.

It probably has something to do with the iconoclastic tendency of thought itself. To give a less obvious example: Deleuze starts his *Cinema I* with a declaration that there won't be any reproductions in the book since text is the best illustration, hence all that talk about reading, not watching films. [2] Icons themselves become iconoclastic, as culminated in Malevich, and thought itself is always on the verge of getting rid of letters/characters.

What Benjamin's basically saying – and there's no basically to his basically and no saying to his saying – is that writers should do more – or something other – than writing. In that sense – and not in that sense only – Benjamin is an increasingly relevant, "more and more modern" or rather an absolutely modern writer, that is, something other than a writer. It's not just that one shouldn't rely on image makers, be they photographers, designers etc., no specialties or specialists should be relied on, not even writers, not even the so-called critical thinkers. Any separation of tasks, any division of labour, any segregation and the related hierarchies are

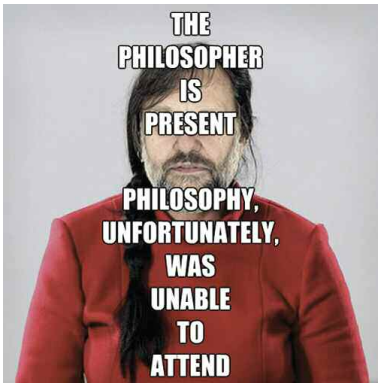
rejected. By that we are not saying that everyone can or should be an artist – that's just the art police baby –, we're saying anyone can be anything, provided that it is a possibility, a potentiality and not a predefined, pre-established actuality.

meme is a device, an apparatus, a dispositif. As always, not a neutral one (not that neutrality is sought). It is dangerous, much more than Janez Janša. [3] With that we don't mean or we don't mean only the hypothesis according to which the Internet was invented by Pentagon so communication could carry on in the event of a nuclear war, although that still sounds menacing, maybe even more so: "Nothing could stop her Instagraming, let alone the burning, crumbling sky. She chose the F2 / Mellow VSCOcam filter." The word and the concept of the meme was coined by none other than a revolutionary biologist. The book is *The Selfish Gene*, the man Richard Dawkins. According to that other non-neutral device Wikipedia: "A meme acts as a unit for carrying cultural ideas, symbols, or practices that can be transmitted from one mind to another through writing, speech, gestures, rituals, or other imitable phenomena with a mimicked theme. Supporters of the concept regard memes as cultural analogues to genes in that they self-replicate, mutate, and respond to selective pressures." They are "living structures, not just metaphorically." [4] Again we are dealing with these nature-society analogies/equivalences, which always ring a bit too close to Social Darwinism (or is it Lamarckism via Herbert Spencer?) – the difference between diagnosing or proscribing being a pretty insignificant one. In much the same way molecular biology uses the theory of



information, binary logic. It's all about the bi-winning, as Charlie Sheen would say. And it's not even a competition, since Dawkins observes there isn't much of a struggle between genes and the host as the former usually wins without a fight.

In the same binary logic kind of way we could say we come from a different place. Let's say our alma mater is critical or radical theory. Of course, there is nothing radical about calling oneself radical, this is just hashtagging, name-dropping for the sake of fast forwarding this introduction. Our point of departure is the Frankfurt School of thought, not the Freiburg School, where that great innovation of Ordoliberalism aka Neoliberalism got underway. To keep it even shorter, like Deleuze & Guattari we believe there is too much communication, not too little of it. That's why a figure/signifier of Slavoj Žižek had to be one of our main targets, someone or something that turns everything he/it touches into shit, preferably if that everything is something emancipatory.



While trying to balance on the shoulders of critical theory, Smetnjak thus responded to Benjamin's call for a new form of literacy, a literacy more native to the image-saturated society of spectacle, grounding its means of expression in what was then at hand – the culture of internet memes. The assemblage of an image and a caption provided us with a form that matched the simplicity of the verse-chorus structure of a pop song. As Debord would have it, "the spectacle's domination has succeeded in raising a whole generation moulded to its laws," [5] and the pop form of a meme seemed geared to our generation, for which, raised on the likes of *Robocop* and/or hyperconnected imagery, the spectacle founds the horizon of possibility. Using spectacle as a tool, as John Maus might put it, we tried to establish

daily production of memes as a means of disrupting the police, that is, critiquing, or rather fabricating the reality of the consciousness mediated by the spectacular technologies. This was our attempt to move beyond the textual into the domain of the hypertextual, which operates by its own rules.

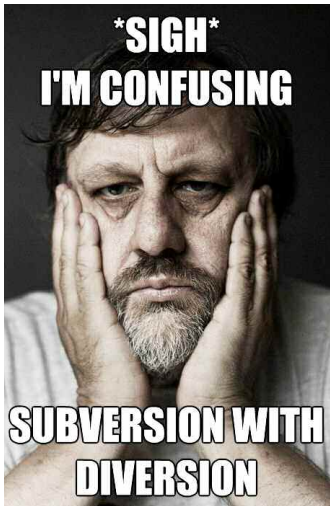
Firmly in the time of Gutenberg and snail mail Flaubert proclaimed that "anything becomes interesting if you look at it long enough." [6] Today, when the wi-fi connection has been elevated into a basic human right, such patience seems not only outmoded, but radically absent. With the ever-accelerating news feeds of the www, attention (not information) becomes a scarce resource, and is becoming ever-more scattered between different tasks and information streams. Indeed, attention deficit disorder looks like the new order of things, and attention span seems to have mutated into attention spam. This new form of attention cultivated by the Web, which N. Katherine Hayles terms hyper attention,[7] has no tolerance for boredom, and thus digests only the bite-size. Making meme our weapon of choice was also a matter of efficiently addressing this form of attention. While taking an image of Žižek and recoding it with a one-liner, or making him sing, might look like a puny attempt to lampoon reality, we also viewed it as the only one possible (especially against the background of the sad futility of academic articles).

Still being overly unmodish writers, we often decided to elaborate our memes with the accompanying essays, not to detrivialize them, but to put them into context(s) or decontextualize them even further.

We never dared to think that memes could be an unproblematic form of critique. Pop is the code of capital, and practicing critical theory through memes could be rejected in the same way Adorno rejects bringing together political protest and popular music. In his view the latter is "to such a degree

inseparable from the commodity-character, from the cross-eyed transfixion with amusement, that attempts to outfit it with a new function remain entirely superficial." [8] While we fall in with John Maus in his wager that pop can offer more than just a mindless distraction, that it can resist the appropriation of the police, we understand where Adorno is coming from. After all, what is subversion?

Žižek on a good day



Žižek on a bad day

Our poetic side keeps telling us about the redistribution or new configurations of the sensory, the breaking up/down of sensory-motor schema. So maybe, just maybe, and we are almost sure we're flattering ourselves, Smetnjak's version of Slovenglish, of mixing meme slang with theory, certainly not because of eclecticism, has something to do with that. On the other hand, our prosa(i)c side keeps reminding us – as Matteo Pasquinelli points out in *Animal Spirits* – that any attempt at subversion should involve a critique of the economic model sustaining the culture industries, otherwise we "remain at the level of media activism, or at the level of the PR campaign of the anti-globalist movement." [9] Sure, one catches oneself counting likes and shares (is it too severe to think that one clicks "like" so s/he can forget all about it?), not just counting, expecting them, desiring them, getting frustrated when an expected hit does not materialize, analyzing the traffic stats, falling into the trap of quantification, commodification etc., feeding the machine. It happens so quickly the thought itself does not manage to interfere, all that Harder, Better, Faster, Stronger stuff. We used to be Daft Punk Kids, we've grown to despise it, all that unabashed 1 percent mongering, and yet, pop/power always finds a way to creep in. And then one utters: "I'd rather not."

Vstaja, the local version of global uprisings, was a push toward Smetnjak's non-participation, withdrawal, the offensive retreat (this "offensive" reeks of defeatist and privilege apology, doesn't it?). There was just too much moralizing, scapegoating, dreaming of the return of law and order, more State, more Control, this cleansing fixation, to which even Smetnjak contributed a bit with its tagline "Someone has to be ashamed". Okay, at least we sounded like Christians, instead of counterfeit, ersatz ones. Maybe Federico Campagna spoiled everything by writing: "As Saul Bellow used to say, 'conquered people tend to be witty.' It is not by accident, for example, that during the Berlusconi decades in Italy, satire and comedy seemed to be the weapons of choice of the social-capitalist, parliamentary left." [10]

Satire, society's famous safety valve. Isn't there enough production of safety as it is? The senile humanistic chatter about human needs as if the difference between human and capital was a clear-cut one. A dispositif from the age of party politics which is now long gone, the wishful thinking of power still being personified, having to do with characters, good guys and villains etc. One can still do it for the sake of a career, and for that sake only. It's obvious Karl Kraus wouldn't want to do satire nowadays, he would find it pathetic. No, one can't do satire, but one is always too close to it when one's doing something that could be broadly or generically called political humour. One could still say with Deleuze, "fabricating the real instead of responding to it," [11] but the problem is it seems the real does that much better by itself – beyond its avatars', mediators' intentions.
One can't caricature when the caricature is the objective reality, the very nature of things, the cari*nature*.

Considering the emancipatory (or whatever) potentials of humor, we still wait to be persuaded by Paolo Virno and his explorations of wit. [12] And as far as critical thought

is concerned, Tiqqun kind of ends it: "We don't need any more *critical* theory. We don't need any more professors. Now critique works for domination. *Even the critique of domination.*" [13]

Meme itself has become a worn out, coagulated form, and Smetnjak couldn't or didn't want to find a way to save it. Time moved on, as always. Modishness is actually not just a fad, it also has something to do with the absolute modernity of Benjamin's/Rimbaud's kind. It has its own metaphysics.

Some say Dawkins' meme is a redundant synonym for a concept. Deleuze & Guattari define the activity of philosophy as producing concepts. Flows hardening into concepts and memes as something that wants to be remembered. Isn't all that about power all over again? Is there a word that is hardly a word, something that does not want to become a word or would prefer not to? Hapax legomenon. A word that occurs only once whether "in the written record of an entire language, in the works of an author, or in a single text." [14] Smetnjak would like to be on the side of the hapax. Something in passing, scarcely traceable or archivable, unmemorable, belonging to the other of memory (but then again, how could Kafka or Walser ever become a part of the canon? Isn't that turn of events a betrayal or retaliation against all the kafkas and walsers without a name?).

There's always too much production, never too little, so why not stop at that? We are already not very far, i.e. we are infinitesimally close to a female voice from the (Italian) movement of '77: "Silence brought the failure of this part of myself that desired to make politics, but it affirmed something new. There has been a change, I have started to speak out, but during these days of silence I felt that the affirmative part of myself was occupying the entire space again. I convinced myself that the mute woman is the most fertile objection to our politics. The non-political digs

tunnels that we mustn't fill with earth." [15] Smetnjak is staying mute, for now, until further notice or without it. The anti-politics of post-politics which is the only politics possible or rather the only possibility of politics. The one or rather none that is slow and opaque.

Smetnjak used to throw raves of a Daft Punk kids variety,
but eventually lost interest in hedonism.
After that it produced critical theory via memes (image macros,
tracks, videos), featuring mascots of the spectacle (Slavoj Žižek,
Laibach, Marina Abramovic , local establishment figures).
Its work was presented on critical-theory.com, versobooks.com,
bturn.com, adsoftheworld.com.
At the moment Smetnjak is pending, but so is all that gives hope.
More info: www.smetnjak.si.

Notes

[1] Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer", in *Understanding Brecht*, trans. Anna Bostock (London, New York: Verso, 1998), pp. 85-103.

[2] Gilles Deleuze, "Preface to the French Edition", in *Cinema 1: The Movement Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. xiv.

[3] Ex prime minister of Slovenia, currently in prison for bribery. According to the liberal hypothesis the source of all evil in Slovenia and thus its central figure/creature, hence prolonging the paradigm of viewing politics as a matter of psychology or temperaments, *Weltanschauungs*, local idiosyncrasies etc. It's actually an example of a sad little incest story, since Janša's political career started in ZSMS (League of Socialist Youth of Slovenia), the incubator of the liberal hypothesis.

[4] Cf. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meme.

[5] Guy Debord, *Comments on the Society of Spectacle*, 1988. Online at http://notbored.org/commentaires.html.

[6] The prefix to Michel Tournier, *The Ogre*, trans. Barbara Bray (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

[7] N. Katherine Hayles, "Hyper and Deep Attention: The Generational Divide in Cognitive Modes", in *Profession*, 2007, pp. 187-99 (p. 187).

[8] Theodor W. Adorno, "On Popular Music", http://youtu.be/Xd7Fhaji8ow.

[9] Matteo Pasquinelli, "Creative Sabotage in the Factory of Culture: Art, Gentrification and the Metropolis", in *Animal Spirits – A Bestiary of the Commons*, (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2008), p. 149.

[10] Federico Campagna, "Talk at 2012 KAFCA conference, Barcelona 2/12/2011", 2011. Online at http://th-rough.eu/writers/campagna-eng/talk-kafca-conference-barcelona-2122011.

[11] Or rather with Tiqqun fabriquoting Deleuze in *The Cybernetic Hypothesis* (http://cybernet.jottit.com/).

[12] Paolo Virno, "Wit and Innovation", in *Eipcp*, June 2004. Trans. Adrianna Bove, online at http://eipcp.net/transversal/0207/virno/en.

[13] Tiqqun, "How Is It To be Done?", Spring 2001. Online at http://tiqqunista.jottit.com/how_is_it_to_be_done%3F.

[14] Cf. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hapax_legomenon.

[15] A quote found in Claire Fontaine, *Human Strike Has Already Begun & Other Writings* (Mute Books and Post-Media Lab Books, 2013), p. 12.

my life without technoviking: an interview with matthias fritsch

Domenico Quaranta

Matthias Fritsch is an independent artist from Berlin, best known for his work *Kneecam No 1* — the live video that brought Technoviking to the internet. Over a decade after he uploaded the clip that went viral, Fritsch is now enduring a long legal battle with Technoviking himself, who sued for the reproduction, proliferation, and unwarranted use of his likeness. In response to the process, Fritsch is making *The Story of Technoviking*, a crowd-funded documentary that aims to shed light on the legal issues surrounding viral images. Below, Fritsch talks about what it's like do battle in court with a viking, the ownership of images in the internet age, and his hopes for his current project.

DQ Matthias, naturally I'm curious about the video that started it all. What was *Kneecam No 1* (2000) for you before it became an internet meme? Why did you upload it to YouTube? Were you expecting such a viral reaction? What did you think when it happened?

MF ***Kneecam No 1* was the beginning of a series of short experimental films in which I wanted to explore the role of the camera and the perception of reality in film. When YouTube**

emerged as an easily accessible video streaming platform, I started uploading my films in order to integrate them into my website. I wasn't aware of viral videos back in 2006 and learned about this emerging culture of internet memes when my own clip went viral.

DQ In *Kneecam No 1*, you simply turn your camera on during the Fuckparade in Berlin and record a short clip. The appearance of the man later known as the "technoviking" is something you couldn't expect, unless it was staged; and that turns the video into something completely different from a simple fragment of reality. Your description of the video on your website, however, is somewhat ambiguous about this. You write: "Real or set up? The camera as a voyeur in an extraordinary situation and level of intimacy." Can you tell us more about this?

MF The documentation sequence turned out to be very dense and intense. My original impulse in publishing this uncut sequence came from its potential of raising the question of whether what you see is real or staged – a question that was very much connected to my personal interests and artistic focus. I was influenced by developments in film aesthetics, such as Dogma 95 from the Danish film scene of the 90s. And yes, you could say that I pressed a button, stayed calm, like a street photographer and captured the moment in reality, but the act of publishing it put it in the frame of working on filmic language and perception.

DQ The viral circulation of an artifact conceived as an artwork may be experienced as an act of violence against the artwork itself. You lose control of your work, its circulation, the way it is understood. It circulates under a different title, and without your name on it. And in all likelihood, it is completely misunderstood. How did you react to all this?

MF The film went viral on a video portal that I didn't even know about. And yet – although I lost control of it – my original question remained unanswered, and I didn't reveal whether the video was staged or not. The portal break.com paid the guy that copied the video from my channel and reposted it for $2,000 USD after the first 2 million clicks and later on, when it reached 4 million clicks, most likely another $2,000. I wasn't too bothered about that. The "violation" that one could see in this user's appropriation of my film made a work of mine famous, and the reactions of the community were much more fascinating to me than the notion of losing control or being ripped off. The idea that I could have an issue with the protagonist didn't occur to me. He was perceived as a hero. The film was a piece of art, originally shot in a political demonstration with a camera that had a very big and obvious lens.

DQ Random or not, the viral success of *Kneecam No 1* closely reflects your interest in the relationship between mediation and reality and somehow conditioned the development of your work, with its focus on digital communities and online distribution channels (I'm thinking of the *Technoviking Archive* and *Music from the Masses*, your online archive of free, silent music video-length works to which musicians are invited to add their own songs). Do you agree? Do you think your work would have developed in a different way, if you hadn't met the Technoviking on your way?

MF The Technoviking phenomenon showed me a new world: global online communities. But already years earlier I had been involved in analogue social platforms. At the time when I shot the video, I was active in the independent film scene in Berlin, organizing a festival and open screenings that enabled filmmakers in Berlin a platform to show, test, and exchange

their works. For as long as I can remember, I have also liked the idea of media recycling, and I did recycle my own material in different works before the Technoviking-Meme was born. I don't know if I would really be doing something completely different if *Kneecam No 1* hadn't become a viral piece of pop culture. For sure without the figure of *Technoviking* there would be no *Technoviking Archive*. Also, I might not have come up with my 5-year project *Music from the Masses*, which was directly inspired by observing strategies of recycling in the users' reactions to the technoviking meme: the exchange of soundtracks. Funnily enough, in court at the Berlin trial the plaintiff's lawyer argued several times that my whole artistic career is based on Technoviking. This is an interesting point, by the way. Let's assume he is right – who is the artist, who is the originator of the meme and the body of works that I have been working on for the last 6 years? The plaintiff? My guess is that the community is actually the originator and the driving artistic and creative force in this collective cultural production.

DQ I would expand on this by saying that, even though your original question remained unanswered, it was exactly this issue that resonated with the online community and turned your video into a meme. The video fascinated people for the same reason it fascinated you: its unclear status, between documentation and fiction, and its main character's connection with a narrative and set of images that existed and was shaped by others long before the video (from Thor to *Conan the Barbarian* to heavy metal singers and the techno underground). In other words: the plaintiff became the Technoviking not because he was "original," but because he was giving an original rendition of a cultural stereotype at a real life event – and people wouldn't have noticed it if you

hadn't noticed it in the first place, if you hadn't published your footage when you did. Do you agree?

MF I agree that there is no original and that the figure of the Technoviking is the result of new combinations of old ideas, which sounds like something that applies to almost everything. An interesting aspect of the trial is actually trying to distinguish between the real persona of the plaintiff and the art persona Technoviking. It might just be a strategic argument that the plaintiff does not see the difference and takes everything that is connected to the Technoviking-Meme very personally. This explains why he even wants to censor comics and drawings of the Technoviking meme. The original question somehow returns to the courtroom, but now with the focus on the Technoviking-Art-Persona rather than the video: is he real or is he a work of fiction?

DQ As mentioned before, after losing control of your artwork, you have also had the experience of being sued by the subject of that artwork for what other people have done with it. This is pretty absurd because, in my view, you are both victims of your internet frame: you should feel sympathetic to each other. At the same time, however, the trial raises a series of questions about intellectual property and reproduction rights in the internet age: who owns the image? Should we be free to use, manipulate, and redistribute what we find online?

MF To collect opinions, concepts, and hopefully solutions to these urgent issues I am working on a documentary film. One interesting thought was expressed by Ulf Petterson, who works in Brussels for the European Union. He said that the plaintiff "has already 'published' his image by appearing in a public place."
The technological changes of the last few years

have generated and boosted our collective visual memory of reality. It is constantly growing and keeps each one of us in a huge global data cloud. We have no real idea where this data will end up and how it will be used one day. The state, companies and citizens produce and collect massive amounts of images every second and nobody can escape this anymore. New electronic senses call for new human behavior and (as yet unwritten) codes and must necessarily change the notion of protecting privacy. We can observe changes in individual behavior in public. We need to change if we want to stay out of the data collecting sphere that surrounds us. I am not suggesting that everybody who is really concerned should wear a burka, but that would probably be the most effective way of escaping the image stream that we are constantly creating by exposing ourselves to the CCTVs and smart phones around us.

DQ What Petterson says is right. In an age when there are more cameras than eyes, and in which the "publish" option is embedded in almost every recording tool, every action performed in public space can potentially end up in the public space of the internet a minute later. Celebrities are well aware of this, and it's hard to imagine Keanu Reeves or Scarlett Johansson suing somebody for the "Sad Keanu" meme or the "Scarlett Johansson Falling Down" meme. At the same time, your trial shows that it's time to start a public debate and make an attempt to regulate this subject. Is this what you are trying to do with your upcoming documentary?

MF Yes, that's basically my motivation for making the film. From the moment that something is online and the community starts to use, manipulate, and redistribute content — I think there is a right to share. Nothing is really

original and everything is the result of culture that existed before. If creators want to own their content, they should also be responsible for sharing their income with the society that inspired their ideas. How can you own something that you (at least to a large extent) took from others for free? Therefore, I see the protection of exclusive rights on intellectual property as the wrong tool for the future.
It only creates complications for cultural development and a fair society. Fairness and openness, not restrictions and control, are the values we should focus on.
At this point, the courtroom is not the place to solve these issues. The judges have a very tight corset of laws that are already 100 years old. The law on owning and controlling your own image (which the plaintiff is citing) is from 1907. To come to a final judgement in court and maybe change some laws, the case has to go one level higher to the constitutional court. This is lengthy process, and it demands a really strong financial backbone to keep up with the costs – something that is not suited to my personal situation. Therefore, to contribute to the discourse and push for new solutions, I would rather make a documentary film that can be discussed in public.

This interview has been commissioned and originally published
Rhizome on December 5th, 2013.
Available online at http://rhizome.org/editorial/2013/dec/5/interview-matthias-fritsch/

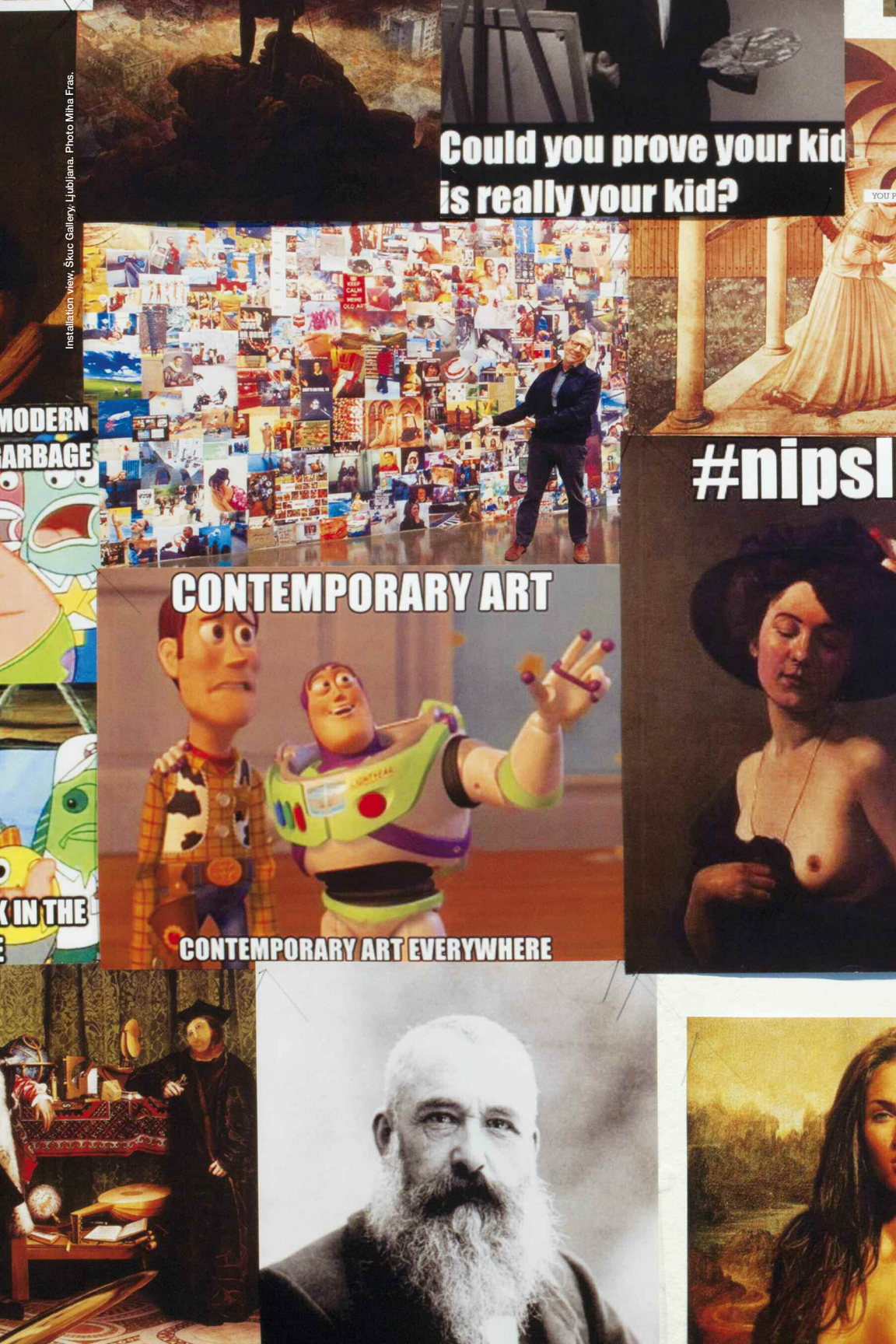
THE GREAT WALL OF MEMES

Valentina Tanni

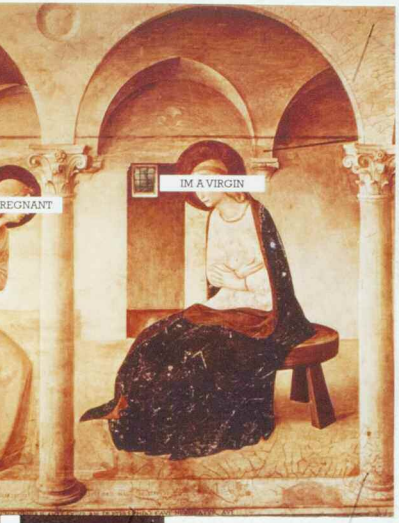
'The Great Wall of Memes' is a research project in the form of a visual archive. It began in 2012 as a collection of art related Internet memes ('Contemporary Art People: y u no have irony?', available on Facebook and Pinterest) and made its first appearance in the physical space in Milan the following year in the form of a giant wall covered in found images ('Nothing to See Here', Swiss Institute, Milan, June 2013).
In Ljubljana this project has reached a whole new level, both online, through a dedicated Tumblr blog, and in the exhibition space, with a new custom installation. The project is loosely based on the "Mnemosyne Atlas" by Aby Warburg, updating his idea in the light of the current cultural context (participatory and viral).
The goal is to retrace the travels of various images through time and space, highlighting the different ways in which they have been used, remixed and re-invented.
http://eternal-september.tumblr.com

Installation view, Škuc Gallery, Ljubljana. Photo: Miha Fras.
I HAS A DREAM.
IN 35,000 B.C.
CAVE PAINTINGS WERE CONTEMPORARY ART
IM SITTING ON A GIANT EAR
They Said I Could Be Anything
SO I BECAME A PAINTBRUSH
CHARLIE BROWNSON
GET DOWN FROM THERE HORSE
THIS IS AN ART GALLERY YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE A PAINTBRUSH
Leci n'est pas une pipe.
YOUR ARGUMENT IS INVALID
You think your kid could paint this?
Could you prove your kid is really your kid?
IT'S SAD HOW WILE E. COYOTE IS REMEMBERED FOR HIS VIOLENCE
AND NOT FOR HIS BRILLIANT PAINTINGS OF TUNNELS
AT IF MEMES
RE ART?
ALL THE SINGLE LADIES
ALL THE SINGLE LADIES
LETS TAKE ALL THE MODERN ART MADE OUT OF GARBAGE
AND PUT IT BACK IN THE GARBAGE
CONTEMPORARY ART
CONTEMPORARY ART EVERYWHERE
#nipslip
1500
1900
2000
2010
2011
2012
EMONA LISA
CONTEMPORARY ART
SHIT'S ON FIRE, YO
USELESS DEMONSTRATIONS?
TOO DEEP FOR YOU
Such beautiful art
...I hate it.
WHAT GAVE YOU THAT IMPRESSION?
ART.
THAT'S THE GREAT THING ABOUT ARTS
IT'S SO VAGUE AND NOBODY REALLY KNOWS WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT
excuse me
YOU LIKE HER
YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO CUT ME OFF!
GIVE HER YOUR EAR
Hey, I just met you and this is crazy,
but here's my ear
I'm giving that bitch an ear.
VINCENT VAN
NO
SELFIES
TWO EARS?
TOO MAINSTREAM
THAT IS A NICE CAR

20th Century art
PROBLEM, ALPS?
In 2014, memes will transcend lulz and become art.
ART CRITICS
Y U NO SPEAK NORMAL
GO HOME HORSE
YOU'RE DRUNK
PERFECTION PERFECTED
"IN THE FUTURE, EVERYONE WILL BE WORLD-FAMOUS FOR 15 MINUTES."
WHEN WILL THEN BE NOW?
Campbell's CONDENSED TOMATO SOUP
WAIT, WHAT?
MARINA ABRAMOVIC DIDN'T MAKE YOU CRY?
LOADING
EVERYTHING YOU OWN IN THE
Brillo
BOX TO THE LEFT
GOLDEN RULE IN ART
NEVER UPSTAGE YOUR MASTER, BITCH!
DIEGO RIVERA?
YOU'VE PROBABLY NEVER HEARD OF HIM
Brightness = 20%
Brightness = 100%
THE ARTIST IS PRESENT
ART, UNFORTUNATELY, WAS UNABLE TO ATTEND
TOO LAZY TO PLUCK EYEBROWS
CALL ME FRIDA



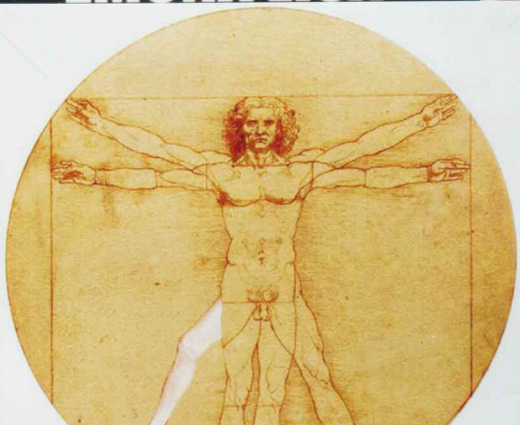
Installation view, Škuc Gallery, Ljubljana. Photo Miha Fras.

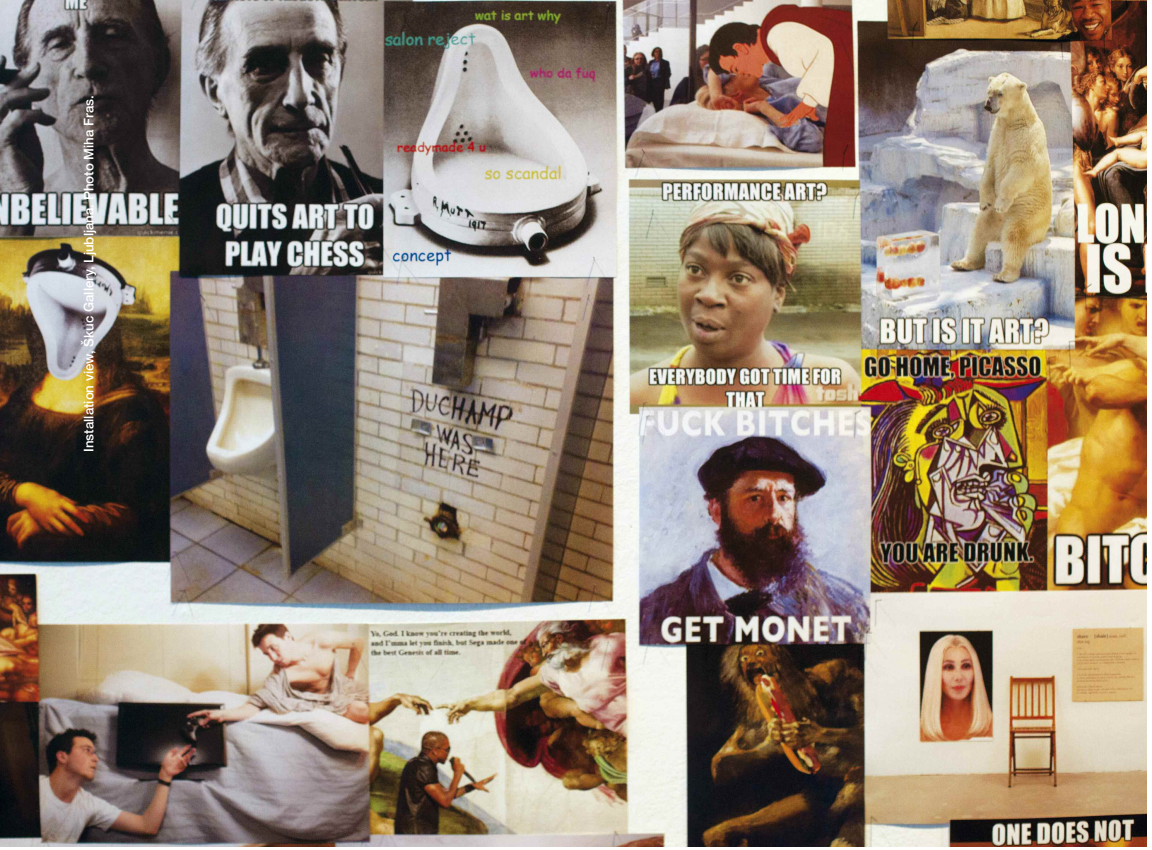

REGNANT
IM A VIRGIN

1500
1900
2000
2010
2011
2013
WWW.SOCIALRATCHET.COM

ip
mememaker.net

VIA 9GAG.COM
EMONA LISA





Installation view, Škuc Gallery, Ljubljana. Photo Miha Fras.

YOU'VE PROBABLY NEVER HEARD OF HIM
Brightness = 100%
ASPIRINA
THE ARTIST IS PRESENT
ART, UNFORTUNATELY, WAS UNABLE TO ATTEND
Theraflu

EXPLAIN AN ARTWORK
Baroque Obama
JEFF KOONS CA
IZ IN EQUILIBRIU

Mauro Ceolin

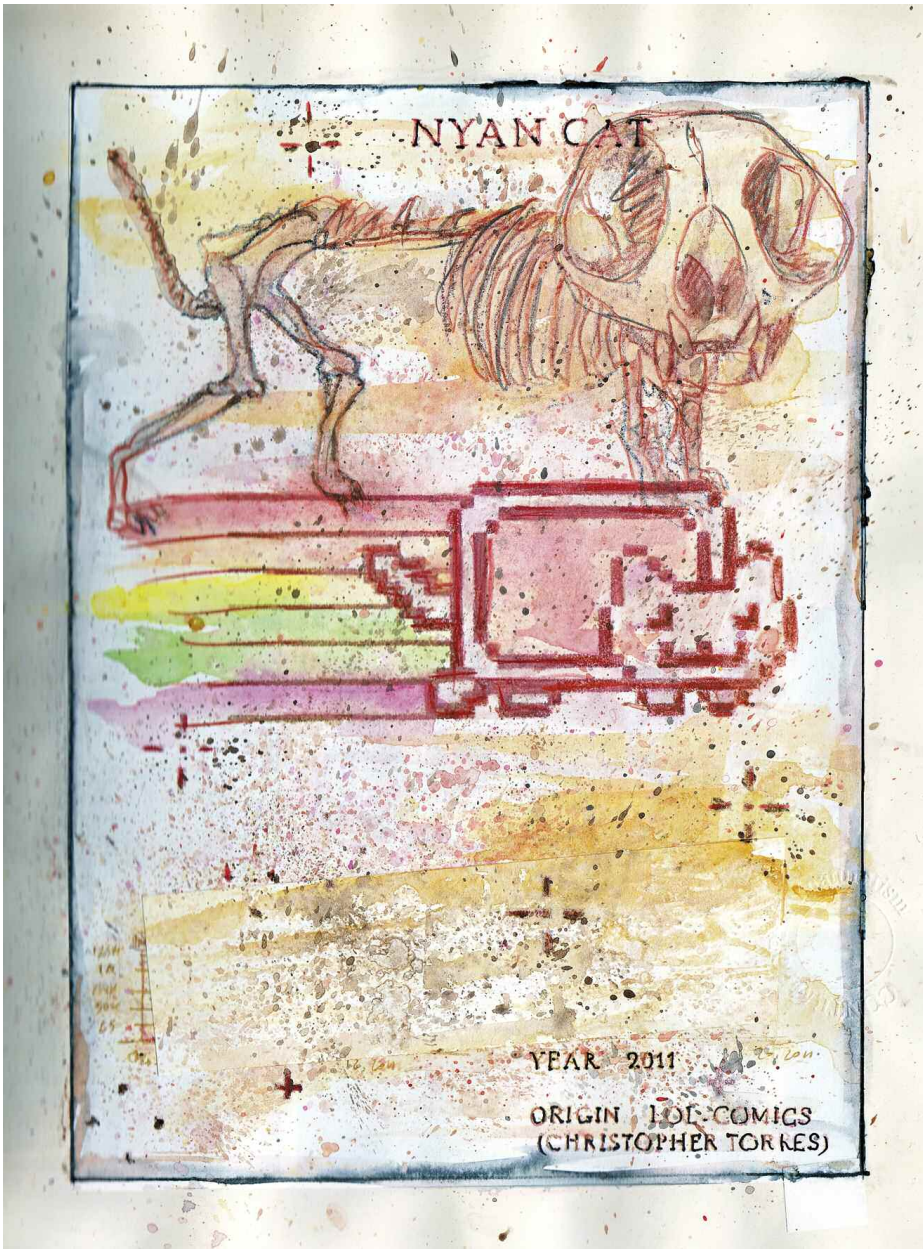
Memezoology
2013 - 2014
Installation,
various materials,
variable
dimensions

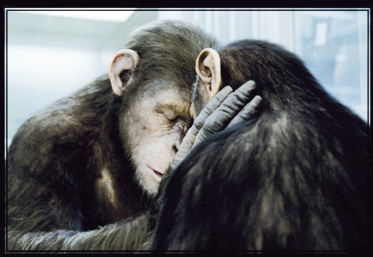
Installation view, Škuc Gallery, Ljubljana. Photo Miha Fras.

Since 2006, Milan based artist Mauro Ceolin has been working on *contemporaryNaturalism*, a complex, ongoing research project exploring the analogies between science and technology, studying the way ideas develop in the online environment using methodologies and taxonomies taken from biology, with the ambition to develop a better knowledge of what he calls "silicon based life". First presented at the roBOto6 Festival in Bologna in 2013, *Memezoology* is a multimedia installation focused on the strange, viral and pervasive history of memes, in a fascinating attempt to build a taxonomy of collective imagination through contemporary folk imagery. In the words of curator Claudio Musso: "With an analytical eye, Ceolin chooses cases that have become "viral" as a result of countless versions created from a common template. Our imagination expands thanks to the emergence of new (even synthetic) life forms. Another evolutionary breakthrough is looming. For Homo Digitalis it is not difficult to be surrounded by wildlife created by film, television or video games, easily contributing to a meme's survival."

Mauro Ceolin (IT, born 1963) is an artist based in Milan, whose work is focused on representing contemporary realities. Since 1996 his research has involved studying the aesthetics forms and the experiences of the post-alphabetic society, from simulated environments to internet memes.
In the past few years his work has been shown in many international shows and venues, and he has been invited to many new media festivals around the world.
More info: www.rgbproject.com

Clockwise: *Memezoology*, 2013. Handmade book and optical scanning, dimensions variables; *Memezoology* | *digital disambiguation*, 2013. Motivational posters, dimensions variables.





OBSERVING THE CONNECTION

among living systems, always keeping the sense of direction

OUR CULTURAL STANDPOINT...

to decode the complexity of biological systems

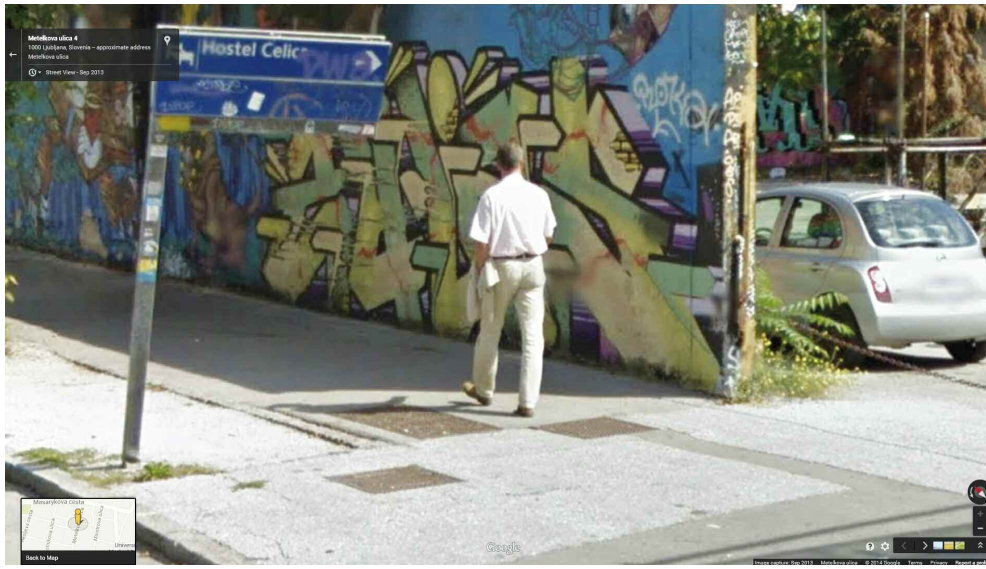
Paolo Cirio

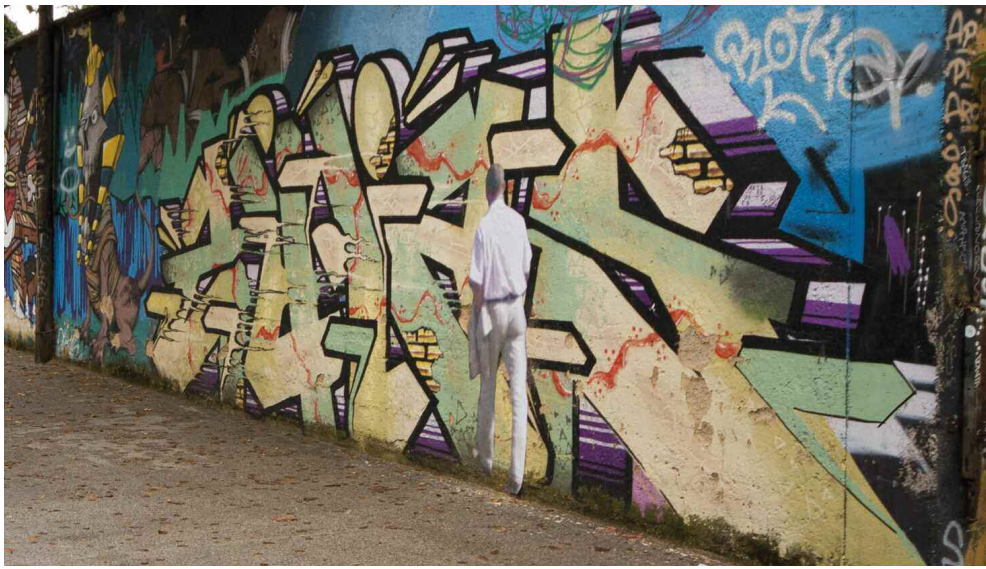
Street Ghosts, 2012 - ongoing
Inkjet print on coated paper,
urban intervention
http://streetghosts.net/

The street action in Ljubljana, August 30, 2014. Photo: Janez Janša

Life-sized pictures of people found on Google Street View were printed and posted without authorization at the same spot where they were taken. The posters are printed in color on thin paper, are cut along the outline, and then glued on the walls of public buildings at the precise spot on the wall where they appear on Street View. *Street Ghosts* investigates aesthetic, biopolitical, privacy and legal issues. In Cirio's words: "I took the pictures of individuals without Google's permission and posted them on public walls. In doing so, I have highlighted the viability of this sort of medium as an artistic material that critiques contemporary society. The data collected by Google and similar corporations is now part of everyday life, yet their source is the personal information of private individuals. By remixing and reusing this material, I set out to explore the boundaries of ownership and the exposure of this publicly displayed, privately-held information about our personal lives." The artwork becomes a performance, re-contextualizing not only ready made informational material, but also a conflict.
The ghostly apparitions come across as casualties of the info-war, a transitory record of collateral damage generated by the battle between corporations, governments, civilians and algorithms.

Paolo Cirio (IT/GB born 1979) works with systems of distribution, organization, and control of information that affect flows of social, economic, and cognitive structures. Cirio's innovative and controversial projects have investigated various issues in fields such as privacy, transparency, copyright, finance and democracy. He renders his conceptual works through performances, photos, drawings, videos and installations. Cirio has exhibited in international museums and institutions and has won numerous prestigious art awards. He regularly gives public lectures and workshops at leading arts festivals and universities.
More info: www.paolocirio.net





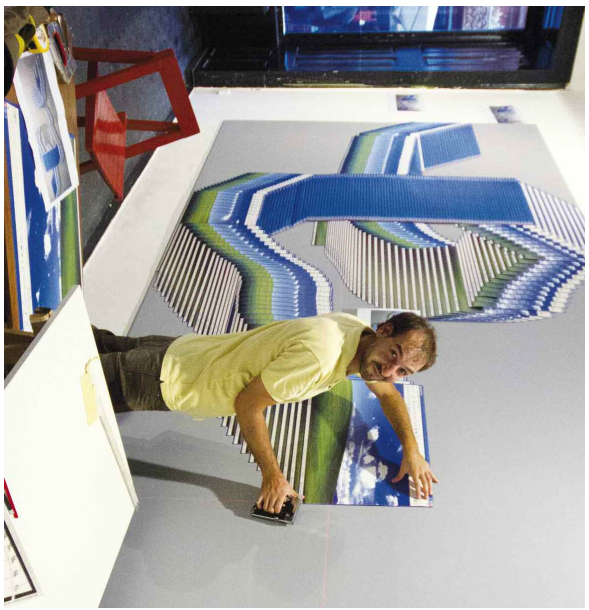
Top: Paolo Cirio, Street Ghosts. Screenshot from Google Street View, 2014. Courtesy the artist.
Bottom: Street Ghosts in Ljubljana. Street project, 30 - 31 August 2014. Photo: Tatjana Cankar

Paul Destieu

My Favourite Landscape, 2006
Mixed media,
240 x 500 cm, 600 offset prints,
(original computer wallpaper Bliss
included in Microsoft Windows XP)

A wall installation made of 500 offset prints, *My Favourite Landscape* is a reappropriation of *Bliss*, the well known desktop picture used by Windows XP, one of the most popular images of our age. Here it is represented in a classic bug configuration, accidentally generated by a computer error.

Paul Destieu (FR, born 1982) lives and works in Marseille, France. His works question technology and its impact on our environment, examining the status of machines in our society. He uses calibration, synchronization processes or setup configurations as means for art production. His pieces focus on the virtual and physical territories of contemporary society in order to reveal affinities between structure and emptiness. Processes of destructions, hijackings or attacks are then used to shape and question the dividing line between the emergence and collapsing of a system using video, new media and installation. For some years now his work has been exhibited in France and abroad.
He is co-founder of *Otto-Prod / La Vitrine* and currently organizes cultural exchanges and events between France and Slovenia.
More info: www.pauldestieu.com

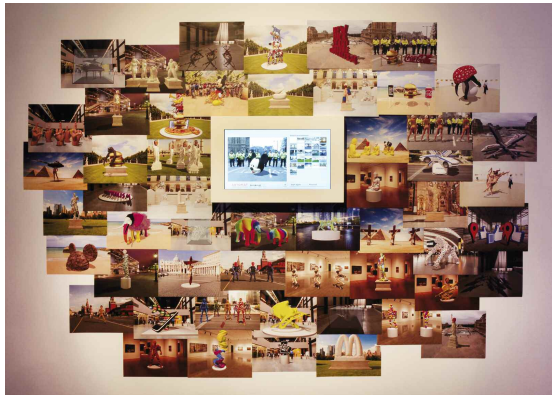


Paul Destieu setting up the installation at Škuc Gallery, Ljubljana. Photo: Janez Janša

Installation view, Škuc Gallery, Ljubljana. Photo Miha Fras.

Electroboutique

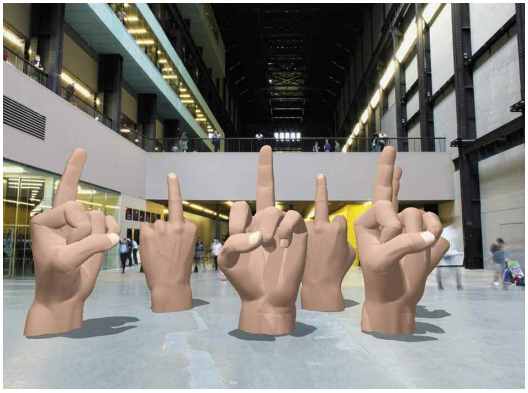
ARTOMAT.pro, 2011-2013
Software, installation,
variable dimensions
www.artomat.pro

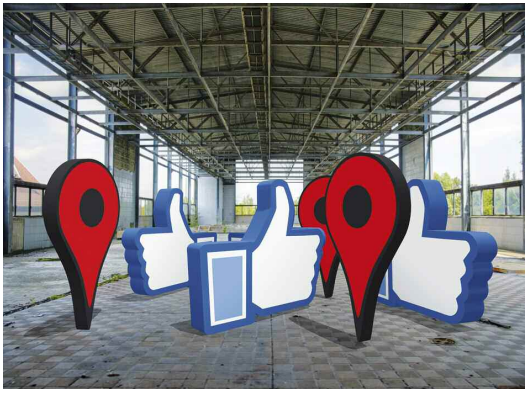


Installation view, Škuc Gallery, Ljubljana. Photo Miha Fras.

ARTOMAT.pro **is a system for the automated production of art. Select an object, apply certain methods to it, combine it with another object, place it in an appropriate space, and your unique work is ready! The starting point of the project lies in the realization that, "if we closely observe the processes that have been underway in art in recent decades, we can see that behind the apparent variety in the works that are appearing lies a fairly limited selection of algorithms employed in their creation": ie., taking something small and powerfully magnifying it; taking a single object and multiplying it; taking a large object and turning it upside down; etc. The** *ARTOMAT.pro* **works by employing algorithms akin to those described above and generating art in an automated or semiautomated mode. The viewer becomes a user-artist, creating genuine works of art to suit his or her own tastes. Hooked up to a 2D or 3D printer, the** *ARTOMAT.pro* **system allows material objects to be created – pictures and sculptures. The entire process for creating art is thus automated, from conception to production.**

Founded in 2005 by Alexei Shulgin (RU, born 1963) and Aristarkh Chernyshev (RU, born 1968), Elecroboutique is a unique creative electronics production company, a media art gallery and an artist collective.
Their products are developed in modern technological forms - user-friendly electronic devices and computer programs - which are artworks at the same time. These products exist beyond national and cultural borders: they could feature in trendy interiors, as well as at contemporary art exhibitions and art fairs. They spring from the encounter between cool aesthetics and information technologies, modern design, pop-art and real-time data processing.
More info: www.electroboutique.com





Coca-Cola

BRITISH AIRWAYS
BRITISH AIRWAYS
BRITISH AIRWAYS

Matthias Fritsch

The Story of Technoviking, 2014
Documentary
www.technoviking.tv

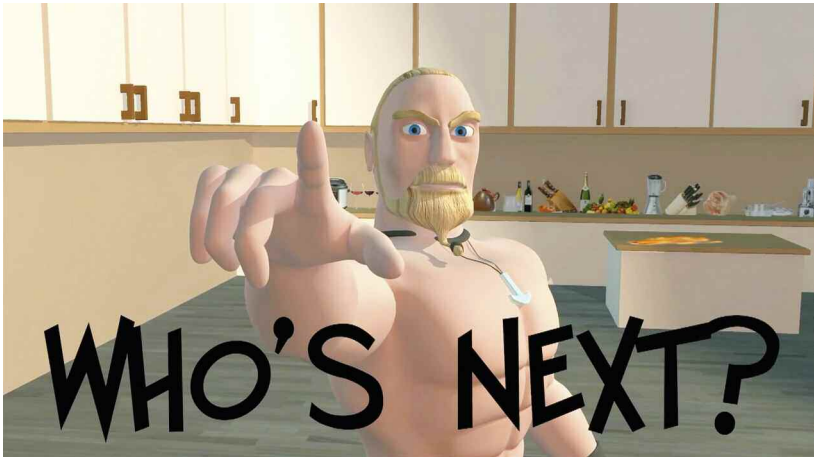
Screening and artist's presentation at Aksioma Project Space, 2 September 2014. Photo: Janez Janša

The Story of Technoviking is a film project by German artist and filmmaker Matthias Fritsch, which shows how an experimental film project became a popular internet meme, reaching a massive audience but also raising copyright and legal issues. In 2000, Matthias Fritsch shot *KNEECAM No.1*, a short video documenting the Fuckparade in Berlin, and posted it to his website. In 2007 the video went viral on YouTube and other platforms under the name "Technoviking", and became the subject of a number of comments, remakes, remixes, re-enactments, response videos etc, turning into a popular meme.

In 2009, the video's protagonist emerged and sued Fritsch over uncleared personality rights, demanding financial compensation and the removal of the meme including user reactions. In 2013 the artist, who has been collecting all the reaction material to his original video in the *Technoviking Archive* (2000 - 2014), launched a crowdfunding campaign to produce a film about the phenomenon, telling the story behind the Technoviking meme and giving a voice to fans, lawyers and specialists that can help other active users and artists to protect themselves against old laws that have yet to catch up to contemporary meme culture.

Matthias Fritsch (DE) lives and works in Berlin. He has made several short and long movies, and media-based installations. In recent years Fritsch has focused on the digital communities formed within internet video platforms, examining their importance in the formation of the contemporary cultural production. Fritsch's filmic works focus on issues of authorship and property, now hot topics in the context of open distribution channels on the Internet. Fritsch studied Media Art at the University of Arts and Design Karlsruhe (HfG) in Germany and Film, Fine Art and Curating at Bard College, Center for Curatorial Studies (CCS), New York State, USA. Since 2010 he has been the artistic director of the annual Moving Silence Festival in Athens and he organizes other international events within this platform for contemporary silent film. More info: http://subrealic.net/

TECHNOVIKING
ARCHIVE


WHO'S NEXT?

Colin Guillemet

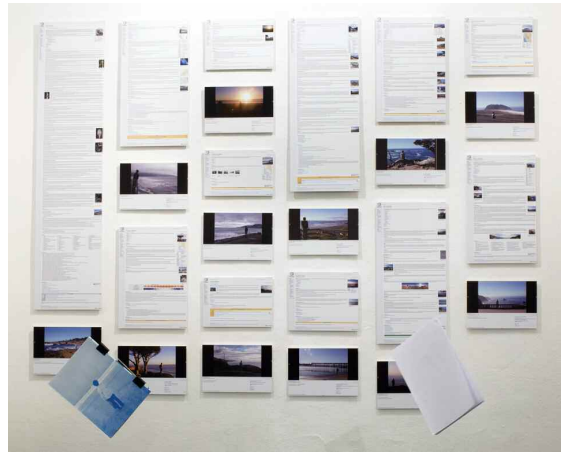
Around the World, 2009
Installation: globe and various international mains adaptors

Around the World, by French artist Colin Guillemet, is an installation that features a globe connected to a wall socket by means of various international mains adaptors. A sculptural piece in the traditional sense, the work is also a strong, poetic visual statement about diversity, inventiveness, identity construction and unconventional behaviours in the Internet era.

Colin Guillemet (FR, born 1979 in Paris) lives and works in London and Zurich. His work highlights the difficulty of describing art, concepts and ideas. Where self-expression is concerned it seems words are not enough. Confronted with his work viewers experience a mixture of confusion and comprehension, convinced they have understood something, not sure exactly what that is.
Guillemet holds a BA in Fine Art from the Central Saint Martins College of Art, and a MA in Fine Art from the Royal College of Art. Since 2000 he has exhibited in many venues around Europe and the States.
More info: www.colinguillemet.com

David Horvitz

Public Access, 2010-2014
Installation: shelf with copies of the Public Access book (*Motto Distribution*, 2011) and printouts of Wikipedia entries pinned to the wall



Installation view, Škuc Gallery, Ljubljana. Photo Miha Fras.

In late 2010 and early 2011, Californian artist David Horvitz drove the length of the Californian coast with a group of friends. The trip started at the beach just north of the Mexican American border and ended in Oregon at Pelican State Beach. Along the way Horvitz made photographs of over 50 different state beaches. In each photograph he stood anonymously on the sand looking out at the ocean, reminiscent of Bas Jan Ader or Caspar David Friedrich. The photographs were then uploaded to each Wikipedia page regarding the beach in question to illustrate the articles. His intention was for these images to become the visual meta data for the specific beaches, and for the images to openly circulate online.

At one point a discussion emerged on Wikipedia regarding the legitimacy of his photographs, which resulted in most of the images being deleted. *Public Access* presents documentation of this intervention, including a book made in 2011 with writer Ed Steck. The book is also available online in pdf form at http://media.rhizome.org/blog/7949/Public-Access-PDF.pdf.

David Horvitz (US, born 1982 in Los Angeles) is a Brooklyn based artist who's diverse practice includes photography, curating, performance, text, social experiments, and publishing. Horvitz's unconventional and inspirational works range from downloadable group art exhibitions, a daily instructional text mailing list, curated art exhibitions contained within post office boxes, daily mail outs of a photograph of the New York sky, and stamping every dollar bill that crosses his path with the phrase "A small distraction interrupting you from your everyday routine".
More info: http://davidhorvitz.com.

Bodega Head

Coordinates: 38.311°N 123.066°W[1]

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Bodega Head is a small promontory on the Pacific coast of northern California in the United States. It is located in Sonoma County at 38.311°N 123.066°W[1], approximately 40 mi (64 km) northwest of San Francisco and approximately 20 mi (32 km) west of Santa Rosa.

The peninsula, which is approximately 4 mi (6.4 km) long and 1 mi (1.6 km) wide, emerges from the coast to the south. It shelters the shallow sandy Bodega Bay the inner portion known as Bodega Harbor. Sonoma Coast State Beach comprises beaches and dunes along the south side of the promontory. The University of California, Davis runs an ongoing marine biology program at the Bodega Marine Laboratory. The laboratory is located on the grounds of Bodega Marine Reserve (http://www-bml.ucdavis.edu/bmr/) , which is part of the UC Natural Reserve System (http://nrs.ucop.edu/) . The peninsula is considered a prime spot to observe the migration of whales. It is also one of the three points of the Red Triangle, a major feeding ground for great white sharks.[2] A series of trails are a popular destination for recreational hiking.

Bodega Head State Marine Reserve & Bodega Head State Marine Conservation Area protect area waters. Like underwater parks, these marine protected areas help conserve ocean wildlife and marine ecosystems.

The peninsula was probably inhabited by the Coast Miwok people before the arrival of Europeans. Campbell Cove, on the east side of the promontory, is a candidate for Sir Francis Drake's 1579 landing site.[3]

A view from Bodega Head.

Bodega Head

Bodega Head in 2009, seen from Tomales Point

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- 1 Geology
- 2 See also
- 3 References
- 4 External links

Geology

Maskull Lasserre

Incarnate (Three Degrees of Certainty II), 2012
Sculpture: books, steel, hardware,
101.6 x 20.3 x 27.9 cm

According to *Wikipedia*, "in the arts, vanitas is a type of symbolic work of art especially associated with still life painting in Flanders and the Netherlands in the 16th and 17th centuries [...] The Latin word, meaning "vanity", indicates the meaninglessness of earthly life and the transient nature of all earthly goods and pursuits." If in the past, fruits and flowers, sometimes food, candles and jewelry worked well as visual symbols of obsolescence, deterioration and the transience of life, today when thinking about fast obsolescence, the first things that come to mind are hardware and software - both conceived according to a protocol known as "planned obsolescence". *Incarnate (Three Degrees of Certainty II)* is a life-sized human skull manually carved into old software manuals that have lost any function, outside of digital archeology. A true contemporary vanitas.

Maskull Lasserre (CA, born in Canada in 1978) makes drawings and sculptures that explore the unexpected potential of the everyday through allegories of value, expectation, and utility. Elements of nostalgia, accident, humor, and the macabre are incorporated into works that induce strangeness in the familiar, and provoke uncertainty in the expected.Lasserre holds a BFA from Mount Allison University (Visual Art and Philosophy), and an MFA from Concordia University (Sculpture).
He is represented in the collections of the Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, and the Government of Canada amongst others.
He has exhibited across Canada, in the United States and in Europe.
More info: http://maskulllasserre.com/

Installation view, Škuc Gallery, Ljubljana. Photo Miha Fras.

Installation view, Škuc Gallery, Ljubljana. Photo Miha Fras.

Aled Lewis

Not sure if art, 2012
Illustration (A2 size, 297 x 420 mm,
5 colour screen print on Sirio 350gsm,
signed, numbered edition of 50, framed)

According to *Know Your Meme*, the "Futurama Fry / Not sure if" meme "is an image macro series that uses a still of Fry from the TV show Futurama squinting his eyes, and is typically paired with overlaid text using a phrasal template. The top line reads "Not sure if X", with "or just Y" as the bottom line, and it is used to represent an internal monologue." The internet meme started in 2011 and has never lost popularity. Lewis used this simple yet effective template to make a humorous, clever commentary on the nature of art, appropriation and copyright in the Internet age.

Aled Lewis (UK, born 1982) is a designer, illustrator and author based in London, England. He moved to London from Portsmouth in 2005 to study Graphic Design and has lived and worked there ever since. Aled is a life-long gamer: influenced and inspired by comics, film and television. His favourite shows are Arrested Development, Curb Your Enthusiasm and Breaking Bad. He loves Jurassic Park. His clients include Polaroid, GQ, Gap, New York Times, Urban Outfitters, Penguin, Vice and Sony. He is a Gemini. More info: www.aledlewis.com.

NOT SURE IF ART
OR COPYRIGHT
INFRINGEMENT

Dennis Logan

Cat Slap Joy Division, 2011
Video, 1:57 min,
http://youtu.be/IJlualhdUpc

Cat Slap Joy Division **juxtaposes some weird found footage of a man slapping his cats on an ironing board with the song** *Atmosphere* **by the Joy Division, resulting in a strangely compelling short film. The work gets its hypnotic power from the contrast between the happy mood of the mysterious slapper and the dark, depressed tune that accompanies the action. Some very close synchronizations of the slap rhythm with the drums pattern of the song do the rest.**
The video has been featured in dozens of web magazines and blogs, and since it appeared in October 2011, it has been viewed by more than 400.000 people.

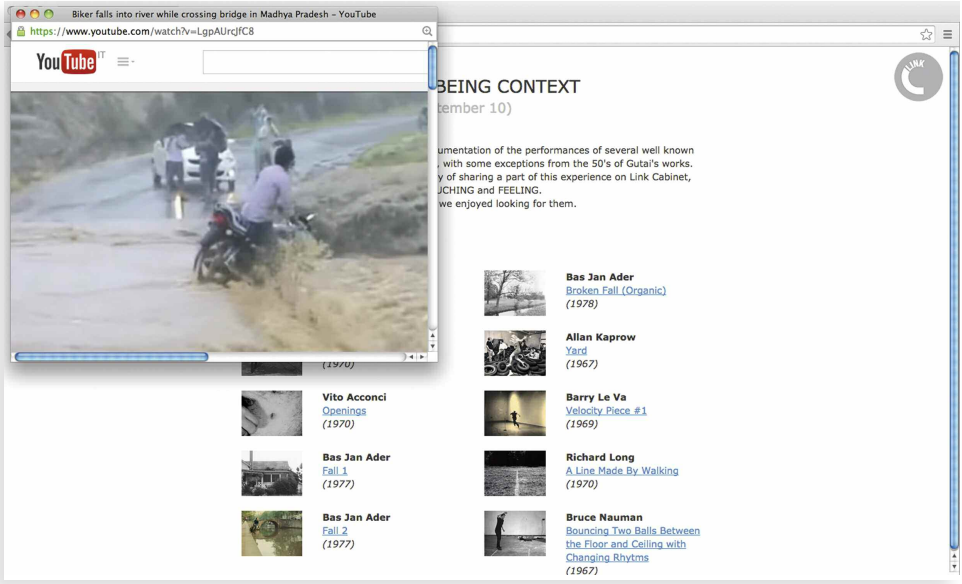
With 70 videos uploaded to YouTube since August 2006, Dennis Logan (Spatula007) is a quite active YouTube user, but *Cat Slap Joy Division* is one of his top hit. The "about" section of his account reads: "The best of Supergun Cinema and Cinema Spatula short films and misc videos. See and hear the movies everyone is never talking about... for a reason." More info: www.youtube.com/user/Spatula007/.

The Importance Of Being Context, 2014
Web project, online archive

The Importance of Being Context **is an online archive that collects a series of well known art performances, mainly from the 60's and the 70's. In the archive, video documentation of works by Marina Abramovic, Vito Acconci, Bruce Nauman and the like is replaced by YouTube videos in which different individuals perform actions unwittingly similar to those in the original performance in question. The work is an open invitation to think about performance, its proximity to everyday life, the importance of the artistic context in turning a simple action into an art work, and the uncanny valley between art performance protocols and popular games.**

Valeria Mancinelli (IT, born 1986) is a contemporary art curator. Since 2008 she is part of the independent space for contemporary arts S.a.L.E. Docks and co-founder of the project Trial Version. She has curated different exhibitions including *Green Desire*, Spazio Sassetti, Milano 2011; *A Linking Park*, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Torino 2013; and *Echo Back*, Jarach Gallery, Venice 2013.

Roberto Fassone (IT, born 1986) makes works that explore and question the notion of art and games, the processes regulating them both, and the relationship between the two. He works mainly with video, installation and live performance, and he is the creator of *sibi* (2012 - ongoing), a software endlessly generating instructions that can be turned into artworks. He holds an BA from Turin Politecnico, and an MA from IUAV University, Venice. Since 2009, he has exhibited in various shows in Italy and abroad. More info: www.jamaicainroma.com



Installation view at Link Cabinet, September 2 - 26, 2014. http://linkcabinet.eu/

Marina Abramovic, *Rhytm 10 (The Star)* 1973 (still from video)
Saburo Murakami, *Passing Through* 1956 (still from video)

Mark McEvoy

New Lyrics for Old Songs, 2014
Ongoing series of digital prints

Mark McEvoy's work analyses the nature of image making and the concept of authorship in the contemporary age. His Tumblr blog, *New Lyrics for Old Songs*, is an ongoing visual project that uses appropriation and remix as its major tools of investigation. All sorts of found material (artworks, photos, portraits of famous artists, book covers, movie screenshots) are the starting point for a non stop visual experimentation.

Mark McEvoy's (IRL, 1973). Belfast born, University of Ulster fine art graduate 1997, Glasgow School of Art MFA graduate 2005. Lives and works in Glasgow.
More info: http://markmcevoy.tumblr.com

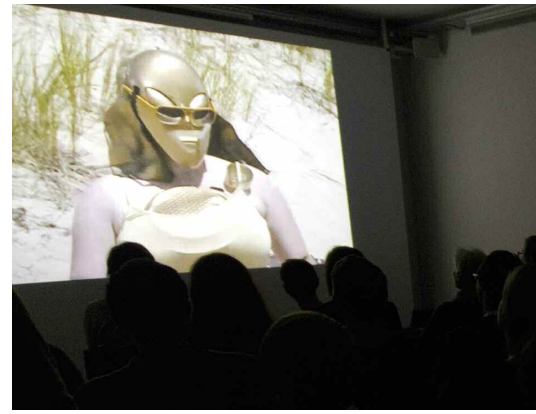
In the artist's own words: "the project is my attempt to explore the age-old notion of the 'unreliable narrator'. I view the Internet as the embodiment of that". Also, the project seems to suggest that any image, with an appropriate caption, can turn into an Internet meme.

I HAVE AN
ART BLOG

Report a problem

Casey Pugh et al.

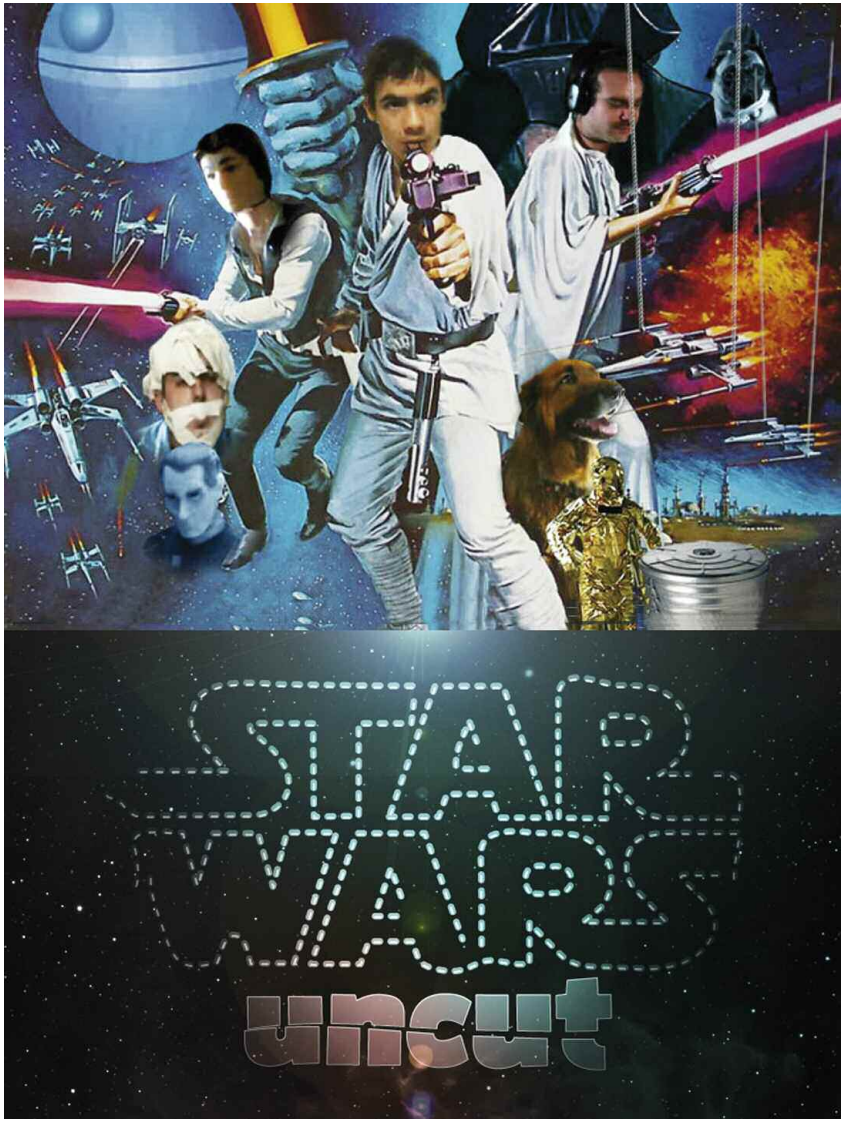
Star Wars Uncut, 2009-2011
Video, 125 mins.
http://starwarsuncut.com/



Screening at Aksioma Project Space, Ljubljana, August 20, 2014.
Photo: Janez Janša

Star Wars Uncut is a film project Casey Pugh started in 2009. In 2010 it won a Primetime Emmy for Outstanding Creative Achievement in Interactive Media – Fiction. Described as "the biggest fan remake of all time", *Star Wars Uncut* is a crazy fan mashup remake of the original *Star Wars* movies. The classic film *Star Wars IV: A New Hope* (1977) was split into 480 15-second scenes, and Internet users were invited to choose a scene and create a remake of it within 30 days. Each scene could be recreated in any possible way: live action, homemade re-enactment, stop motion, flipbooks, action figures, 3D animation, animated ASCII art, etc. Once all 480 scenes were claimed, they were unlocked again so that more people could participate. About a thousand fans from 300 countries all around the world took part in the process, and all the scenes are available online on the project's website and on YouTube. When the collaborative process was completed, Casey Pugh and his team – which included Aaron Valdez (video editor), Bryan Pugh (sound design/mixing) and Jamie Wilkinson (video narrator) – started working on the submitted to turn it into a full feature film, that was released online to the public in January 2012. The "Uncut" movie was generated by a computer program written by Pugh that automatically played the highest rated rendition of each scene, and compiled those scenes on the fly, so the movie could change in real time depending on the ratings of users. This makes *Star Wars Uncut* not just a work of crowdsourced fan fiction, but a code-directed movie, generated online and welcomed by the broadcast world. Lastly, the Director's Cut is a fully edited movie with the actual *Star Wars* soundtrack.

Casey Pugh (US, born 1985) is a creative technologist and a developer dedicated to creating interactive experiences on the web. He is one of the creators of the Vimeo video player and one of the founders of VHX, a distribution platform that helps video creators to distribute, promote and generate income from their creations. More info: http://caseypugh.com/.


STAR WARS
uncut

Steve Roggenbuck

Internet Poetry Manifesto (2011): How social media will spawn a major revitalization in poetry, Video, 6:35 mins.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrTETPYfVhQ

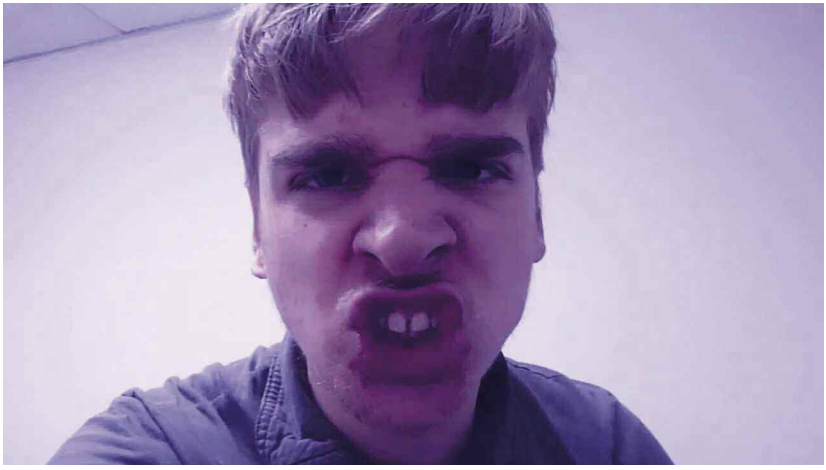
We All Die Eventually (2012) CARPE DIME VIDEO.. "SIZE THE DAY" VERY ENCOURAGING, Video, 1:37 mins.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=JhKpaT0G4yg

"AN INTERNET BARD AT LAST!!!" (2013) ARS POETICA, Video, 4:41 mins.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=YchvRnKwCbc

Steve Roggenbuck's work focuses on building a new kind of poetry based on Internet language, styles and aesthetics, reconnecting the ancient art of literature with the social potential of web communities.

In his YouTube videos he recites verses in a over excited voice, holding the camera a few inches from his face, inciting people to embrace the Internet as a powerful platform for self expression and connecting with other people all over the world. As he says in a recent interview: "If we're trying to move people in only 140 characters, or 6 seconds, or 500x500 pixels, our language must be charged with meaning. In that sense, the internet is a game that only poets can win. What I'm trying to do is get more poets-in the-romantic-sense to use these platforms."

Steve Roggenbuck (US, born 1987) is a poet, blogger, performer and YouTube star from rural Michigan. He's the first poet to be catalogued as a meme by Know Your Meme. His work explores (among other things) the new forms that poetry, humor, and spirituality might take on the internet. He has been covered by *Rolling Stone, The New Yorker, The Atlantic, Gawker, The Guardian* among others. He lives vegan and drug free. He has published two full-length poetry books, CRUNK JUICE (2012) and IF U DONT LOVE THE MOON YOUR AN ASS HOLE (2013), and two earlier e-books: I AM LIKE OCTOBER WHEN I AM DEAD (2010) and DOWNLOAD HELVETICA FOR FREE.COM (2011).
More info: http://livemylief.com



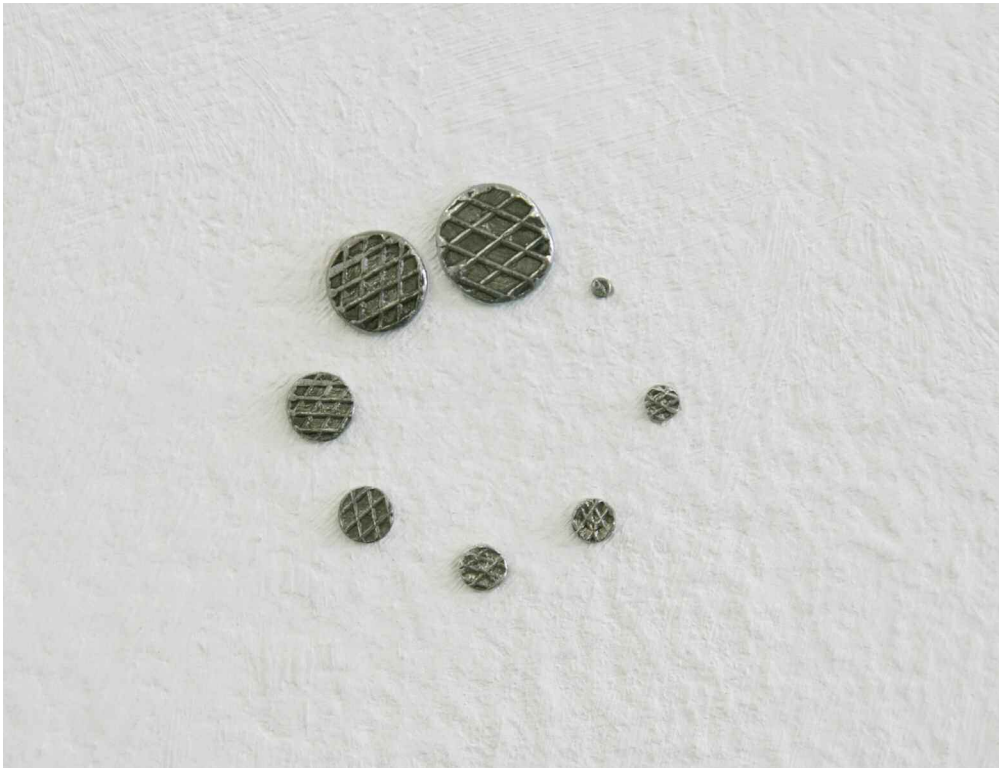
I MAY GO INTO ADVERTISING BUT I DON'T LIKE THE COMMERCIAL ASPECT

Helmut Smits

YouTube (Staring at the Wall), 2010
Sculpture: nails in different sizes, 3 x 3 cm

YouTube (Staring at the Wall) is a minimal, playful wall-mounted work consisting in eight little nails resembling a very familiar, usually immaterial, image: the YouTube loading wheel, a static, motionless icon you can do nothing but stare at. The work could be described as an effective visualization of Marshall McLuhan's infamous statement, "the medium is the message": although apparently irrelevant if compared to the contents it displays, through its discrete yet overdesigned visual symbols (the loading wheel, the timeline bar) the YouTube platform ends up becoming the true content of itself: to the point that, while we may not remember a single video watched on the platform, when we see a simple arrangement of a few dots in a circle, we immediately think about YouTube.

Helmut Smits (NL, born 1974) is a multidisciplinary visual artist based in Rotterdam, The Netherlands. He works with video, sculpture and installation in public spaces, and he's also active as a designer. He attended the 's-Hertogenbosch Academy for Visual Arts. Since 2000, he has been featured in many group and solo exhibitions in Europe and the States.
More info: http://helmutsmits.nl/.



Paweł Sysiak and Tymek Borowski

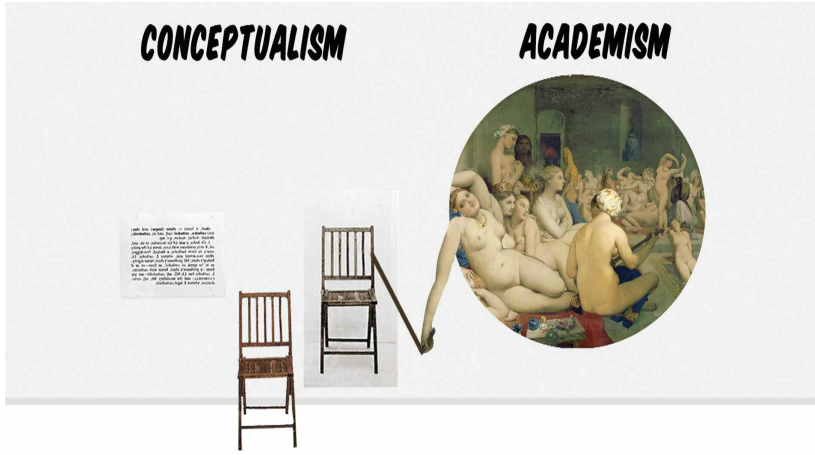
How Art Works? A serious movie about problems and solutions, 2012
HD video, 12:40 mins.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=JZ-eSTuf7Ko

How Art Works? A serious movie about problems and solutions is a thoughtful and engaging visual essay that raises important questions about the quality of today's artworld and about the (long lost) sincerity and boldness of artists. The movie is divided in three chapters: the first one is focused on history, explaining the evolution of art as a social activity; the second is an incisive analysis of the present, a world in which the cult of the artist's personality has obfuscated the things that "really matters" about art. The third part of the video is a manifesto, a set of resolutions written by the artists as a guide to overcome this cultural impasse. The short film went viral on YouTube, where it got more than 25.000 views.

Tymek Borowski (PL, born 1984) lives, has fun and works in Warsaw. He studied painting at the Academy of Fine Arts and he has been active as an artist since 2005. More info: http://tymekborowski.com/

Paweł Sysiak (PL) is a graphic designer and artist. He grew up in Poland, where he earned a MA at the Warsaw's Academy of Fine Arts and he currently lives and works in San Francisco. He is a co-founder of Billy, an art gallery that wants to use Internet as a serious art medium and tries to come up with a new model of art economy. More info: www.sysiak.com and http://billygallery.com.

INTERNATIONAL
PROTOTYPE
ARTWORK


CONCEPTUALISM
ACADEMISM

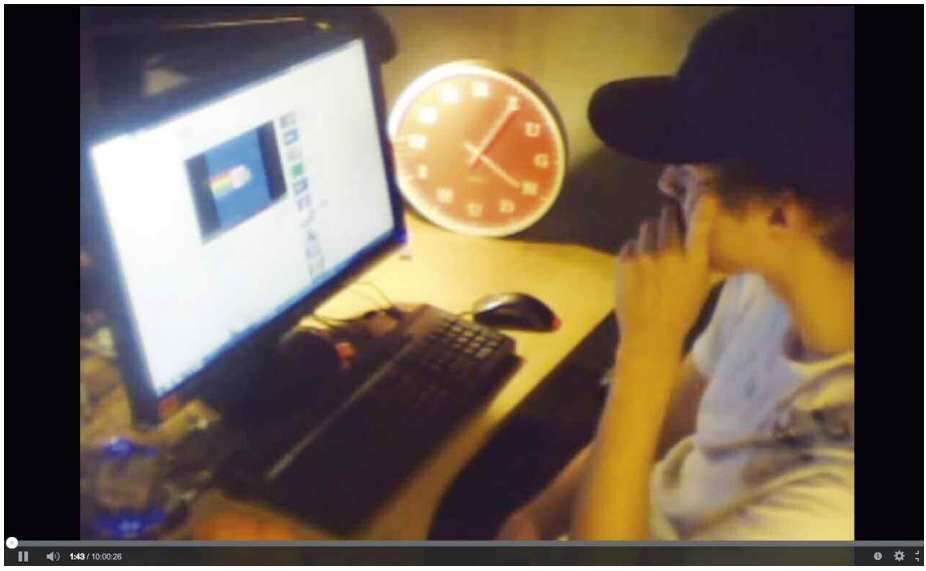
YOU WILL BE
LOVED, ADMIRED
AND NOTICED...
WORLD

Nyan Cat 10 HOURS REACTION VIDEO! (Yes, I actually watched it for 10 hours), 2011
Video, 10:00:26. http://youtu.be/D6etnDBV2gY

According to *Know Your Meme*, "Nyan Cat, also known as Pop Tart Cat, is an 8-bit animation depicting a cat with the body of a cherry pop tart flying through outer space. [...] the surreal humor behind this particular combination has captivated YouTubers and online art communities, spawning fan illustrations as well as user-interface designs and homebrew games across multiple platforms." The animation was published by illustrator Chris Torres in April 2011, and an anonymous YouTube user later set it to the well-known Japanese Vocaloid song *Nyanyanyanyanyanyanya* by Japanese artist Daniwell-P. It went immediately viral, inspiring a number of derivative projects. *Nyan Cat 10 Hours* is one of them – one of the many 10 hours videos published on YouTube after 2011, when the upload capacity of new accounts was (secretly) increased to that limit.

TheGamePro has only ever uploaded this one video on YouTube, gathering 2,526 subscribers and 1,339,167 views so far.

Nyan Cat 10 Hours Reaction Video is also a reaction video (another genre commonplace on YouTube) and crazy performance done by an Internet user known as TheGamePro, who recorded himself watching the famous *Nyan Cat 10 Hours* video for ten hours straight. As a performance, *Nyan Cat 10 Hours Reaction Video* is based on endurance, and strictly follows the rules of early performance art, listed by Marina Abramovic as follows: "No reharsal, no repetition, no predicted end."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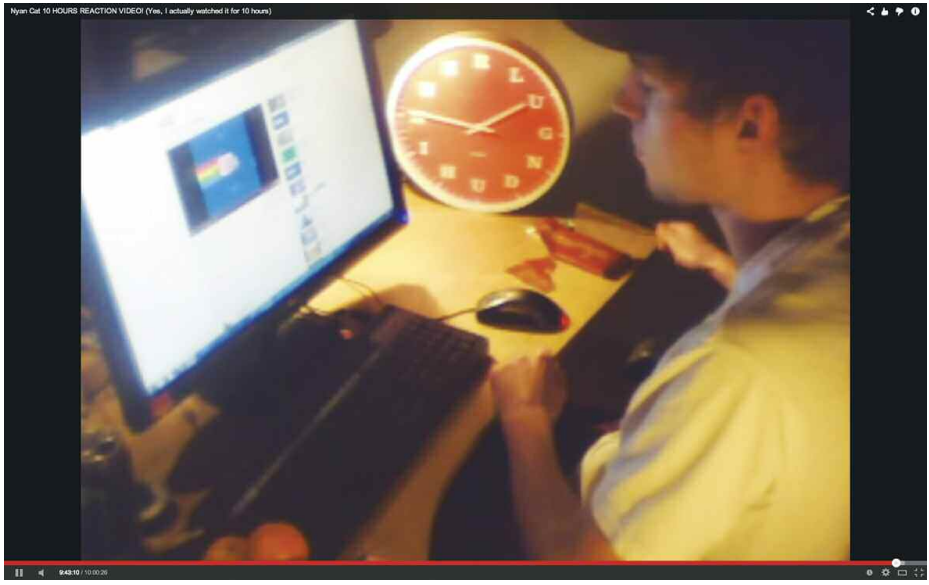
Nyan Cat 10 HOURS REACTION VIDEO! (Yes, I actually watched it for 10 hours)
9:43:10 / 10:00:26

Phil Thompson

Copyrights, 2011 - ongoing
Paintings, oil on canvas,
various dimensions

Copyrights is a lucid commentary on the notion of copyright in the digital age, and related issues like the accumulation of big data by corporations such as Google and copyright infringment in developing countries. The Google Art Project (www.googleartproject.com) contains several paintings which have had a blur filter applied to them so as to make them unrecognisable. Google states that the paintings were "required to be blurred by the museums for reasons pertaining to copyrights." The artist collected all of these images by taking screenshots and cropping out the blurred images, then emailed them to oil painting reproduction companies in China (chosen for its own issues with internet censorship and for its ongoing difficulties with Google), where they were painted to the scale of the original painting. Shipped back to the UK, these reproductions have become artworks in their own right.

Phil Thompson (UK, born 1988) earned a BA in Art Practice at Goldsmiths, London (2007-2010) and an MA in Sculpture at the Slade School of Art (2010-2012).
Since 2009 he has exhibited widely in the UK.
He is represented by XPO Gallery, Paris.
More info: www.pjdthompson.co.uk

Installation view, Škuc Gallery, Ljubljana. Photo Miha Fras.

Wendy Vainity

My crappy life, in crappy 3d animation, 2010
Video, 02:12 mins. http://youtu.be/7eRBQt51VlA

Bare arsed Tedda Bear does lunch in the park, 2010
Video, 03:50 mins. http://youtu.be/vlBdGKal1Yc

My crappy life, in crappy 3d animation is a short video in which the creator introduces herself to her audience. We see her in the garden of her house in Adelaide, surrounded by rainbow coloured rays and trees with strange swinging leaves. We also see her cats, dancing gracefully on the bed in a zero-gravity-like atmosphere. The surreal, uncanny atmosphere of the whole scene is heightened by the soundtrack: a song based on an Australian folk tune called *Wild Colonial Boy*, performed by a vocal synthesizer. The second video, *Bare arsed Tedda Bear does Lunch in the park*, has a similar visual style and soundtrack, but this time there is no autobiography involved and the atmosphere is humourous and oniric: all we see are costumed bears doing hip-shaking dance moves on a picnic blanket, surrounded by flying food.

Wendy Vainity (AU, also known as matcatlady, her YouTube username) is an extremely creative and prolific YouTube user. On her account, she describes herself as "just a hobby animation software user using ready made content, just having fun on my computer and sharing." Yet, the 3D animations made by this self-taught Australian have an incredibly bizarre, even disturbing edge, albeit infused with an undeniable sense of humor. She has uploaded almost 800 videos so far, collecting something like 16,879 subscribers and 5,124,155 views since 2009, including many art world fans. Her work has been featured on *Vice*, *Hyperallergic*, *DIS Magazine* and *Salon* among others, but very little is known about her, except for what she says through her rather autobiographical work.
Check out her YouTube channel:
www.youtube.com/user/wendyvainity.

Installation view, Škuc Gallery, Ljubljana. Photo Miha Fras.

Published on the occasion of the exhibition:

ETERNAL SEPTEMBER
The Rise of Amateur Culture
Curated by Valentina Tanni

Škuc Gallery
Stari trg 21, Ljubljana
2 – 26 September 2014

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Coproduction

Škuc Gallery, Ljubljana

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Clouds

Domenico Quaranta, *In Your Computer*, 2011
Valentina Tanni, *Random*, 2011
Gene McHugh, *Post Internet*, 2011
Brad Troemel, *Peer Pressure*, 2011
Kevin Bewersdorf, *Spirit Surfing*, 2012
Mathias Jansson, *Everything I shoot Is Art*, 2012
Domenico Quaranta, *Beyond New Media Art*, 2013
Curt Cloninger, *One Per Year*, 2014

In My Computer

#1 Miltos Manetas, *In My Computer # 1*, 2011
#2 Chris Coy, *After Brad Troemel*, 2013
#3 Martin Howse, *Diff in June*, 2013
#4 Damiano Nava, *Let the Right One In*, 2013
#5 Evan Roth, *Since You Were Born*, 2014
#6 Addie Wagenknecht, *Technological Selection of Fate*, 2014

Catalogues

Collect the WWWorld. The Artist as Archivist in the Internet Age, 2011.
Exhibition Catalogue. Edited by Domenico Quaranta, with texts
by Josephine Bosma, Gene McHugh, Joanne McNeil, D. Quaranta

Gazira Babeli, 2011.
Exhibition catalogue. Edited by Domenico Quaranta,
with texts by Mario Gerosa, Patrick Lichty, D. Quaranta, Alan Sondheim

Holy Fire. Art of the Digital Age, 2011.
Exhibition catalogue. Edited by Yves Bernard, Domenico Quaranta

Ryan's Web 1.0. A Lossless Fall, 2012.
By Ryan Trecartin

RE:akt! Reconstruction, Re-enactment, Re-reporting, 2014.
Exhibition Catalogue. Edited by Antonio Caronia, Janez Janša, Domenico Quaranta,
with texts by Jennifer Allen, Jan Verwoert, Rod Dickinson

Born Digital, 2014.
Exhibition Catalogue. Edited by Link Art Center.

Open

Best of Rhizome 2012, 2013.
Edited by Joanne McNeil
Co-produced with Rhizome, New York (USA).

The F.A.T. Manual, 2013.
Edited by Geraldine Juárez, Domenico Quaranta.
Co-produced with MU, Eindhoven (NL).

Troika, Edited by Domenico Quaranta, 2013.
Co-produced with Aksioma - Institute for Contemporary Art, Ljubljana (SLO).

Eternal September, 2014
Various Authors
Co-produced with Aksioma - Institute for Contemporary Art, Ljubljana (SLO)

Torque # 1. Mind, Language and Technology, 2014
Edited by Nathan Jones and Sam Skinner
Co-produced with Torque Editions (UK)

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Curated by Valentina Tanni, Eternal September, The Rise of Amateur Culture **is a group exhibition that explores the relationship between professional art making and the rising of amateur cultural movements through the web, an historical event that is triggering a big and fascinating shift in every field of culture, especially visual culture. The show includes the works of 15 authors (professionals and amateurs) and a series of special projects and collateral events taking place both offline and online.**

This exhibition catalogue features a curatorial text by Valentina Tanni, together with an interview with artist Matthias Fritsch, the man beyond the Teknoviking meme, an essay by artist group Smetnjak on practicing critical theory in the form of internet memes, and visual documentation of Tanni's ongoing curatorial project The Great Wall of Memes. **Featured artists include Mauro Ceolin, Paolo Cirio, Electroboutique, Paul Destieu, Matthias Fritsch, Colin Guillemet, David Horvitz, Maskull Lasserre, Aled Lewis, Dennis Logan (Spatula007), Valeria Mancinelli and Roberto Fassone, Mark McEvoy, Casey Pugh et al., Steve Roggenbuck, Helmut Smits, Pawel Sysiak and Tymek Borowski, TheGamePro, Phil Thompson, and Wendy Vainity.**

Valentina Tanni (1976, Rome, Italy) is a contemporary art critic and curator. Her research is focused on the relationship between art and new media, with a focus on Internet culture.
More info: www.valentinatanni.com