

MyFlag, social networking and dialogic reappropriation.

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Tracks of self.

According to the aggregation phenomenas presented by forums, mailing-lists, chats and other communication protocols, the web 2.0 forewarns new practices. Individualized and modulating connexion dispositives, embodied by social networking as Myspace, Facebook or Skyblog, involve what Laurence Allard defines as the *extimate* : the exposed self, cast and linked to other individual representations. The virtual body is a data body transferred and rearranged into modulating territories which are interfaces preprogrammed and bount to render a range of environments impregnation in contact with the individual. The web user is no more conform to a deictical perspective, displaying, revealing, archiving according to traditional logics of exhibition - as the first HTML websites prefigured it - it is more about a constant rearrangement, besides the relational indexation of information is allowed by a solid filing and organizing capacities of the technical means.

The interconnection idealized postulate applied to all users is negated by the permanent hacktivist sphere's wish to distinguish public and private sphere. Because of the numerous technical, philosophical and artistic elaborations social networking induces itself a dialogic perception in which integrity is expressed in an ethic way - to remain itself in essence - besides the net reflexive dimension tend to compel a paranoid and panoptical vision. Dealing with these paradoxes, the digital artist syncretises those territories, teetering between mediation and the initial *communicare* which means communion.

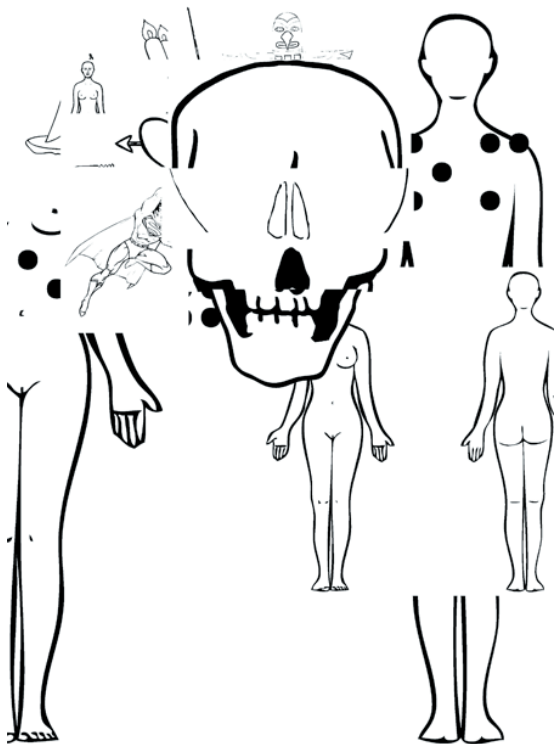
Surely social networking is a topic marked by its complicated and tangles architecture, it organizes mechanizing dispositives which users are the reticular operators. Regarding this individual integratings complexity within network, is the web providers's supposedly first vocation proven ? Actually, to put it in other words, are web users enjoying more conviviality, humanness, merrymaking or communication ? Does all this really creating link ? All these issues are ongoing since the individual is stranglehold between a fluctuating social environment (unemployment, consumption, health...) and a fantasized universe allowing the entire fulfilment of all wishes.

A new definition of space, provide : furnish, specify, engage...

Then, if these furnishings seem at first enjoyable it is necessary to understand the notion of dispositive. Operating on the exchange and reciprocity principle, dispositives imply energies, actions bount to a public : a receiver, willing

or involuntarily, moving to a place, a given context, singular or common, and a given time. The one who sets the required conditions to a fully operational deployment of the dispositive can be resume as a performer or a provider. Because if the provider makes a giving, he/her operates also as a symbolic adviser, leading toward a range of hypothesis to explore or not and to set within an efficiency and functionality logic. There is no doubt about the dispositive embodying authority, sacredness, and properties well fitted in numerous digital and interactive art works. Although anyone dealing with alike participative art work's dispositive design does not gamble with hazard and surprise as over-response, dynamic reject, request or rephrasing. Actually it is necessary to look askance numerous new technologies driven exhibitions, mostly fascinated by monumentality or foreshadowing, sophistications and other incongruity insertion linking art, science, biotechnology, ethic and business - properties always warned by the Critical Art Ensemble. Such circumstances are not mainstream and approaches driven by current network issues can take more surprising forms. In instance the approach of Art-Act's work *MyFlag* which deals with hijacking and rephrasing specific social networking vocabulary exemplify our topic.

Hanging on instead of running away.



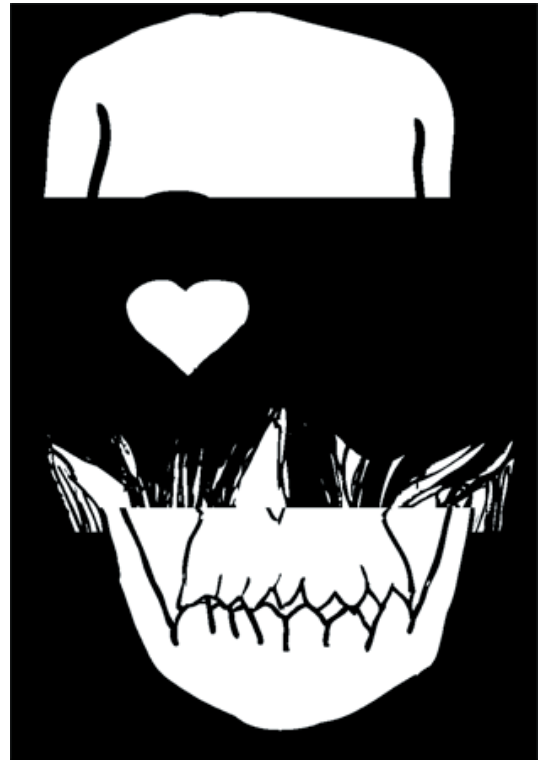
As well as an activist theoretical and documentary framework Art-Act has engaged for several years its will to disrupt the sole hegemonic art model, rationalizing and setting circulations within the so-called public space. If urban issues are about to fit the better the question, however it is not the chosen one for Art-Act. Unlike numerous activist groups setting their actions in the streets, Art-Act members work to input involment and critical thinking of the virtual as an operating and autorepresenting space. According to the Foucault's definition, they consider network as a stratified matter, covered and recovered by settings, measurements and utterances, achronical and simultaneous time : a heterotopical model. *MyFlag*, running from september 2007, would be a phoresical-like dispositive (from Greek phoros which means to

carry) that is to say the host's organism carriage. Alike remora, a suckerfish following sharks or other big marine specimens, Art-Act chose to set its communication and artistic generator dispositive on Myspace, web 2.0 and autorepresentation's emblem. Myspace is mostly well known for its capacity to link members of the community in accordance to affinities, many music bands using it as a promotional tool. Defined as an *visual anthropology*

interpretation, Myflag hijack automation models for its own sake using a pirates banners generator based on the *Jolly Roger* model. From 1700, the dead head flag symbolizes a freedom and independency affirmation, a symbolic statement to refuse assimilation to any corporation or any state. The pavilion was a representation, an extension of the individual and his/her crew and while fluttering showed the pirates intentions.

In accordance to a current and virtual update two issues come out :

First of all if the dissenting politic event is actually estheticized, too often reduced to a position, it is then necessary to think about the symbols used and injected in the art production. Numerous artists use deceptive, minimal or underground like culture as a motive of rejection. It is likely to visit website with subversive content and with 90-95's graphic codes (Courier fonts, white background, no image, rough photomontage) which is no more than another consensual stigmatization. On the contrary, Art-Act calls for permeability between sensitive and plastic domain, which includes graphic, photographic, sound and videographic productions, and the irreverence tone. Actually, Art-Act does not ban popular culture symbols - reinjected in design and motif pattern - to hijack them in



a critical way. If *Jolly Roger* was an stand for autonomy, it also was an allegory, a vanity of ephemeral and of the passing being.



Nowadays, generators design show windows and frontage of the global individual living in a palimpsest networking. Nothing remains and all is changing in a perpetual rewriting as do the generator model. Then it is the ideology which dominates the interchangeable at the expense of the permanent.

The second important issue is more about the appropriation processes of a generative model. As explained, the dispositive dominates, sets a logic of showing, seeing, understanding.

Then, generate in essence remove a sense of responsibility and destitute its user from his/her power to decide, that is the influence he/her might operate on the environment, since the result depends on several factors beyond user's

control. Undeniably generativity fascinates, seduces but escape beyond user's control because of the provider who is the one to control it. The full dispositive interaction isn't illusory since the parameters are built on random sets, only conditions have to be checked. Myspace works the same, then out of the usual restrictions (publication, advertising, content filtering) and the ascendancy lack leaved on the web server, it has no modular limits and is governed by norms which follows up precise boundaries leading inevitably to individuals standardization. Art-Act nourishes simultaneously a critical discourse toward this omnipotence (Myspace's owner is Rupert Murdoch, one of the american media big boss) but also chooses wilfully hijacking, to step inside the doom and to disrupt the whole *cellular rules and norms (...)* for a modality re-invention of the constant renewed forms.



Territories, taking action

In accordance to the prior issues, *MyFlag* might be thought as an online-driven work which would very lower its influence. Although the term subversion isn't used it is still obvious regarding the actual application proposed and activated by Art-Act. That is to say that if the aim of this work consists in supplying multiples of pavilions, auto-representation extensions, it can't be reduced to a simple screening. What creates the effectiveness of the dispositive and its interaction with a public is the printing, the assembling and the hanging of the pavilions in physical areas (urban, rural, private, public, official, hidden, spectacular...) Everyone can create a pavilion, an autonomous artwork purposely to be shown despite the volition of artists (who don't control the generator). Activation is reached while the networking limits are crossed, that is to say when the archived short note and the downloaded intimate are achieved. Then, if the dispositive linking each individual sets the conditions to its self-achievement, so Myspace is destitute from the cannibalism it generates, the intake of virtual identifications.

"the limits of my language are the limits of my inner world" a so lucid statement leads to overcome the given boundaries to spread our inner worlds. If generative artwork is fundamentally transitive as it produces items and is designed by a process then because *MyFlag* changes its territory it becomes reflexive. It is no more representative - according to Louis Marin's terminologies - it gets self-connected and self-conscious because of the conditions which determine it. Taking action produces the artwork, extracts it from the dispositive and its limits, which are *not only by essence spatial but also temporal in a way that it doesn't only separate a beyond and an above but also a past and an after.*² Then the only existing territories are those we overcome, duplicate and create, the ones we figurate. *MyFlag* might be one of them...

(Footnotes)

¹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus logico-philosophicus, 1921, 5.6

² Eléments pour une théorie de la frontière, CLAUDE RAFFESTIN, revue Diogène n°134, 1986, p.3-21

All pictures are taken with Art-Act's autorisation

MyFlag website : http://www.myspace.com/myflag_artact

Art-Act : <http://www.art-act.net>