Net.Art. The art of connecting
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Note: The following abstract is a broad synthesis of the book. Sometimes it follows literally the original text, sometimes it shrinks it down to few words.

Thanks to Francesca da Rimini for editing this text.
This book is the result of a clumsy theft, a smuggling of ideas, theories and practices of dubious provenance. The spoils have been accurately forged, but they still present the recognition signs left by their last “owners”. You will not find them on a stall, nor auctioned on e-Bay. The thieves (the authors) have mounted the objects on a tapestry, to form an almost coherent drawing that make them not saleable one by one.

The choice of fixing in the printed matter an ephemeral and hypertextual process like “the art of connecting” was a challenge in itself. It would have been certainly easier to propose an on line index or to set up another collection of essays. By stubbornly insisting on the linear path we have been forced not only to exalt but also to order the hypertextual links amongst various projects. Looking for an “original” cipher of the text, the reader will probably have to consider the way in which the projects have been related to each other. Naturally, we would enjoy a pierced book, or just clicking and jumping from one page to another. But the linearity cage is also a resource, because it has forced us to decide what comes first and what after, and why a project has to be included in a chapter instead of the other.

Another issue was that we were facing a mature practice (for someone already dead), knowing that in Italy very few people even realized it was born. Obeying to the tyranny of a chronological order would have favoured clarity but it would have distracted us from our goal. Which was not to narrate the net.art “progression”, but to capture its most ambivalent aspects and openness to other influences. The initial hypothesis formulated in 1999 was that the Internet was relaunching the aesthetics and politics weaving, so common to all the Twentieth century avant-gardes. The hypothesis was supported by the blooming of highly hybrid practices that freshly recombined a formal experimentation on network codes with a renewed use of communication-guerrilla tactics and with all a series of trespassing into domains apparently distant light-years one from another. In few words, culture jamming landed on the Internet, with the consciousness that anonymity, the “real time” dimension and the system of communicating vessels of the mailing lists were crucial points of strength. By acting in a viral and unexpected manner, the new culture jammers were trespassing different territories, recombining different know-hows to turn upside down the traditional form of communication and politics as if the extreme specialization of informatic and tecno-scientific languages could be partially recomposed through a shared procedure and method. Moreover, the acceleration of participatory processes on a global scale would have demonstrated that far from being isolated, some of these groups were landmarks for the production of imaginary of the new global movement.

Obviously, net.art is not only this. If the authors declare explicitly their sympathy, and their belonging to the networks of the semiotics warriors, the art of connecting walks along winding and not always converging paths. Formal exploration of code, errors and interfaces has its own agenda, that...
only occasionally mix up with hacker, activists and other troublemakers that swarm on the Net. Nevertheless, it’s not necessary that a link between one practice and another is explicit to be actual. Our selecting effort has been to focus on the “memetic potential” of any project and to exalt those ones who looked more suitable to be reused into different contexts. For us, net.art is mainly a connector, a neuron, a lexicon amongst the billions of idle objects residing on the Internet. It is the possibility of turning the banal experience of navigation in a narration in which characters and authors redesign continuously the paths along which they walk.

This is the reason why the “Italian scene” stays in the background. Besides the dubious existence (and necessity) of an actual national scene, the features of Italian groups and practices resembling net.art are generally not suitable for a great contamination. To the tecno-linguistic gap, add the peculiarity of Italian movements, since ever disposed to a broadening of inclusion mechanisms against the velocity of execution and interference. This book is a tool at their disposal, to be modelled by thousands of users and to disclose new possibilities of transformation of the present.
Chapter 1
The art of making network

Prelude. Vuk Cosic’s dreams

The chapter begins with a vision of the Slovenian artist Vuk Cosic (an invention of the authors), who dreams to walk on a hill shaped by monumental buildings designed as archaic, yet ever-changing and flexible 3D characters. After climbing one of the buildings, Cosic can eventually see his own face from the tip of the nose.

It is a morning of December 1995, and with the sensation of being himself an alphanumeric construct, Cosic downloads the e-mail containing the birth myth of the term “Net.Art”; a corrupted ASCII message containing only six legible characters separated by a dot. Cosic forwards the message to a Croatian friend, Igor Markovic, asking him to decode its content. The original text was apparently a rather vague manifesto blaming on traditional art institutions and reclaiming a generic freedom of expression for the artists on the Internet. The quoted fragment read: “All this becomes possible only with the emergence of the Net.Art as a notion becomes obsolete...”. The text was a ready-made, produced entirely by a machine. And it could have not been otherwise, for a practice entirely based on the manipulation of pre-existent assembled codes.

Net.art vs art on the net

After mentioning the formation of an independent “media circus” made of mailing lists, festivals, media labs and conferences (e.g. Net Art Per Se, Trieste, 1996), the general outlines of the semantic field of net.art are drawn. In January 1997, the mailing list Nettime hosts a long thread polarizing around two terms: net.art versus art on the net. The first one is preferred by the vast majority of the interventions not only because of its elegance and synthesis, but mainly because placing the word “net” before “art”, it stresses out the collaborative, process-based and interactive aspects of the practice. Instead “art on the net” would define the Net only as an accessory tools, a simple means of distribution of works who are pre-existent and produced “elsewhere”. As Joachim Blank wrote:

“Art on the net is mostly nothing more than the documentation of art which is not created on the net, but rather outside it and, in terms of content, does not establish any relationship to the net. Netart functions only on the net and picks out the net or the "netmyth" as a theme. It often deals with structural concepts: A group or an individual designs a system that can be expanded by other people”.

Therefore the “mission” of net.art is to constantly explore limits and possibilities of many-to-many communication in a techno-social environment. Along this trajectory, the Net becomes material and tool for production. For the first time in art history, the means of production and distribution coincide. If this self-reflective quality exposes net.art to the accusation of formalism and separation (“therefore placing it in modern art tradition”, Baumgartel), its capacity to mix various competences and attitudes brings it into the undetermined field of “an art that no longer needs to be called art” (Shulgin). In other terms, it is the “medium” in which net.art operates to free it from the limits of modern art and by opening it to the intervention of designers, hackers, activists, journalists, scientists and many others.

Because of these features, net.art doesn’t make use only of the World Wide Web, but relies on a wide range of protocols, communication channels and software: e-mail, browsers, search engines, mailing list, chat, Moo, p2p, satellite and wireless networks. These software are sets of formal instructions (the code) inter-related to other software, whose underlying alphabet is composed of zeros and ones. The duty of much of the software and Gui is to anthropomorphize machine language and binary system. Net.art deploys itself in this undetermined passage between semantic and non semantic writing, in the koiné where stratified systems of signs collapse one upon the other, producing often ambiguities, errors and paradoxes.

These inputs will be deepened in next chapters. By now, it is enough to say that net.art rarely deals with the creation of clearly representable objects. In this case, it would be better to talk of Web Art, which deals with hypertexts or animations characterized by a low level of interaction. Even if they are conceived to be browsed on the Net, most of these web sites could be distributed also via other physical supports, such as the DVD, CD-ROM or Floppy Disk. Nevertheless, it is not our intention to create schematic categories. Not all of the artworks that reside on the Web can exist independently from it. Indeed, some “web art” sites can be considered interventions of network art; for being always “under construction”; for being effectively open to external contributions or other forms; or simply because they reflect conceptually on their own medium.

Because of this, net.art does not have to be related to any specific application. Rather, to define its ray of action, we prefer to put it in relation to three specific concepts and practices: identity play; the manipulation of information fluxes; the aesthetic of the machinic. Starting from the latter we will step back to the origins of net.art to pass to analyze, in the following chapters, the other forms of intervention.

**Aesthetic of the machinic and of communication**

The principle of the ‘machinic’ relates not so much to particular technological or mechanical objects connected to or independent from the human body. The ‘machines’ can be social bodies, industrial complexes, or psychological or cultural formations, such as the complex of desires, habits and incentives that create particular forms of collective behaviour in groups of individuals, or the aggregation of materials, instruments, human individuals, lines of communication, rules and conventions that together constitute a company or institution. These are examples for ‘machines’ which are assemblages of heterogeneous parts, aggregations which transform forces, articulate and propel their elements, and force them into a continuous state of transformation and becoming.
As an aesthetic principle, the machinic is associated with process rather than object, with dynamics rather than finality, with instability rather than permanence, with communication rather than representation, with action and with play. The aesthetics of the machinic does not so much concern itself with the intention or result of artistic practices, but with the translations and transformations that occur within a machinic assemblage.


In this paragraph, we draw a distinction between dynamic, process-based and non representational qualities of net.art and the same qualities as they were played out by XX century avant-gardes. Futurism, dadaism, Fluxus, the Situationists, mail art and land art had already replaced the artwork with the happenings, the detournement, the psychogeography and interventions within the postal system or on the landscape. But the avant-gardes were driven by the polemic against the art system more than by the need of communicating remotely through new technologies. Besides, the original idea of Television as “vision at distance” was replaced, after the Twenties by broadcast. These pushed the artists to concentrate themselves more on recording technologies than on telecommunications. (Lev Manovich).

It is only by the end of the Seventies that a new generation of artists will start to experiment with telecommunications in itself. In other terms, the implementation of an art of the processes from a polemic choice against the art system will become a *conditio sine qua non* imposed by the adopted technology. As Derrick De Kerchove wrote in 1986: “If we don’t get immediately the crucial node of the aesthetic of communication, the reason is simple: it is because it doesn’t work any longer starting from *representation*, as all the typographic media and the likes. Until we will try to represent a certain circuit, a given experience as a mirror function the book model we will make the same simplistic mistake of the average viewer that facing an abstract painting asks what it means. It doesn’t mean anything, it wants to make something… The aesthetic of communication is not a theory but a practice. It doesn’t create objects, but it entwines relationships… Most of telecommunication artists do not have anything to communicate. For them, it is sufficient to build some circuits and different interactions to make the user the content in itself”.

The first telecommunication performances by artists such as Fred Forest, David Rokeby, Norman White, Mit Mitropolous, Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz were all dealing with the intersection of different tecno-social ways of communicating. The attempt was often to employ in a non conventional way systems originally conceived for military or commercial purposes.

**The forerunners**

In this paragraph some telecommunication performances are told:

- **1977. Satellite Ars Project**, Kit Galloway and Sherry Rabinowitz makes interact two groups of dancers performing at 3.000 km of distance. By using satellite communication, two dislocated events meet “in that *non place* that takes the name of real time”.
- **1980. Hole in Space** by Galloway and Rabonowitz, a public access installation “suspended” between the Brodway Store in Los Angeles and the Lincoln Center in New York. Three days during which the passersby realized they could communicate in real time through a screen with the other coast. The experiment is interesting because it discloses the dimension of real time to the public, which can choose directly how to use the hole, instead of delegating it to broadcast professionals.
1982. The World in 24 Hours. Robert Adrian X turns the Ars Electronica Center into a “hub” of a network of 24 remote artists who send, over 24 hours, their contributions to the festival by employing low cost technologies. This experiment is surely cheaper and more accessible for artists than Hole in Space, but it is still based on one-to-many telecommunication pattern.

Throughout the first half of the Eighties, Roy Ascott starts to make use of the first telematic networks to build collaborative texts and theorize the concept of networking and dispersed authorship. The invention of Mosaic will allow the integration in a unique protocol (HTTP) of different functions such as images, animations, video, sounds, Vrml and so on.

The dawn of Net.Art

The first Net.Art projects (1994-6) are inspired by a low tech spirit. Based on conceptual solutions and a minimal graphic design, these projects explore the features and possibilities of network protocols. The spirit is fresh, almost naive, as for all the periods of discovery of a new communication tool. The circle of artists is still limited and the economic interests are irrelevant as compared to the desire of playing and manipulating.

Projects listed:

1994. King’s Cross Phone In. Heath Bunting invites people all over the world to call at a given time the numbers of the telephone booth area in the King’s Cross Station in London:

Please do any combination of the following:
(1) call no./nos. and let the phone ring a short while and then hang up
(2) call these nos. in some kind of pattern
   (the nos. are listed as a floor plan of the booth)
(3) call and have a chat with an expectant or unexpectant person
(4) go to Kings X station watch public reaction/answer the phones and chat
(5) do something different

This event will be publicised worldwide
I will write a report stating that:
(1) no body rang
(2) a massive techno crowd assembled and danced to the sound of ringing telephones
(3) something unexpected happened

No refreshments will be provided/please bring pack lunch

Bunting’s call is aimed to create an unexpected event in the urban space and it remembers some of the Fluxus sets of formal instructions. The game is played at the intersection of three different communication systems: 1. The Internet, used as a channel to distribute the call; 2. The phone system; 3. The railway and subway station of King’s Cross.
· **Communication Creates Conflict.** Heath Bunting, Tokyo, 1995. This time the project makes a more specific use of the Web. The users are invited to send messages to Bunting through a form and ask him to drop fax and flyers in different stations of the Tokyo subway.

· In the same period, the Russian artist Alexei Shulgin creates a series of minimal games that play with the formal qualities of the Html combining them with some instructions or conceptual jokes. *Turn Off Your Tv Set, Remedy for Information Disease, Joro Da Silva Travels in Europe, This Morning.*

· Olia Lialina invents some “screenplays” in Html based on b/w images and animated gifs, that often interact with search engines opening therefore the narration to random keywords and infinite possibilities of recombination. *If you want me to clean your screen, My boyfriend came back from the war, Anna Karenin goes to Paradise.*

· Rachel Baker and Alexei Shulgin designs WWW Art Award, a ready made compiled with randomly chosen webpages to which the two authors assign a *WWW Art Medal.* The comments are extracted from critical art essays and the prize is motivated with paradoxical statements that add even more confusion and disorientation.
Chapter Two
Poetics of the code

The politics of the link

The basic mechanisms through which a hyperlink works are explained. The link is a surface with a double face: one, the linking object, is immediately visible whilst the other, the name of the linked document, is less obvious and concealed in the source code of the HTML page. The relationship between these two faces is completely arbitrary and demanded to the author of the page. In other terms, any time we click on a hyperlink we get transferred to a page whose real contents are completely unknown to us. We can only trust the author and expect that the linked object will effectively correspond to the linking one. But what would happen if the webmaster would voluntarily introduce an error or some disturbance in the supposedly “automatic” way of linking informations on the World Wide Web? What would happen if “Deleuze” would transfer you to a website dedicated to mutant salamandra?

Starting from this basic assumption, we take in consideration a series of projects dealing with an unusual or unpredictable ways of managing the hyperlink. These projects are mentioned for their “formal” relevance, but also because they will be easily re-used, for different purposes, in different contexts. They are: Refresh (Shulgin, Cosic, Broeckmann), XXX, Linkx, Abc (Shulgin), Own, Be Owned, Remain Invisible (Heath Bunting).

ASCII Art

During the first period, network artists make often a figurative and iconic use of ASCII (American Standard Code for Information Interchange) characters. In this way, they refuse the assumption that the creative process of digital art should mimic painting or drawing, as suggested by the metaphors employed by the main graphic design softwares. The refusal to use the “paintbrush”, the “pencil” or the “eraser” is rooted into a critic of the ineluctability of innovation and, more in general, of the graphical user interface (as we will see in chapter 4). ASCII Art becomes part of a “media archeology” strategy with the double aim to update some of the forgotten and marginalized technologies of the past, and to throw a bridge to the Twentieth century avant-gardes. Therefore ASCII Art is seen by Vuk Cosic as the legitimate son of a lineage started with Guillaume Apollinaire’ Calligramme, Mallarmé’s Un coup de dés..., Italian Futurism and Russian Suprematism, William S. Burroughs and Brion Gysin’s cut-up, Jeffrey Shaw’s Legible City and so on.

In this expanded sense, ASCII Art starts from telematic networks (e-mail ASCII signatures being the most diffused manifestation) but debords soon to other fields such as computer games,
photography, video and architecture. This process of transcodification of a format into another is at the core of our culture since the Sixties (Manovich). For ASCII artists it consists in reviving dead media.

Featured ASCII project: Instant ASCII Camera (ASCII Art Ensemble), Ttyquake, HASCI Cam (Jaromil), ASCII History of Moving Images (Vuk Cosic), Icontext (Andy Deck), Little Movies (Lev Manovich), Blinkenlights (Chaos Computer Club), Vinylvideo (Gebhard Sengmuller), 386DX (Alexei Shulgin).

We love your computer

This paragraph is dedicated to Jodi, (Joan Heemsmerk and Dirk Paesmans) who launched in 1995 a website, www.jodi.org, without a narrative content, but that turns Html code and other scripts into abstract forms, errors or self-reflexive code. Once connected to Jodi, the user sees its browser breaking down into small windows that jumps from one corner to the other of the screen, encounters terrorist messages of “Alert Virus!”, long scrolls of non formatted ASCII, rolling backgrounds, blinking and flickering pages without an apparent meaning. The usual, first reaction of the user is panic. Since Jodi doesn’t explain its work or publish any critical feedback about it, the website “stands in the Net like a brick” to use an expression of its authors.

Jodi challenges hypertext and the lay-out metaphor mutated from print media and treats the screen surface as something dynamic, time-based and related to television, videogames and other softwares.

Featured Jodi projects: Oss, %Location, Good Times, 404.
Chapter Three
The Possible Extensions

Between 1996 and 1997, big art shows, festivals and institutions such as Ars Electronica, Documenta, Isea and The Walker Art Center of Minneapolis start to shift their attention from the generic “art on the net” to network based art. The main question posed by the art system is not only how to make accessible to a vast audience the experience of “being connected”, but also how to represent its creative side. The first step is how to transfer the net.art medium into the physical space of the museum. Why should a visitor consult an Internet based project in a public space, while she can do it more comfortably from her own place?

The first show to face the issue is Documenta X. Inaugurated in Kassel, Germany, on June 28th 1997, Documenta X dedicates a section to net.art called *Hybrid Workspace*. The exhibition space is sterile, very similar to an office, and the artworks of groups like Jodi get transferred from the Internet to local hard drives. In this way, the curator, Catharine David, avoids the risk of leaving the visitors free to surf the Web and checking their e-mail (forgetting the artwork), but at the same time she removes net.art from its medium of origin. This decontextualization receives many critics and the *Hybrid Workspace* becomes mainly into a space for polemic. However, the failure of Documenta doesn’t mark a crisis of the relationship between the art system and net.art. Rather, the festival inaugurates a reflection amongst new media curators on how to interface online and offline world. This debate will lead to different developments: in some cases the institution will choose exclusively the road of the online exhibition; in some others it will manage quite complex interfaces between the online and offline world; in some others it will split completely the two universes hosting two separate physical and online show. More in general, the traditional exhibition will be replaced by festivals where the duty to present network based art will be left to the artists themselves and to a series of live performances and practical workshops.

In any case, besides some declarations of alterity (“Should we call ourselves still artists?” asked Shulgin in 1996), net.art was ready to an inevitable confrontation with the art system. Inherited by the XX Century avantgardes, this contradiction was faced by net.artists in a less dialectical and frontal way than by the more politicized avantgardes. Since the beginning, net.artists seem to have clear some functioning mechanisms of the art system and use them to attack it and contaminate it like bacteria from inside. Many of them will decide to expand the range of possible extensions, by continuously challenging the borders of the emerging discipling and refusing *de facto* to be confined in one of the many subgenres of contemporary art. One of the more commons techniques of displacement is the identity play of which we give some examples in this chapter.

**Female Extension**
A project by German net.artist Cornelia Sollfrank.

For the full story check: [http://www.artwarez.org/femext/content/femextEN.html](http://www.artwarez.org/femext/content/femextEN.html)

By assuming the personality of 200 hundred women, Cornelia Sollfrank decoupled the body and the subject and disarticulated that complex of physical and discursive elements through which the modern State identifies any subject with a physical body, easily retraceable in space and time (Allucquere Rosanne Stone). In order to realize her intervention the artist collaborated with a network of artists, critics and activists that provided e-mail accounts, distributing them on wide range of servers. This collaboration that gave the curators the impression that the 200 women were “real” demonstrated that “what develops from the idea of one single artist with the collaboration of many others, is incalculable” (Joachim Blank).

**The Digital Hijack**

Etoy story.

Check also: [www.hijack.org/](http://www.hijack.org/)

As compared to Female Extension, etoy enacts the identity play on a different plan: the corporate identity, that will be adopted also by another group, Rtmarrk. With the digital hijack etoy demonstrates to be able to intercept the information fluxes and to divert them on their own website. This ability is based on a lucid analysis of the way the Internet works. The search engine is a funnel, a forced passage for all the surfers; to be in control of the funnel means to control access to information, despite the presumed “horizontality” of the medium. Etoy knows that most of the informations distributed on the Internet are elaborated and indexed by automatic dispositives. This is why etoy works on a high level of interaction between people, codes and machines. To intervene on this automation the group seek a balance between a specular approach (quantitative and automated data filtering, through the creation of softwares that mirror the search engine functioning) and the subjective choice of the keywords, statistically incalculable. We will soon see many net.art interventions integrate these two aspects.

**Nobody dare to call it plagiarism!**

In the beginning, 0 and 1 were hardly aware to be in the world. To have a body, a sensibility, a mind. Then, one day, after being assembled, shared and exchanged in any kind of permutations, they finally took consciousness of themselves. They crystallised in the shape of an aseptic string - long enough not to be memorised by human beings, but short enough to enter the URL’s field of a browser. They attached it a nice suffix (.org) and gave birth to 0100101110101101.ORG. Since then, lots of people have been dealing with 0100101110101101.ORG. In actuality, only few understood if this string hides some real "human flesh", or an entity that composes and decomposes autonomously, according to a Fate that We as Humans, are no longer able to interpret.
Since 0100101110101101.ORG came into being (someone talks about an X day, by the end of 1998, in Bologna) many have tried to grasp its real intentions but very few have been able to understand them. The web art world, was the first who have seen one of its most notorious sites sucked by the vortex of zeroes and ones.

Hell.com, seemingly an anti-web site built in 1995, with no public access and/or contents, was a sort of conceptual black hole in the net. Within three years, Hell turned itself in a launching pad for cool designers and leading net.artists, a private parallel web. Surface was the first on-line exhibition promoting artists like Zuper!, Absurd, Fakeshop and many others. In February 1999, a limited number of visitors was invited to access the exhibition, namely the Rhizome mailing list subscribers, which were given with a password allowing the access to Hell. In the 48 hours of opening, hidden in the mob, O and 1 entered the web site and downloaded the whole of it. Then, they uploaded it on their own web site, in anticopyright version, making it wide open to all netizens. The action was enough to upset Kenneth Aronson, owner of Hell.com, who blamed O and 1 for theft and threatened them with an international lawsuit for copyright laws violation. Today, one year and half later, the "stolen" Hell.com is still freely available in www.0100101110101101.ORG.

Russian net.artist Olia Lalina, founder of the first web gallery Art.Teleportacia (selling works of early net.art), was the second blow. When someone asked "how can you sell a work of net.art if everyone can access it for free?", Lialina always claimed that the originality of a net.art work is guaranteed by its domain name, its URL. The owner of a work, according to the Russian artist, should have his own access to the server hosting the work. The fact that the work could be mirrored on other sites is irrelevant: it may well be of public domain, but only the owner has the right to access the original URL through a certificate sold by the curator. Needless to say, Art.Teleportacia was quickly sucked by the string known as 0100101110101101.ORG. The same site that was selling "original" domain art, in June 99 was doing it twice, with no great variation of prices...

September 1999 was the time of Jodi.org, the ASCII Art web site built by Joan Heemskerk and Dirk Paesmans. Since then, 0 and 1 used to randomise their downloads, uploading in their web site weird hybrids of their victims. The Jodi web site, instead, was just cloned as it was. Downloaded and uploaded with no variation at all.

At this point, the international press (The New York Times, Le Monde, Telepolis, etc.) realised that, in the friendly world of net.art, there was a site dedicated to systematic plagiarism. This raised a wave of panic about the risk that being endlessly reproducible the new art form could not be “commercialized”. To these worries, 01 answers that browsing is already a form of appropriation. Since all the web sites we navigate are automatically stored in the cache directory of our browser, 01 believes that it is necessary to look for alternative forms of valorization, not based on scarcity but on over-abundance, as the “attention economy” require. If replication augment the “aura” of an artwork instead of diminishing it, to be cloned by 01.org it’s another possibility to increase its visibility.

On Christmas Day, 1999, the Los Angeles-based site www.plagiarist.org acted in 01-style and duplicated 0100101110101101.ORG. Shortly after, 01 responded by linking plagiarist.org in the opening page of 01.ORG, conceptually cloning a clone of their own clones.

The Year 2000 opened with two retroactive pranks. For a whole year, the domain name www.vaticano.org hosted a seemingly official web site of the Holy See, similar to the www.vatican.va (official Vatican domain name) but with slightly modified contents: heretical texts, songs of crap teenybopper bands, and stuff. For 12 months, thousands of people had visited the web site without realising
the prank. At the expiring of the first year of contract, Network Solutions prevented the renewing of it and sold the domain name. Needless to say, Vaticano.org is still online in 0100101110101101.ORG.

In February 2000, Propaganda (the official 01 e-mail newsletter) announced to the world "The Great Art Swindle": the invention of life, works and death of the Serbian artist Darko Maver by 01.ORG. A pure act of mythopoiesis, in 1999 the "Darko Maver Affair" took by storm the Italian art world, with several exhibitions, articles and debates about this maudit artist (whose supposed works were - actually - trash pictures from web sites like rotten.com)…

Life Sharing and Vopos:
“life_sharing” (an anagram of "file sharing", i.e. exchanging "music" files via the Internet) allows access via the WorldWideWeb to the computer of the two artists. This computer has not only their entire software and other digital material on it, but also all of the artists' e-mails. Visitors can read 0100101110101101.ORG's complete e-mail correspondence since 1999. Afterwards they are familiar with the artists' exact web address, their (secret) real names, their postal address, account number, earnings, exhibition plans or invitations to lectures. One can learn about their private contacts with friends, gossip from the media art scene and other things not normally for the public. In 2002, in a continuation of this project entitled "VOPOS", one could check daily on a website where the artists were at any moment, since their cell phones transmitted their respective positions several times a day to the Internet, where the locations of the two 0100101110101101.ORG members were displayed on a map”. [Tillman Baumgartel]

Not.art?
Netochka Nezvanova
Chapter 4
Software as culture

You expect that 'Save' will save and not erase. This feeling that you understand and control what the software is doing in the machine can only be based on trust in the programmer. (Statement of Transmediale Jury, 2001)

Software can never just be a tool; it is always culturally and politically positioned, and part of this positioning is the invisibility of the software's construction. We follow our menu items like we follow our maps moving from place to place transfixed by the representation we see before us, while seeing nothing of the social geographies from which they were derived and on which they act. We ignore the built-in cultural and political bias - the implicit totalitarianism of prescribed menu options. Instead we are transfixed by the outcome of our interaction with applications. We forget the program in order to get on with the task. (Graham Harwood)

When, in 1984, Apple launched Macintosh, the first computer desktop with a graphical user interface (Gui), the world of informatics made an unprecedented jump. Until then, to control a personal computer it was necessary to learn a set of instructions condensed in the so called command line interface. The operations made by the machine were readable, but the learning curve was steep and limited to few professionals.

The introduction of the mouse and of the bitmapping system, developed in the Sixties at Xerox Parc, made this knowledge suddenly irrelevant. Datas were now disposed on a bidimensional grid of pixels, and to each of them was assigned a space in the computer memory. In other terms, single datas were given a virtual location the image on the screen which was mirroring their real position on the phisical memory of the machine.

The invention of dataspace and of the Wimp system allows the user to manipulate directly objects and directories arranged in the tree structure. But the principle of direct manipulation implies a strange paradox. The Gui was created to allow the user to navigate the surface without seeing and having to deal with the underlying operations made by the machine. Rendering everything more functional, the Gui hides. As compared to the command line, the Gui is both more opaque and more transparent: it is more opaque because it proposes a closed system; it is more transparent because by simplifying the use, it tends to disappear. In one word, it tends to become “natural”.

To be implemented on a large scale the Gui has to rely on very common metaphors. The designers of Xerox Parc found in the office environment a series of elements (desktop, folders, files and the trash bin) that could be easily turned into icons and absolve a precise and coherent function within the Gui. [Follows a critique of the Gui principles of coherency and of direct manipulation, see Gentner and Nielsen, The Anti-Mac Interface].
Nevertheless, beyond its limitations, the Gui becomes soon a user-friendly convention. But who is this end user? Is it possible that millions of people with different cultural backgrounds and expectations can be reduced to the abstract projection of an “average” user? [...] 

By showing the redundancy of the conventions adopted by the most diffused proprietary interfaces, software artists critique the ideology implicit in the rush to the killer application. Furthermore, they create their own programs that pose precise questions on the cultural and social effects of certain tools.

Software art

Featured projects:

· Auto-Illustrator by Adrian Ward: a version of Illustrator that is a critique of the opacity of the Gui and of the trust relationship established between designers and users.
· Composition N.1 1961 by La Monte Young (Fluxus): “Draw a straight line and follow it”. A formal instruction enough clear to be executed both by a human being or a machine. Florian Cramer considers this piece of concept art a forunner of contemporary software art.
· Screen Saver by Eldar Kharlev e Ivan Khimn: a set of instructions to configure or misconfigure a banal “3D Text” Windows screensaver. The result is a moving black square. The instructions are the program itself, a program that allows the “victory of the user on the programmer”.

When the virus becomes epidemic

As a machinic interference, the “virus contains a machine control syntax, a code that interfere with the (coded) system to which is sent”. Many programmers play with the ambiguities and overlapping between natural language and machine language. For the e-mail viruses this ambiguity can be played out as a hoax but also at an artistic level. For example

· The Sulbfnk.exe hoax (2001) was urgently inviting users to erase immediately a file from their hard disk (sulbfnk.exe) that indeed was only an ordinary Windows system file. Thus, while they are convinced to make a rational and preemptive gesture, people all over the world obey irrationally to a command becoming viruses of their own system.
· SendMail DownJones by epidemiC is a software that alters the way a webmail application like SendMail works. DownJones make slip into the body of an e-mail a phrase picked up randomly from a list of sentences. The project reverses the common sense of what an e-mail virus actually is (a machine language executed via natural language).
· Biennale.py by epidemiC and 0100101110101101.org brings a printed version of the source code of a virus into the Venice Biennale.
· Modified videogames: Retroyou and Jodi.
· Oss/**** by Jodi is a superficial infection of the graphical user interface.
Making and unmaking navigation interfaces

Since 1997, net.artists try and challenge commercial browsers creating alternative tools that show different ways of perceiving and living the Net. Amongst them:

· **Web Stalker** by I/O/D: a “structural” browser that organizes in a graphical map the links between the web pages. The first browser to open an aesthetic reflection on what Html is and how it looks like depending on the tool we use to interpret and represent it.
· **Web Tracer** by Tom Betts; a 3D evolution of the Web Stalker
· **Netomat** by Maciej Wisniewski; the lay out disappears letting images, texts and objects free to flow across the screen.
· **Shredder** by Mark Napier; a browser that modifies the functioning of Netscape and Explore superimposing in a random collage html source code and the surface of the same page.
· **Riot** by Mark Napier; an evolution of Shredder, Riot is the first multi-user browser. It mixes up to threeUrls selected simultaneously by different users connected to Napier’s website.
· **Wrongbrowser** by Jodi; a set of 4 browsers that can execute only a very limited set of domain names and are apparently uncontrollable by the user.

Netscape Art

“Netscape art” is art that plays formally with the Internet landscape and tries to put it in relationship to the art tradition based on representation. Not accidentally, these sort of projects are usually sponsored by big art institutions, that need to show artifacts to their audience more than networking practices. The tendency to represent the web page as a sort of dynamic abstract painting is common to various projects such as:

· **Feed** by Mark Napier
· **Rsg Carnivore**; a collaborative project divided with a central server that outputs a datastream coming from the Rhizome’s Local Area Network and various plug-ins developed by different software artists.
· **Police State** and **Crank the Web** by Jonah Brucker Cohen

Netscape art features are also often overlapped with a “teleactive” element, based on the possibility for users to manipulate remotely objects through signs (Manovich). Projects like **Telegarden** by Ken Goldberg or **Vectorial Elevation** by Raphael Lozano-Hemmer are part of a tradition started in the late Seventies with the first telerobotics experiments.

I show you mine, you’ll show me yours
Projects like Carnivore reverse engineer surveillance technologies to disclose a reflection about the obsession of our society for collecting information about people. Blown by the explosion of file sharing, there are other projects that turn this obsession into a sort of cyber-exhibitionism or “data nudism”. Amongst them:

- *Life Sharing* by 0100101110101101.ORG
- *DeskSwap* by Mark Daggett; a p2p screen saver that allows a user to receive via Internet screen captures of other’s people desktop and to send them h/her own.
- *Desktop is* by Alexei Shulgin; a forerunner of *Deskswap* but organized as an online exhibition of desktops.
- *Tracenoizer* by Lan; working as an automatic assembler from search engines, Tracenoizer is a generator of fake personal web sites recombined from the databody of an individual dispersed on the Internet.

The culturally positioned software

Mongrel Project and I/O/D. This paragraph recaps the work of two London-based groups who have developed the definition “software as culture” and have tried to de-neutralize interface design putting it in relation to specific cultural demands. A vast project entitled *National Heritage* has been articulated in multiple strands:

- A cd-rom based on 8 human non-existing prototypes, built from the 100 different faces.
- *Natural Selection*; a search engine built around a series of specific web sites that treats paradoxically “racial” issues and mix them up with the apparently objective ranks compiled by ordinary search engines.
- *Heritage Gold*; a “racialized” version of Photoshop that changes the abstract menu and functions of the software with culturally positioned ones.
- *Linker*; a mapping software for community story-telling based on the same engine underlying the cd-rom National Heritage.

Matthew Fuller, co-founder of I/O/D, writes:

Lev Manovich, in his useful essay on the 'Database as a Symbolic Form'3, suggests that what is often found in actual usage of databases is that what has been assembled is, "A collection, not a story". In Linker, forcing a limited number, but no more, of image cells to be filled before the thing can be used encourages a certain amount of syntagmatic relations between data elements in the constellation of many which the database is composed of. As Manovich suggests, this can be like putting together a sentence in a natural language. It also suggests what he calls the conflict between database and narrative, between more or less open arrays of elements, paths and strata and the timelapsed results of particular routes through them congealed as a story.
In chapter six we will see how this “syntagmatic relations” will facilitate the interconnection of diverse projects and inspirations to produce a collective narration, open to game and reinvention.

Chapter 5
The performative matrix

Inverting technology

In this introductory paragraph the authors trace an historic excursus from Jarry’s pataphysics to Duchamp’s concept of “variable measure” to touch Bataille (The Psychological Structure of Fascism), Piero Manzoni’s Infinite Line and the “politics of incommensurable” theorized by Lyotard in the Seventies. In 1987, the Critical Art Ensemble’s postal catalogue Useless Technology. Technology so pure that its only function is to exist, proposes a campionary of sophisticated, yet useless, devices exalted as the top of the “engineering of desire”. In the same period, cyberpunk literature disconnects technological imaginary from the scientific domain and opens it up to other forms of intervention. If science never belonged to itself entirely (Sterling), activists, researchers and pranksters collaborate to hijack it into other fields. Such is the case of US based collectives, like the Institute of Applied Autonomy and the Bureau of Inverse Technology. The first one has realized several projects such as Contestational Robotics, Little Brother and Graffiti Writer that aim to “extend the autonomy of political activists” in public spaces, equipping them with surprising prosthetics.

The Bureau of Inverse Technology - a project by former Xerox Parc researcher Natalie Jeremijenko and UK artist Kate Rich is “an information agency servicing the information age” that provides “products, informations, packaging, marketing and tecno-commentaries”. As compared to the useless technology critique, Bit shifts the focus from tecno-feticism to the connection between IT and information science. The Suicide Box project was a vertical motion capture sensitive device placed under the Golden Gate Brige of San Francisco for 100 days. It registered the suicides and ordered them by number, time, frequency and presented them to the public in a statistic, cold manner. By delivering information presented as “standard authoritative data”, the Bureau was covering a phenomenon obscured from the public sphere, providing a critique of what can be told and how it is told. Bit operates on the notion that “information politics is embedded in the application of technologies that generate information. An institution that collects informations demonstrate precisely this that no one else is collecting them (this is what i mean by power in the most banal sense)”.

Other Bit projects: Despondency Index, Bit Plane, Stump, and Bitsperm Bank.
The Venus Matrix

Story of Vns Matrix collective (1991-1997) and the invention of the term “cyberfeminism” by Sadie Plant. Some basic outlines of first wave of cyberfeminism are given. Featured Vns projects: *All New Gen*, a blueprint of a role game populated by weird and ironic characters like Big Daddy Mainframe, the DNA Sluts and Circuit Boy; *The XXI Century Cyberfeminist Manifesto*, a giant advertising billboard who travelled around; *Beverly Hills 90210* a performance in the Lambda Moo played simultaneously by multiple characters which resembled the notorious Tv stars; *CorpusFantasticaMoo*, the “vaporware” of another videogame; Bad Code, the prototype of a real 3d videogame.

After the Vns Matrix collapse, Francesca da Rimini, one of the four members of the group, continued to work by herself on various projects which involved identity play and various personae. These experiences get recollected into various projects like DollSpace, Los Dias Y Las Noches de Los Muertos, Identity Runners (in collaboration with Diane Ludin and Agnese Trocchi).

The Market of the Fakes

In the book *The Electronic Disturbance*, Critical Art Ensemble offers an interesting reinterpretation of Antonin Artaud’s concept of the “Body without Organs”. In this text, Cae formulates the idea of a new performative matrix, basing it on the recombination of two models: electronic theater and street performance. According to Cae, the latter has the advantage of being very direct and participative but the limit of being able to deliver only very simple messages. On the other hand, the electronic performance allows the actor to organize more informations and to present them in a quite attractive way.

In this paragraph the authors analyze the work of two groups: the first, *The Surveillance Camera Players*, use very traditional techniques of street theater and very simple tools (masks and stencils) to address surveillance cameras in New York City. In their case the electronic eye and the operator who is supposed to monitor it - is given as the Other, the Watcher, and the all performance is played in function of a mute camera (being therefore mute in itself) . The second group, *Fakeshop*, makes a use of electronic devices to explore intimate spaces (with CU_See_Me) and recombining them with the remake of some movie scenes sampled from Fifties science fiction movies.
Chapter six
Sabotage and Simulational Strategies

The Electronic Civil Disobedience

Getting inspiration from Cae’s reflection about the crisis of traditional forms of activism, former Cae’s member Ricardo Dominguez tries to shape the practice of Electronic Civil Disobedience (Ecd). Shaped in a book published in 1997, Ecd updates some of Gandhi’s and Thoreau’s ideas and practices. Instead of organizing a mass of bodies to block access to a building, ecd aims to move a mass of decentered electronic impulses on the doors of a Web server. If streets have become “dead capital”, as Cae argues, the power has to be followed and fought inside the electronic networks.

The first netstrike, consisting in the simultaneous manual reload of the web site of the French government during the Mururoa nuclear tests, is organized in December 1995 by the Italian group Strano Network. Two years later, Ricardo Dominguez organizes the first netstrike against the Mexican government and in 1998 founds - together with Brett Stalbaum, Stephen Wray and Carmin Karasic - the Electronic Disturbance Theater (Edt). Creating the FloodNet, a java applet that reloads automatically a chosen Web page, the Edt organizes a series of netstrikes involving thousands of people all over the world. For its capacity of providing a shared grid of time - a synchronization amongst the netstrikers - the main function of the software is merely syntactic. Its capacity of connecting different discourses is exemplified by the interface. The Floodnet has a simple design, and the bottom part is divided into three frames that refresh continuously; one of the functions is to send to requests to the target server, like "Is democracy.html on this server?". The server, e.g. the Mexican President one, would answer: "Democracy.html is not found on this server". In this way, a typical net.art conceptual gesture like the 404 (see chapter 2) gets tactically reused into a different context. In this sense, the netstrike can be considered as a lexicon or a syntagma that intersects the language and attitude of different communities: the “formal” intuitions of net.art, the ethical issues brought up by activism and the hackers’ ability of forging tools proper.

The netstrike has also, or mainly, a symbolic function. As Ricardo Dominguez puts it, it’s the function of shifting the public attention from the “words for war” to the “words as war”. In other terms, the performative matrix created by the Floodnet - with the electronic rebels, the cyberpolice, the media and so on - is not aimed to disrupt physically the functioning of the technological infrastructure but to create a “disturbance” or a breach in the collective imaginary, that would allow people to see something else (“it’s a war of ghosts”).

In the beginning, the ambivalence of this tactic doesn’t persuade all the actors and the FloodNet receive critiques by both traditional activist circles and hacker communities. The latter don’t consider the FloodNet a “digitally correct” tool, because it consumes a lot of bandwidth and is potentially dangerous.
for the Internet infrastructure (this conflict becomes manifest in 1998, during the the Ars Electronica
Festival dedicated to Infowar). The former don’t believe that street actions can be replaced by the
simple clicking on a browser button. To this criticism, Edt answers organizing a series of netstrikes
simultaneously and in conjunction with street protests, in order to allow the participation of people from
abroad and to expand the world resonance of events that otherwise would have remained local.
In the following years, other groups like the Electrohippies and the Federation of Random Action will
develop, technically and aesthetically, the FloodNet basic features. Most of the actions will happen in
conjunction with massive anti-globalization rallies in Seattle, Prague and Quebec City.

The web site clonation

The faking of a Web site is a diffused form of appropriation, alternative to defacement. Whilst
the latter involves legal risks and is visible for a very limited amount of time, the cloning and
modification of an “official” Web site allows the authors to play the game in a more articulated manner.
The story of Rachel Baker’s Clubcard project is a case in point. In 1997, London based artist Rachel
Baker member of an “artivist” network called Irational created a fake Tesco Web site through which
users could get a Clubcard and accumulate points. While the original Tesco’s card was invented to give
customers the illusion of saving money (indeed to profile them and to perfect marketing strategies),
Clubcard was aimed to create a real club made by people and not only by the individual relationship
between the consumer and the brand.
In any case, Tesco lawyers’ threatened to sue the artist, which rapidly passed to the competitor,
Sainsbury.

The viral corporation

If Clubcard didn’t make the hole in the media, the opportunities of building alternative narrations out of
spoof Web sites and parodies have been maximized by Registered Trade Mark - a pseudo-corporation
founded by a cell of pranksters originally based in California. A viral agent nested in the belly of the
beast, ®TMark has targeted official Web sites of conservative politicians like George W. Bush and Rudy
Giuliani, and symbols of neo-liberalism like the WTO. At a first sight, these Web sites look identical to
the originals, and are registered under domain names which are very similar to the official ones.
Therefore, those who reach them from search engines or by accident can be easily fooled.
In 2000, the homepage of gwbush.com donated to ®TMark by a person that had tried in vain to sell it to
the committee for the election of the Republican candidate looked identical to the original.
Nevertheless, some of the soundbites, such as “education”, “value”, “responsibility” and “prosperity”
were substituted with corresponding adjectives (educative, valuable, responsible, prosperous), that
made the future president appear more arrogant and self-celebrative than ever. The Web site also
presented a paradoxical program and slogans such as “Bush is a market driven system”. The target was
hit. Infuriated by the spoof Web site, Bush released embarrassing statements to national press and
media such as “They are garbage men” (referred to the authors of the spoof), and “there ought to be
limits to freedom”.
The Web site of Rudy Giuliani (yesrudy.com instead of rudyes.com) maintained the same graphics and even the same contents of the original. The twist was hidden in the links of the homepage. Instead of sending the user to inner areas of the Web site, the links pointed to racist and xenophobic Web sites, highly embarrassing for a politician like Giuliani.

The World Trade Organization was tricked just few days before the beginning of the Seattle round with the gatt.org spoof. In reaction, the WTO issued a warning on their site warning the public about a fake and misleading web site "purporting to be the official web site of the World Trade Organisation". Of course the warning was quickly adopted in the gatt.org site, now claiming the WTO site to be illegitimate. The registering of an heavy domain name such as gatt.org, would have given to ®TMark further opportunities, that will be exploited in a spectacular way, as we will see in a while.

But let’s analyze better the way in which this mysterious corporation works. The declared goal of ®TMark is to force the corporations to have “a sense of social responsibility”, sponsoring actions of creative sabotage against them. From rtmark.com:

®TMark is essentially a matchmaker and bank, helping groups or individuals fund sabotage projects. Money provided by donors is held by ®TMark until project completion, and goes to the saboteur at that time; he or she can use it to find a new job or career, pay for lawyers, fund a vocation or a vacation, etc. Should the project not be completed, the funds are returned to the donor. The four keys to each ®TMark project are the worker, the sponsor, the product, and the idea. ®TMark’s entire purpose is to unite these four keys into projects. Until recently, the core of the ®TMark system was a database located on an anonymous Internet server and accessed by users in double-blind anonymity. Once the four blanks in a database record were filled--worker, sponsor, product, idea--a project was launched. The order in which the blanks were filled was not important.

Every day the “corporation” collects information from a broad network of designers, journalists, programmers, activists, artists and net.culture operators. When the opportunity knocks, it declares to be the funder of a sabotage. The fact that the hack has really happened with the described features is almost irrelevant. What is relevant is the ability to select an interesting (and usually very funny) story in a short time. Usually journalists compare different sources, but are unable to verify directly who are the real actors and what their role actually his. In this “desert of the real” ®TMark plays its game with intelligence, manipulating the information fluxes and calculating the times of the different reactions. To any move of the adversary, ®TMark responds with a counter-move of “tactical embarrassment” that raises media attention.

The 4 keys of the database are like narrative functions, that ®TMark weaves keeping in consideration possible variations and modular endings. On the Internet the growth of public attention usually plays in disadvantage of strong players and in favour of small but well connected players.

Other featured ®TMark projects: Barbie Liberation Organization, Sim Copter, Secret Writer’s Society, Deconstructing Beck.

Above everybody

During the elections of 2000, George W. Bush had some troubles with his (presumed) Web site. Nevertheless, in the same period the USA presidential elections were disturbed by another event: the launch, in March 200, of Vote Auction, an online platform for the auction of votes to the highest bidder.
(the three candidates were George W. Bush, Al Gore and Ralph Nader). The underlying philosophy of Vote Auction was combining the most sophisticated techniques of communication-guerrilla with a bliss of marketing. The starting point was simple. The electoral campaigns are so expensive only because these consultants spend the campaign contributors' money on advertising while taking a 10-15% cut for themselves. The political consultants are paid based on their ability to "deliver" voters to the candidates. This effectively treats the voters as a product to be sold to the candidates (and/or their campaign contributors.) This is similar to the way television (and other media outlets) operate. In television, the end product is the viewer whose attention is sold to television's customer, the advertiser.

Bringing this argument to its logical consequences, Vote Auction was bypassing the expensive and inefficient electoral machine to put directly in touch the demand with the offer. The target group was the 50% of the voting age population “that stays home on the election day”, but that could vote having the possibility of “participating in the democratic process and expanding economy”. The value of the single vote changes daily on the basis of the number of voters that decide to put it on the market and of their percentual incidence on the total of the votes in a single State. The candidate who made the highest bidder on the day of closure, will get the entire stock of votes auctioned in a given State.

The second part of the paragraph tell the story of the reaction of the Federal and local Us authorities. Their repeated attempts to shut the site down and the counter-moves by Hans Bernhard and Lizvlx - two Austrian artists, founders of Ubermorgen.com to reopen it. Beside the immense popularity of Vote Auction, covered by thousands of media all over the world, one of the spin-offs of the project will be the Injunction Generator, a platform that automatically sends out court injunctions to Internet Service Providers to shut down a given Web site, with reasons made up by users who fill out a simple Web form.

Another featured project is Nazi-Line, a Web and theater performance coproduced by the Austrian director Cristoph Schlingensief and Ubermorgen, to recuperate neo-nazis that want to quit the nazi scene. The project, conceived with the usual mechanism of over-identification, involved the Bmdi (Austrian Ministry of Internal Affairs) and other corporate sponsors, caught up in the sophisticated media stunt built up by Ubermorgen.

The man with the golden phallus

As we saw before, ®TMark managed a Web site, called gatt.org, whose lay-out and contents were very similar to the official WTO Web site. This resemblance mislead many users, in particular those who reached the spoof site from search engines or other links, taking it for the official one. In more than one circumstance, the visitors posed questions to the managers of the Web site, thinking to talk directly to some WTO employee. In other cases, they went further and invited via e-mail the General Director (by that time, Mike Moore) to take part to conferences and events all over the world. At this point, ®TMark donated gatt.org to a group of friends, called The Yes Men, who wanted to push the game further.

Thus, any time The Yes Men received an invitation, they answered with an enthusiastic “Yes!” and went to speak on behalf of Mike Moore. In this way, in four different occasions (Salzburg, Tampere, Plattsburgh and Sydney) a pretented WTO spokesman lectured audiences of lawyers, researchers, business students and accountants who had no idea that the speaker was a fake. The Power Point presentations orchestrated by The Yes Men were formally respecting the marketing lingo, but introduced some surreal elements - like the Management Leisure Suit, a golden suit equipped with a
three-foot phallus - that showed the violence of neo-liberalism all over the world. The most incredible thing was the passive or even positive answer of the audiences, which produced a critical reflection on flexible personalities (Brian Holmes) and on the symbolic power of organizations like the WTO.

www.thevesmen.org

The Toywar

The chapter on activism ends with a detailed reconstruction of the Toywar, a project that saw the Austrian group Etoy (see chapter 3), fighting against a corporate giant of the New Economy, the online toy reseller Etoys. This battle over a domain name (Etoys wanted to control etoy.com and sued the artist group) became a symbol of the battle for the “freedom of the Internet”, against its commercialization and appropriation by corporate interests. It was the occasion in which hacker activist and artist communities entered a real dialogue and collaboration. Working together on on line actions, the development of specific tools, and the invention of metaphors able to hit the mediascape and the public imaginary, net.artists and activists won the Toywar, forcing the corporation to step back.

Chapter Seven
Politics of connection

Under construction !!