

Art 'In-Formation' (Bremen, 30 Nov–1 Dec 07)

ASPC

Art 'In-Formation'

Communication Aesthetics and Network Structures in Art from the 1960s to the Present

Conference at the Weserburg - Museum for modern Art, Bremen, Germany
Nov. 30 - Dec. 1, 2007

Call for Papers

Deadline: June 30, 2007

"To distribute two thousand copies in a big city is like shooting a bullet into the air and waiting for the pigeon to fall."

Nam June Paik

This international conference aims at exploring artistic practices which situate their work within, or make usage of communication media from the 1960ies to the present. In particular we wish to investigate the relation between the formation of artistic network structures, both in the sense of artists' collaborations, and in the sense of communication aesthetics and distribution strategies to understand their paradigmatic role as a historical precondition for the formation of (collaborative) electronic art forms. In our effort to interrogate the strategies that artists developed for accumulating, transmitting, re-inscribing, or interpreting information within the public sphere of communication, the conference pursues both a retrospective and a prospective view, discussing works by artists who played a significant role in earlier critical discussions regarding the complex relationship between information, collaborative art structures, art institutions, communicative and social processes at large.

With the emergence of new communication media, a wide variety of conceptual art practices strategically pursued the proliferation of their works via channels of mainstream media since the late 1960ies. Anticipated by the programmatic agenda of media interventions by the Situationist International movement in France, artists like Dan Graham, Richard Serra, Allan Kaprow, Nam June Paik, Hans Haacke, Wolf Vostell,

Joseph Beuys, Ed Ruscha, Robert Smithson, Berner Venet, Sol LeWitt, Vito Acconci, Stanley Brouwn, On Kawara, Lawrence Weiner, Jenny Holzer, Felix Gonzales-Torres et al. reflect the aesthetic, ideological and political dimensions of the technological revolution in multiple references to the spheres of public communication at the dawn of the information age. Among others, these artists' works bear witness to the rapid transformation of interaction modes and exchange codes using old and new communication channels from print media (newspapers, journals, artists' books, art editions, copy art, billboards) through postal services (Mail Art), television and fax transmission to computer technology (Net Art) as tools for critical and political engagement in the social and cultural sphere. Referencing this unprecedented artistic involvement in systems of information and communication media, Dan Graham paradigmatically writes in 1969/73 "(Systems of) information (in-formation) exist halfway between material and concept, without being either one." Underpinning the powerful role and expanding impact of the media in the era of the information age, artists strategically explored the possibilities of inserting critical information into mainstream communication systems as impulses to empower the art and media consumer to become an active spectator with the goal to establish a critical counter public.

These tendencies correlated with multiple formations of artists' collaboratives and strategic network structures (Fluxus, Ant Farm, Art and Language, Group Material et al.) which substantially profited from the idea of the artwork as an open structure and as a procedural concept, were interconnected in diverse ways with medial interventions and the continuous search for emancipative action. Art's expansion into the public sphere by dissemination via contemporary communication media not only sought for institutional critique, but also explored the alternative dimensions of established technological facilities in terms of their creative potential and as platforms for the formation of internationally networked artist initiatives, particularly in Eastern Europe, and Latin America whose dissident group structures anticipated new forms of international collaborations. It is thus symptomatic for the post-1960ies period that in comparison to artist group formations of the classical avant-garde the new possibilities of communication media usage clearly contributed to rather inclusive than exclusive new forms of collaboration.

Several landmark exhibitions responded to these developments while they emerged. Information, curated by Kynaston McShine at the Museum of Modern Art in New York is considered today as a groundbreaking synthesis of early artistic reflections on the conditions of information proliferation in new documentary and information based art forms. Likewise, Jack Burham's concept for Software, Information Technology:

Its New Meaning for Art, an exhibition held at the Jewish Museum in New York in 1970, thematically drew attention to this turning point of contemporary art production. The field of information, previously considered to belong to the sphere of mass communication and standing in contradiction to artistic concepts, became a new paradigm in the redefinition of international artistic practices and has since then shaped the programmatic dimensions of critical art and its derivatives >from the 1970 through the 1990s to the present. Benchmark works of conceptual art, such as Dan Graham's text inserts into magazine pages (Schema or Homes for America, both from 1966) which entirely converge with the structure of their communication platform, overcome the "Minimalist" paradigm of absolute presence and the metaphysical idealism of conceptual art by strategic dissemination. Reproduced at such visible albeit mundane sites of public communication and perception, art is "in-formation," as Graham remarks in his reflections on the status of his early work Schema. Likewise, Lawrence Weiner addresses the art spectator as recipient (of information), while the Latin American manifesto "A Media Art," written in 1966 by Eduardo Costa, Raúl Escari and Roberto Jacoby proposes to "'unchain' information communicated through the media" (Alexander Alberro) by announcing art exhibitions that did not take place in newspapers and journals. These early examples of a critical engagement with the reality construction of communication media, finds multiple continuations in today's art practices which address the concrete effects of communication politics on the social and cultural order in multiple forms of alternative and participatory media usage.

The symposium intends to confront the most current developments in communication and information based artworks with pioneering historical works, which will allow for a better examination and contextualization of key debates on conceptual developments and collaborative systems in late 20th and early 21st century culture.

We invite submissions from scholars working in areas that relate to the usage of communication media for the dissemination of artistic concepts or to proliferation practices of dissident or critical art movements which effected new forms of network structures. We encourage submissions that address:

- Fluxus (art editions, diagrams, collaboration structures,)
- Mail Art (including Eastern European and Latin American projects, for example G. Galantai / Budapest, Robert Rehfeldt / GDR, Clemente Padin / Uruguay etc.)
- Name lists: (diverse "Flux Mail Lists", "Fluxuslist", "Black Lists", Art and Artists' Genealogies, "List of Names" e.g. by Douglas

Gordon or Tracey Emin)

- Conceptual artworks (historical and contemporary) using communication media as a tool for proliferation or as a platform for presentation.
- Conceptual art works (historical and contemporary) based on accumulation of information and statistical breakdown
- Groundbreaking exhibitions dedicated to the central theme (e.g. Information, Software etc.) of information or communication.
- Artists' collaboratives and dissident artist collaborations (e.g. Art & Language, Group Material, Atelier van Lieshout etc.)
- Gallery cooperatives from the 70ies to the present (The Kitchen, Food, Produzentengalerie, Galerie am Moritzplatz, SO 36 etc.)
- Artist groups and male organizations (Männerbünde), associative teams (e.g. Martin Kippenberger, Albert Oehlen, Werner Büttner, Günther Förg and the "Lord Jim Loge")
- Feminist activist groups (e.g. Guerrilla Girls)
- Dissident artist collectives in Eastern Europe and Latin America (e.g. subReal in Bucharest, Lodz Kalisko in Poland or collective actions in Russia, Eduardo Costa, Raúl Escari, Roberto Jacoby)
- Club Cultures within the realm of art (e.g. Sidney Stucki, Tobias Rehberger, Gerwald Rockenschau, etc.)
- Artist curators (Christoph Keller, Ross Sinclair, etc.)
- Cyberfeminism: Old Boys Network (<http://www.obn.org>)
- Netactivism (e.g. Paul Garrin, REPO History, etc.)
- Netart (e.g. <http://www.adaweb.com/> www.adaweb.com, <http://www.artnetweb.com/> www.artnetweb.com, <http://www.channelp.com/> www.channelp.com, <http://www.everyicon.html.com/> www.everyicon.html.com, <http://www.net.art.com/> www.net.art.com, <http://www.thething.com/> www.thething.com, Hybrid Media Lounge, etc.)
- Communication and network theory

The conference will be organized by the Research Association Artists' Publications.

This association was build up in 2005 by scholars from the Research Centre for Artists' Publications / ASPC in (Neues Museum Weserburg Bremen, now:) Weserburg - Museum for modern Art, the University Bremen, the Research Institute for East European Studies, (International University Bremen, now:) Jacobs University Bremen, and the University of the Arts Bremen, which is dedicated to projects concerning the investigation of international artists' publications and art editions in the archives and collections of the Research Centre for Artists' Publications.

Session organizers of the here-announced symposium are: Dr. Anne Thurmman-Jajes (Research Centre for Artists' Publications / Weserburg - Museum für moderne Kunst) and Prof. Dr. Ursula Frohne (University of Cologne).

We hope the theme will inspire papers of an interdisciplinary nature. The two-day conference will take place in the Weserburg - Museum für moderne Kunst Bremen (Germany) (<http://www.nmwb.de>) from November 30 - December 1, 2007. The official language of the conference will be English. In exceptional cases, if scholars propose a paper in German, we will provide translations of the manuscripts.

Papers are invited from international scholars in the field. Each speaker will have 30 minutes: 20 minutes for paper and 10 minutes for discussion. Please, send an abstract of one page (not more than 500 words) in digital form to:

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The deadline is June 30, 2007. All entrants will be notified by August, 1, 2007.

Reference:

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