

Surfing Club

Aids-3D, John Michael Boling, Petra Cortright, Aleksandra Domanović,
Harm van den Dorpel, Joel Holmberg, Oliver Laric, Marisa Olson,
Guthrie Lonergan, Paul Slocum
& Nastynets, Spirit Surfers, Loshadka
Curated by Raffael Dörig

From March 26th to May 30th 2010
[plug.in], St. Alban-Rheinweg 64, 4052 Basel
Opening hours: Wed-Sun 1-5pm during exhibitions

04/18/10 and 05/30/10, 2pm

Guided tour through Surfing Club (in German)

05/09/10, 2pm

Artist talk

With Aleksandra Domanović, Harm van den Dorpel and Oliver Laric

Cooperation:

A slightly modified version of the exhibition takes also place at Espace
Multimédia Gantner in Bourogne (F) from May 9th to July 3rd.

Surfing Club shows works by a new generation of artists working with and within the internet. The artists of the exhibition are part of a loose network affiliated with collaborative platforms and internet surfing clubs such as Nasty Nets, Spirit Surfers, Loshadka, Club Internet and Vvork.

Here, the big utopia of a new medium, as it was the theme of classic late nineties net.art, is no longer an active concern. The work of the participating artists is characterized by the prosaicness of computer and Internet use, as it became normal for a wide range of the population, in particular for the generation of the „digital natives“ who grew up with the Internet.

The artists of the exhibition investigate the mechanisms and aesthetics of the Internet. Today, the Net is largely commodified and increasingly controlled, e.g. under the pretext of copyright issues (as suspected in the late nineties). On the other hand, it still provides opportunities for anarchic, uncontrolled thinking. It is not so much about strict separation, but about the natural or playful use of the paradox exemplified by the possibility of political and aesthetic alternatives taking place within commercial platforms such as Facebook or YouTube.

Surfing: Found Materials & Digital Folklore

Many of the works in the exhibition refer to photography and video in the age of their digital reproducibility. Starting points are the overabundance of pictures in the Net, the possibility of seamlessly copying and manipulating digital images as well as the classification and taxonomy systems of digital databases.

This can be described as an update of the artistic use of found footage and appropriation – against the background of such practices having become ubiquitous outside of the art world as well. In any case, the examination of non-artistic aesthetic practices is important – amateurism, digital folklore, pop culture – as well as the framework of computer programs and Internet platforms, their templates and defaults: smilies, animated GIFs, Times New Roman, Photoshop Brushes, YouTube Karaoke...

Club: loose networks, new platforms

The artists of the exhibition are part of a loose network affiliated with platforms such as Nasty Nets, Spirit Surfers, Loshadka, Club Internet and Vwork, in which collaborative and curatorial projects as well as the presentation of Net finds and the artists' own work takes place. The three „Internet surfing clubs“ Nasty Nets, Spirit Surfers and Loshadka are also on display in the exhibition. They are characterized by a specific collaborative practice of showing, transforming, commenting and decontextualising net finds and the artists' own work.

The artists' nonchalance in terms of scenes and platforms for art is remarkable.

The Net is not supposed to be the sole place for their art (in the sense of the utopian space of democratic access for all to art of the classic net.art). In fact, these artists work naturally in different formats. Works that refer to Net culture can manifest themselves in the Net, but also in physical spaces, and can be shown in ICAs, off spaces, media art festivals or commercial galleries.

Harm van den Dorpel
(*1981, lives in Amsterdam)

Ethereal Others

2009

Harm van den Dorpel's „Ethereal Self“ (www.etherealself.com) from 2008 initially seems like a poetic, slightly harmless online piece, creating the illusion of a prismatic crystal mirror through the webcam of the user's computer. Before one's webcam is switched on, one of these common warnings pops up, upon which everybody clicks OK in an instant: „If you click on OK, you might get recorded“. Van den Dorpel takes this standard warning literally and actually records all visitors of his online work. The result can be seen in the installation „Ethereal Others“ and provokes both curiosity and discomfort. Categories of private and public are challenged on the Net, with and without the consent of the involved.

Guthrie Lonergan
(*1984, lives in Los Angeles, CA)

Artist Looking In The Camera

2006

Lonergan's video is completely composed of clips from a commercial stock footage archive, like they are used for advertising and PR videos. These archives have advanced taxonomy and search systems. Lonergan's search for „artist“ and „looking in the camera“ resulted in a series of happy, proper creatives, professionals and amateurs, exclusively working in the medium of painting and sculpture of course, including a „graffiti artist“ for the target group of the youth.

John Michael Boling
(*1983, lives in Athens, GA)

Four Weddings And A Funeral

2006

Four Weddings and a Funeral is exactly what the title (obviously taken from the nineties mainstream romantic comedy) promises: We see and hear videos from four weddings and one funeral, found on YouTube. These are documents of private moments of the lives of people unknown to us, documented and published through media technology – attested and fictionalised at the same time and thus becoming material, ready to be transformed, e.g. into an artwork.

Joel Holmberg
(*1982, lives in Brooklyn,
NY)

Yahoo! Answers: Questions from jhlmbg
2008-2010

The website Yahoo! Answers is a user generated content platform, where questions about all kinds of topics can be asked and will be answered by the user community. In the tradition of conceptual art, Holmberg poses questions about life, art and the Net: „What should I search for?“ „Are you feeling lucky?“ „Does the internet have a goal?“ The answers range from incomprehension, attempts of serious answers to experimental reactions to the experiment.

Nastynets, Spirit Surfers,
Loshadka

Three „Internet Surfing Clubs“ are on display to explore in the exhibition as examples for the collaborative practices of the participating artists.

www.nastynets.com
www.spiritsurfers.net
www.loshadka.org

Aleksandra Domanović
(*1981, lives in Ljubljana
and Berlin)
Untitled (30.III.2010)
2010

The Slovenian artist frequently deals with the subject of former Yugoslavia's history. As a memorial for the „.yu“ domain – subject of conflicts during the war, now switched off as of the end of March 2010 – she developed a series of paper sculptures. They consist of several thousand printed A4-sheets. Stacked, they make a picture appear, showing nationalist Ultras in Belgrade's football stadium. For the Surfing Club exhibit, Domanovic developed a new installation with three of these sculptures.

Petra Cortright
(*1986, lives in Santa Barbara,
CA)
Vvebcam
2007

The video performances of Petra Cortright are characterized by a decontextualisation of the commercial tools for video chats with their kitschy icons and effects. The nonchalant results – often published on YouTube – are at first sight very close to the self-expressions of teenagers on the Net. But they are distinguished by precise transformations. For instance, she adds an excessive list of popular search terms to her YouTube videos. This method recalls Spamming and lures a very diverse range of viewers to her videos.

Oliver Laric
(*1981, lives in Berlin)

Versions

2009

Versions

(Maria Justitia)

2010

In his video essay „Versions“, Oliver Laric deals – with the multifaceted remix cultures of the net as a starting point – with the notion of transformation and versioning per se. For instance, one of his topics is the transformation and damaging of sculptures during the Iconoclasm. During his research, Laric learnt about a sculpture on the facade of Basel's town hall. It was transformed from a Madonna to a Justitia during reformation and thus secularized. Laric rebuilt the sculpture as a digital 3D model and added a liquid-looking new texture. For the exhibition, three prints of his „Maria Justitia“ were made. They are mounted behind a glass that used to be part of the wall of a subway station, but has been transformed by graffiti taggers into the carrier of their signs.

Aids-3D

(Daniel Keller *1986, lives
in Berlin / Nik Kosmas
*1986, lives in Berlin)

OMG Obelisk

(Translation No. 4)

2007-2010

Artist duo Aids-3D deals with our quasi-magical relations to technology and the myths of the digital age. They restaged „OMG“, the abbreviation for „Oh my God!“ common in the Internet, as an installation and reverted back into the realm of religion through some sort of altar. The photo of the installation gained a life of its own on the Net, being re-used by many people as an „Oh my God!“ comment. At [plug.in], the newest version of the work as a picture-object is on display.

Paul Slocum

(*1974, lives in Dallas, TX
and Brooklyn, NY)

You're Not My Father

2007

Paul Slocum searched via online classifieds for people whom he paid 150\$ for reenactments of a short sequence from the TV show Full House from the early nineties. The detailed instructions and the resulting video can be seen in the exhibition. Amateur reenactments of popcultural material are omnipresent in the Net. Slocum's transformation of the everyday phenomenon takes place through the payment on one hand, blurring the boundaries between professional and amateur, and on the other hand, by use of a soundtrack, in which Slocum weaves a hypnotic composition through overlays.

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