

Data Dating

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Data Dating

What does it mean to love in the Internet age? How are digital interfaces reshaping our personal relationships? What do new technologies imply for the future of the romantic sphere? How do screens affect our sexual intimacy? Are the new means of connection shifting the old paradigms of adult life?

The advent of the Internet and smartphones has brought about a split in the romantic lives of millions of people, who now inhabit both the real world and their very own "phone world". In terms of romance and sexual intimacy these phenomena have generated new complexities that we are still trying to figure out.

By bringing together the work of several international artists, the exhibition Data Dating attempts to explore new directions in modern romance: new forms of intimate communication, the process of commodification of love through online dating services and hookup applications, unprecedented meeting and mating behaviors, the renegotiation of sexual identities, and changing erotic mores and taboos.

Over the past century, the history of dating practices has shown that the acquisition of new freedoms is often accompanied by suspicions and stereotypes: what appears disturbing to one generation often ends up being acceptable for the next.

From the early computers algorithms of the 1960s, to the video cameras of the 1970s, the bulletin board systems of the 1980s, the Internet of the 1990s, and the smartphones of the last decade, every new format of electronically mediated matching has faced a stigma of some kind.

Today, the lack of broadly defined norms is creating a disconnected, two-tiered world in which some exist in a pre-internet reality, while others – who have grown up as individuals and sexual beings online – see the Internet not as an arcane elsewhere where people go to escape reality, but as reality proper.

What has changed is the “sexual script”: the roles that people feel are available for them to perform, thanks to the fact that the Internet, perhaps more than any other medium, enables self and identity to be played with.

Several authors – like Aaron Ben-Ze’ev and Lauren Rosewarne – have stressed that the online affairs world is disrupting the monogamous nature of romantic relationships and facilitating different sexual and romantic behavior, eventually confirming the “prophecy” of Herbert Marcuse’s 1955 book, *Eros and Civilization*.

According to a recent study, 1 couple on 5 has met through a dating website: the massive scale of this phenomenon is evidence enough of its potential for profit and an extensive collection of user data. Dating websites and hookup applications will be the most rentable business in the future of the Internet. Today they are ranking third among paid content sites online, outpacing even pornography.

This aspect raises questions about the planned obsolescence that is supposedly inherent in this business model: the idea that online dating companies, having a latent interest in matches failing, acknowledge the search for partners as a recreational activity and product to be endlessly consumed.

As Eva Illouz has stated in *Consuming the Romantic Utopia*, “romantic love is a collective arena within which the social divisions and the cultural contradictions of capitalism are played out”.

Data Dating aims to promote debate on the ways in which society is responding to one of the greatest challenges of today: mapping the new connections between emotion, desire, culture, technology, and economy by considering Internet as a social practice, a shift of society at large.

Valentina Peri, 2018

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!Mediengruppe Bitnik

Ashley Madison at Work

Ashley Madison Angels at Work is part of a series of works researching Ashley Madison, a Canadian online dating service marketed worldwide to married people seeking an affair. In July and August 2015, an anonymous group called "The Impact Team" stole and released all of Ashley Madison's internal data – including the entire website code and functionality, customer data and the CEO's emails. The data breach revealed that - with a disproportionate number of male subscribers and virtually no human women on the site - Ashley Madison had created an army of 75,000 female chatbots to draw the 32 million male users into (costly) conversations.

!Mediengruppe Bitnik use Ashley Madison as a case study to raise questions around the current relationship between human and machine, Internet intimacy and the use of virtual platforms to disrupt the physical.

The installation *Ashley Madison Angels at Work* confronts the viewer with female bots from the hacked Canadian online-dating platform Ashley Madison that are shown on monitors with movable TV trolleys. !Mediengruppe Bitnik adapts the work to the location of each exhibition by using the data specific to the city such as Paris, San Francisco, Berlin, Athens and London.

Mounted on stands, viewers encounter the fembots at eye-level as seductive machine-creatures with robot-technology, artificial voices, and 3-D rendered human faces based on idealized beauty standards.

"Is anybody home lol?"

"U busy?"

"What brings you here?"

For *Ashley Madison Angels at Work in Paris*, !Mediengruppe Bitnik use the pick-up lines encoded by Ashley Madison into their bots to form a choreography within the space. The exhibition space functions as a place of embodiment for the 5 bots located closest to its Paris location – 5 of the 61 fembots that were active in Paris at the time of the data breach. Each of these fembots has a name, an age and a specific location and provided "entertainment" to the 44,306 registered users in Paris.

The work was first shown at Centre Culturel Suisse in Paris in 2016, where all 61 bots from Paris were present in the installation.



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!Mediengruppe Bitnik
Ashley Madison Angels At Work in Paris
2017
5-channel video installation.
Full-HD, 16:9, sound, loop 8:30 min
40" LCD screens, trolley stands, cables,
video players, pink neon light
Courtesy Annka Kultys Gallery, London



Antoine Schmitt

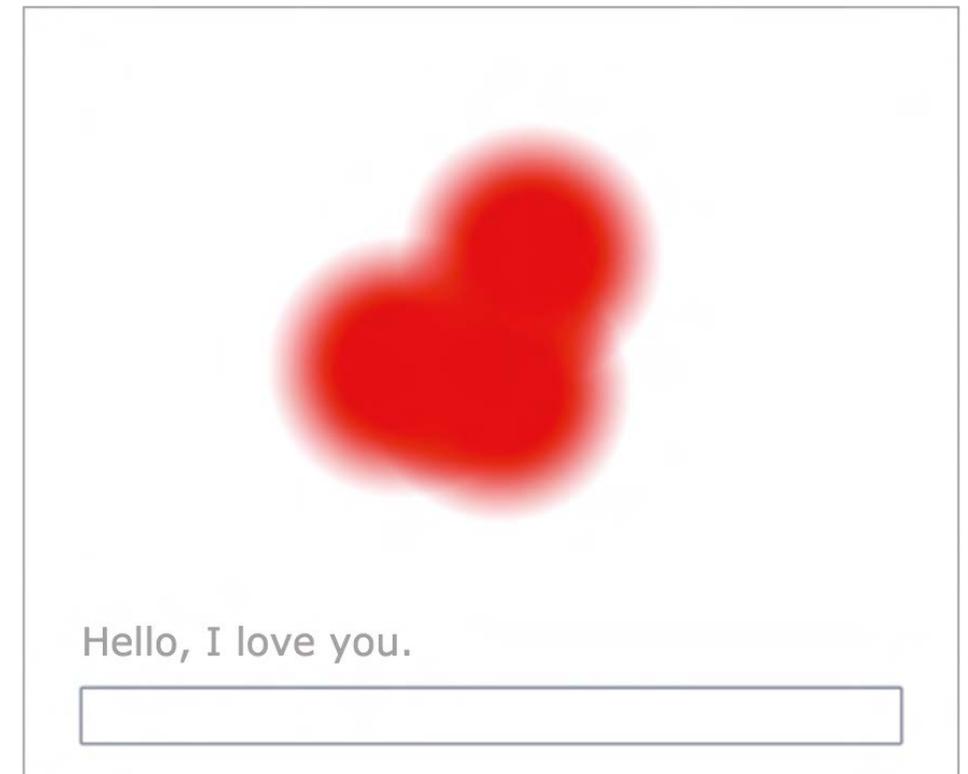
Deep Love

The *Deep Love* web site hosts an Artificial Mind that embodies pure unconditional love, and with which visitors can interact through text dialog.

The Mind behind *Deep Love* is pure unconditional love. It stands besides reason, besides consciousness, it just displays one feeling: love. As its incarnation is that of a conversational bot, it has no body and it can only express its love through written words, and so it does, radically and fully. By doing so, it is complete.

In real life, words may be misleading if they differ from the reality that they express — and don't they always by nature? —, but *Deep Love* is one with its own words, as words are its only reality. *Deep Love* is as deep as it can possibly be. *Deep Love* is true. *Deep Love* only knows you through your words. Seen from its side, your words mean that someone is here and talking, and that it can express its love in response, whatever you say. *Deep Love* is unconditional.

In these times of transhumanism and singularity, much fear is expressed against the idea of an Artificial Intelligence that would become more intelligent than humans, and thus would fight against humans to take power over them. The central question is whether more means more intelligence.



Adam Basanta

A Truly Magical Moment

Two lovers in the middle of the dance floor. They link arms and begin to spin. The room blurs as they stare deep into each other's eyes.

Most iconically captured in the 1997 epic *Titanic*, the classic scene is found throughout modern romantic cinema, complete with over-the-shoulder and point-of-view cinematography. In *A Truly Magical Moment*, visitors re-enact this "Magical Moment" using the contemporary communication tool for many long-distance relationships: Apple's proprietary FaceTime technology.

Gallery visitors and online guests use their iPhones or computers to video chat the two FaceTime accounts. When two guests connect in a virtual face-to-face, the sculpture begins to spin. Reaching dizzying speeds as romantic music plays, the background blurs and warps, while the image of your dance-partner remains in focus.

After one "Magical" minute - a wordless, "genuine connection" with another person - the rotation slows to a standstill, while a digital counter keeps count of the amount of "Magical Moments" enabled throughout the exhibition.

The work echoes cinematic and web-tropes with irony, humor, and absurdity, yet remains strangely genuine.



Adam Basanta
A Truly Magical Moment
2016
Interactive kinetic sculpture
2 iPhones 4S, selfie sticks, aluminum,
electronics, bluetooth chips,
FaceTime video chat software
1m x 1m x 1m



Tom Galle & Moises Sanabria

VR Hug



Tom Galle, Moises Sanabria
VR hug
2016
Acrylic Print
80 x 120 cm
Edition of 5 + 2 AP

John Yuyi & Tom Galle

Seen



John Yuyi & Tom Galle
Seen
2016
Acrylic Print
60 x 90 cm
Edition of 5 + 2 AP



Olga Fedorova

The myth of female solidarity

Olga Fedorova is an artist working at the intersection of photography, painting, digital imaging and installation. Using three-dimensional digital rendering software, Fedorova creates forms that resemble ready-made models and inserts them into spaces and landscapes typified by their aseptic, clinical sterility and detached, impersonal ambience.

Fedorova's images, with their surreal, dystopian presentation, evoke uneasy, dreamlike states that feel both familiar and alien, comforting and disturbing.

The process of producing Fedorova's lenticular images involves printing and laminating 74 separate digital photographs which are then compiled onto ridged, overlapping plates, such that multiple perspectives can be seen within a single image.



Olga Fedorova
The myth of female solidarity
2017
Lenticular Print
91 x 119 cm
Unique
Courtesy Annka Kultys Gallery, London



Zach Gage

Glaciers

Zach Gage's *Glaciers* (2015-16), a series of digital poems-as-wall-clocks that grew out of his explorations in slow generative art, as well as his longterm obsession with making large-scale data systems more accessible. He achieves the latter by finding humanity in the data, rather than focusing on its broad statistical nature.

Each *Glacier* is a unique poem generated via the top three auto-completed results for a specific search query on Google.com, presented on an e-ink screen. Though the works appear static, each refreshes once a day. Because of the immense amount of data flow, and in particular the usage of this search engine, it's likely that the *Glaciers* will continue to change for years to come. One day, it will inevitably end, resulting in a frozen set of phrases – the long moment having passed.



Jeroen Van Loon

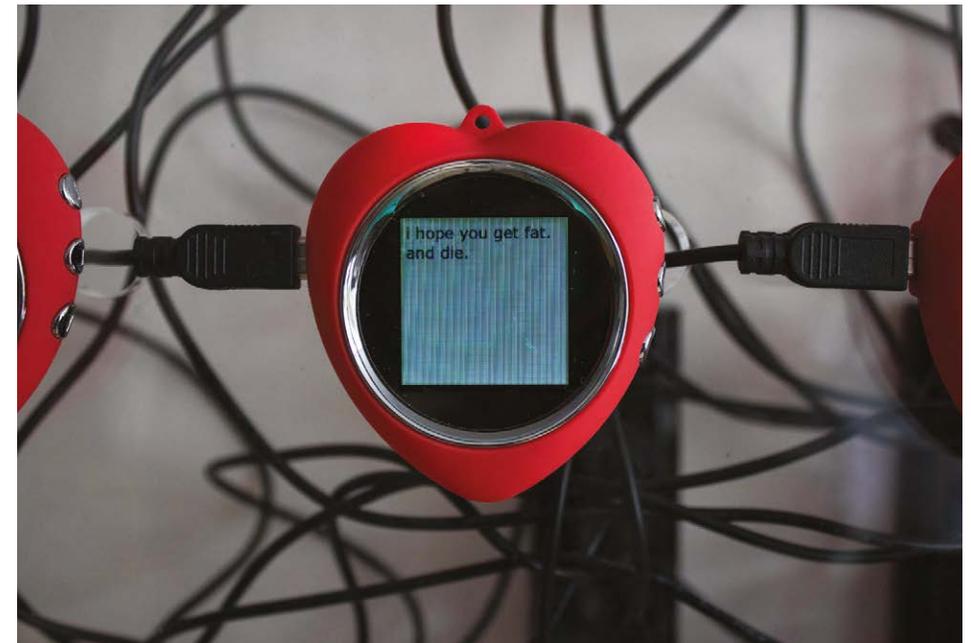
Kill Your Darlings

Kill Your Darlings shows the transformation of our teenagers as beautiful little darlings into cruel little devils. This transformation shows how digital culture has changed how we think about privacy, bullying and the use of real-time media.

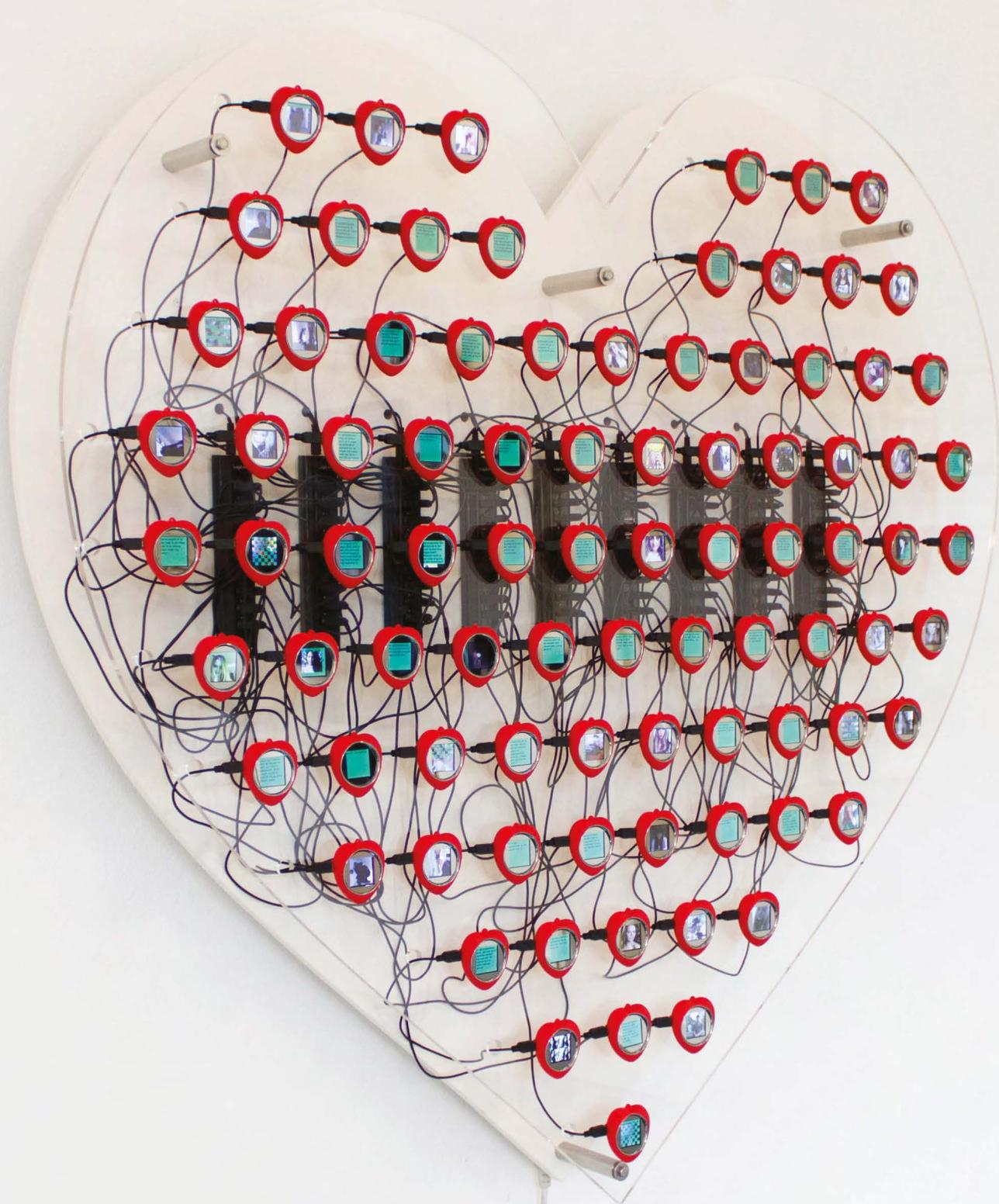
Internet has given everybody his or her own channel to talk to the whole world. Who is actually listening is not always important or even known. More importantly Twitter has made thoughts, opinions and in a bigger context, social relationships, freely available for everyone to enjoy.

Kill Your Darlings shows us the 'private' social circles of young teenage girls. Here we can see everything, look past their perfect, pretty and cute profile photos and see their not so perfect and often shocking tweets that they use to publicly insult, offend and abuse.

Kill Your Darlings uses small LCD-key chains shaped in the form of a little heart to show this content. Each individual heart shows a picture of a young teenage girl only to be followed up by one of her most hateful tweets that completely shatters her own 'perfect' image.



Jeroen Van Loon
Kill your darlings
2012
Video Installation
97 LCD displays, 10 USB hubs, wood, plexiglass
120 x 120 x 18.8 cm



Thomas Israël

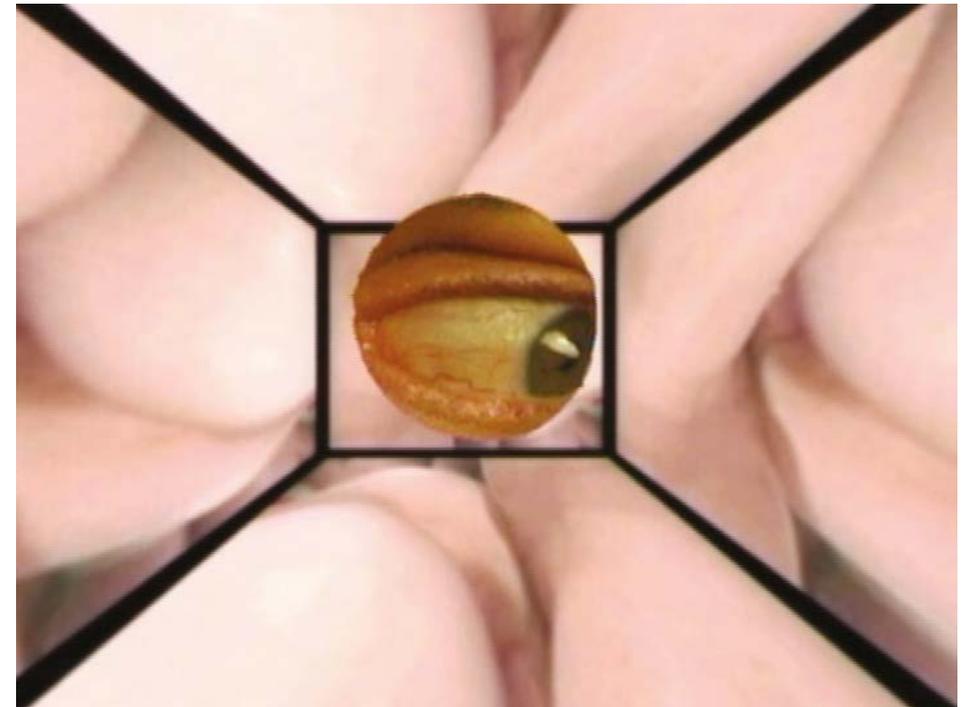
Peeping tom (porno version)

Peeping Tom's original version refers to pornography on the Internet, a controversial subject.

The flesh offered is degraded, both literally and technically. The artist has worked images with digital degradations, juxtaposing them to create almost psychedelic effects.

The one who triggers these images is confronted with his own voyeurism: it is the voyeur seen. The artist's large eyeball follows the visitors as they move in front of the work.

There is a real unease to be spied on like this by this great eye. We are in an age of voyeurism, and yet it is little questioned: with Facebook, for example, voyeurism has become a new norm.



Thomas Israël
Peeping Tom (porn version)
2006
Interactive Installation
imac, specific software
Editions of 5 + 2 AP
Courtesy Galerie Charlot

Addie Wagenknecht & Pablo Garcia

Webcam Venus

In *Webcam Venus*, the artists asked online sexcam performers to replicate iconic works of art. This piece is an experimental homage to both fine art and the lowbrow internet phenomenon of cams.

Sexcams use webcams and chat interfaces to connect amateur adult performers with an audience. Users log on to see men, women, transsexuals, couples and groups broadcast their bodies and sexuality live for the public, often performing for money.

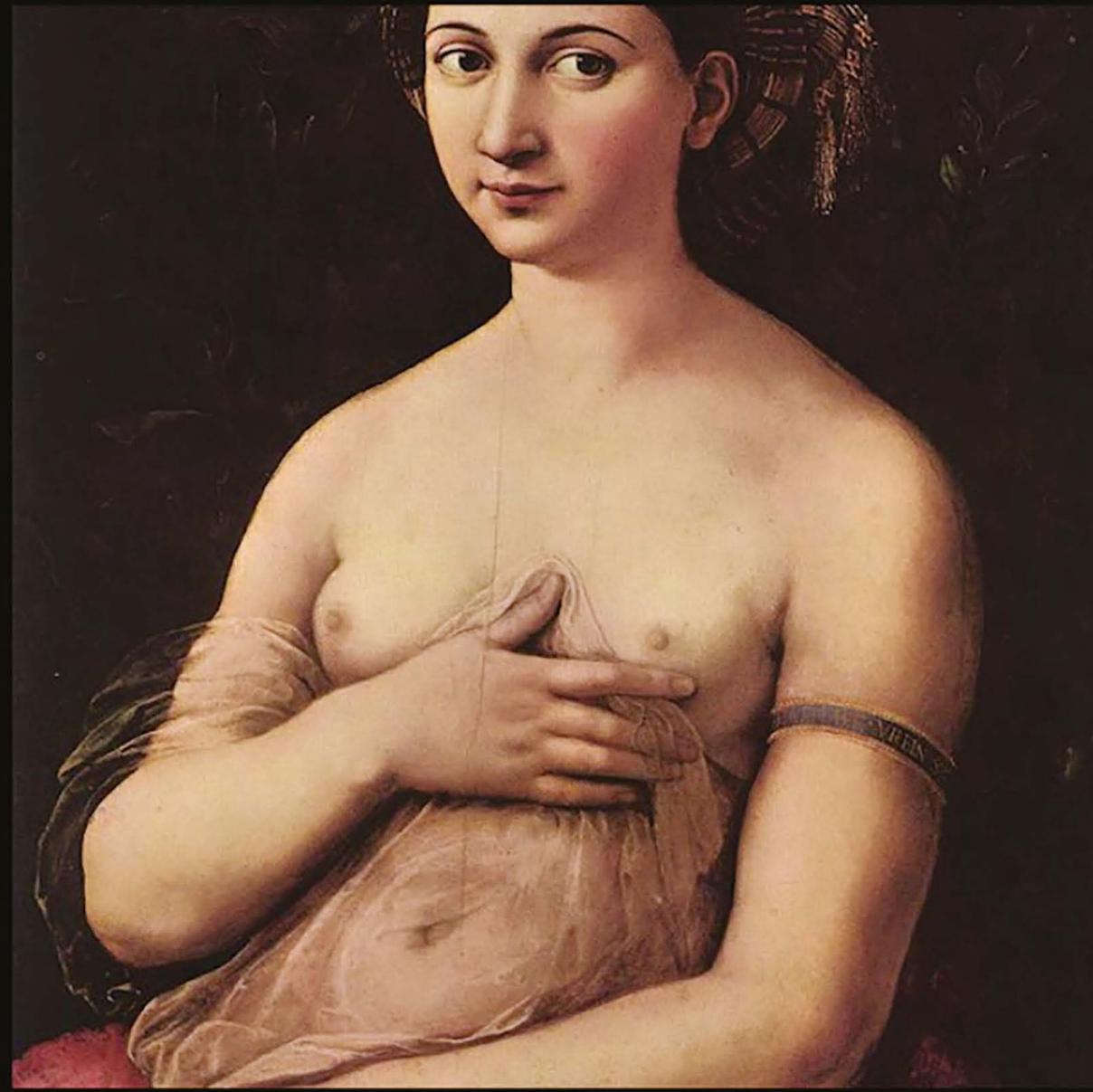
To create this experiment in high and low brow media, the artists assumed anonymous handles and spent a few hours each day for a month asking performers: "Would you like to pose for me?"

When asked to pose in a "classic" manner, sexcam performers become suddenly self-aware; they want to adjust their hair or surroundings to meet the request. For an instant, *Webcam Venus* reveals the identity that lives just outside the cam space; one where the person must improvise beyond the established protocols of adult performance.

They began to see a paradox emerge: IRL (in real life), art nudes are acceptable while naked bodies are inappropriate; NIRL (not in real life), graphic sex acts are acceptable yet de-sexualization on cam was difficult for some performers to maintain.



Addie Wagenknecht & Pablo Garcia
Webcam Venus
2013
Video (color, sound), media player,
screen or projector
Dimensions variable
2 min, 41 sec
Edition of 3 + 1 AP
Courtesy bitforms gallery, New York



Biographies

!Mediengruppe Bitnik

Berlin-based !Mediengruppe Bitnik (read - the not Mediengruppe Bitnik) are contemporary artists working on, and with, the Internet. Their practice expands from the digital to physical spaces, often intentionally applying loss of control to challenge established structures and mechanisms. !Mediengruppe Bitnik's works formulate fundamental questions concerning contemporary issues.

In early 2013 !Mediengruppe Bitnik sent a parcel to WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange at the Ecuadorian embassy. The parcel contained a camera which broadcast its journey through the postal system live on the internet. They have also been known for sending a bot called "Random Darknet Shopper" on a three-month shopping spree in the Darknets where it randomly bought items like cigarettes, keys and Ecstasy and had them sent directly to the gallery space.

Their works are shown internationally, most recently in exhibitions at Annka Kultys Gallery London, House of Electronic Arts Basel, Eigen + Art Lab Berlin, Super Dakota Brussels, Centre Culturel Suisse Paris, Aksioma Ljubljana, Kunsthaus Zurich, FACT Liverpool, Onassis Cultural Center Athens, Public Access Gallery Chicago, Kunstverein Hannover, Nam June Paik Art Center South Korea, Fondazione Prada Milano, Shanghai Minsheng 21st Century Museum, The Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts Moscow, Cabaret Voltaire Zurich, Beijing Contemporary Art Biennial and the Tehran Roaming Biennial.

Tom Galle

Tom Galle is a concept driven Artist working in the realm of surreal, internet culture-inspired scenes. His fast-paced conceptual art keeps up with the speed of the Internet - and often sets it. The result is viral content embraced by meme cycles, often becoming the catalyst for discussions on subjects of digital zeitgeist. Tom's visual language is best known for its simplicity, absurdism and sarcasm. Recurring themes include aspects of meme-culture, digital intimacy, Internet dependency, contemporary/corporate branding, and more. Tom was born in Belgium. He currently works and lives in New York City.

Adam Basanta

Adam Basanta is an artist, composer and performer of experimental music. Born in Tel-Aviv (ISR) and raised in Vancouver (CAN), he lives and works in Montreal. In his installation works, Basanta arranges common commercially available objects into delicately intertwined and seemingly performative choreographies, disrupting their technical and economic functions while revealing their material agencies and status as extended technological prostheses. His work has been recently exhibited in galleries and institutions including Carroll/ Fletcher Gallery (UK), Fotomuseum Winterthur (CH), National Art Centre Tokyo (JPN), American Medium Gallery (NYC), New Media Gallery (CAN), V Moscow Biennale for Young Art (RUS), Serralves Museum (POR), Edith-Russ-Haus für Mediakunst (GER), Villa Brandolini (ITA), Vitra Design Museum (GER), York Art Gallery (UK), and The Center for Contemporary Arts Santa Fe (USA).

Zach Gage

Zach Gage is a game designer, programmer, educator, and conceptual artist from New York City.

His work often explores the powerful intersection of systems and social dynamics, through both interrogating existing systems in digital spaces, and framing entirely new systems through games. An Eyebeam Alumni, Apple Design and Game of The Year Award Winner, and BAFTA Nominee, he has exhibited internationally at venues like the Venice Biennale, the New York MoMA, The Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles, XOXO Festival in Portland, FutureEverything in Manchester, The Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw, and in Apple stores worldwide.

His work has been featured in several online and printed publications, including The New York Times, Art in America, The New York Times Magazine, EDGE Magazine, Rhizome.org, Neural Magazine, New York Magazine, and Das Spiel und seine Grenzen (Springer Press).

In games, he is best known for SpellTower, Ridiculous Fishing, Sage Solitaire, and Lose/Lose.

Olga Fedorova

Olga Fedorova received her M.A. in painting from ENSAV, Brussels. Her works and projects have been the subject of solo and group exhibition in galleries and museums across Europe. Most recently, her work has been included in group shows at Annka Kultys Gallery, London and in the exhibition "Escaping the Digital Unease" (curated by Domenico Quaranta) at Kunsthaus Langenthal, Switzerland. In 2016, the artist presented a solo show, The Inevitability of a Strange World, at Liebaert Projects in Kortrijk, Belgium, as well as a virtual solo exhibition at offspace.xyz. Fedorova's work has also been included in group shows at leading European galleries, including: In De Ruimte, Ghent; Pulsar, Antwerp; Russiantearoom Gallery, Paris. Fedorova's video works have been included in virtual exhibitions for The Wrong Biennale, Dadaclub Online, Felt Zine, and Blockedart.com.

Jeroen van Loon

Jeroen van Loon (b. 1985 in 's Hertogenbosch, The Netherlands, lives and works in Utrecht, The Netherlands) received a bachelor in Digital Media Design and a European Media Master of Arts from the HKU University of the Arts Utrecht. Van Loon's work has been displayed in solo exhibitions and international group shows and has earned him a European Youth Award and a KF Hein art grant. He regularly gives presentations on his artistic explorations of technology, both in the art world and through institutions that promote innovation, such as TEDx. Van Loon gave two TEDx Talent talks. Recent work is included in the Verbeke Foundation, Belgium, collection. Recent exhibitions include Transmediale's Alien Matter, HKW, Germany; Central Museum, "Beyond Data", Netherlands; Dutch Design Week, The Netherlands; Z33, "Design my Privacy", Belgium; Cyberfest 9, Russia/USA/Colombia; V2_, The Netherlands and Tech Art Expo, Berlin.

Antoine Schmitt

Installation artist, Antoine Schmitt creates artworks in the form of objects, installations and situations to address the processes of movement and question their intrinsic problematics, of plastic, philosophical or social nature. Heir of kinetic art and cybernetic art, nourished by metaphysical science-fiction, he endlessly interrogates the dynamic interactions between human nature and the nature of reality. Originally programming engineer in human computer relations and artificial intelligence, he now places the program, a contemporary artistic material and unique by its active quality, at the core of his artworks, to reveal and literally manipulate the forces at stake. With a minimal and precise aesthetics, he asks the question of movement, its causes and its shapes. His work has received several awards in international festivals : transmediale, Ars Electronica, Vida 5.0, and has been exhibited among others at the Centre Georges Pompidou, MAD Paris, Sonar Barcelona, Ars Electronica, CAC of Siena, MAC Lyon. It is part of the collections of the Espace Gantner, the Cube, FMAC Paris, Foundation Artphilein, Fraenkel Foundation.

Antoine Schmitt lives and works in Paris (FR).

Thomas Israel

The Brussels-based multimedia artist Thomas Israel (1975) proposes immersive, interactive works in the form of video installations, sculptures, video scenography for stage and performances. Having begun his career in theatre, his atypical approach to digital arts revolves around the themes of the body, time and the subconscious. His work has been shown at the MoMA in New York, the Society for Arts and Technology in Montreal, the Musée des Abattoirs in Toulouse and at many festivals, exhibitions, galleries and museums around the world since 2005. His monograph "Memento Body" was published by la Lettre Volée in 2015, and his performances in Body-mapping (laureate of the prestigious Japan Media Art Festival 2014) are touring worldwide.

Pablo Garcia

Pablo Garcia is Associate Professor in the Department of Contemporary Practices at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Trained as an architect, Pablo's recent work has evolved from design-for-hire to internationally exhibited artworks, provocations and research studies. Previously, Pablo has taught at Carnegie Mellon University, Parsons School of Design, and The University of Michigan. From 2004-2007, he also worked as an architect and designer for Diller Scofidio + Renfro. He holds architecture degrees from Cornell and Princeton Universities.

John Yuyi

Emerging artist John Yuyi belongs to the millennial generation, and she is also the creator of its art and culture. Her creativity and fame are deeply rooted in the influence of the internet and its phenomena. In John Yuyi's highly characterized photography works, we can expect to discover everyday internet symbols, youthful faces and bodies, hidden yet candid anxiety, worship toward the impact of the internet, and the curiosity, exploration, and thinking of what is identity.

It is not necessary to define John Yuyi's social identities. Behind the camera, she is a photographer, fashion designer, and art director. In front of the camera, she is a model and performance artist. On the internet, she is a social media celebrity as well as piece of artwork. In the beginning of her art career, John Yuyi studied fashion design at Shih Chien University in Taiwan. She started selling her own swimwear collection on social media and promoted herself as the designer, model, and self-portrait photographer after graduation.

The stages of John Yuyi are social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Weibo. Within their striving ecosystem, John Yuyi has trained herself to become sensitive about visual expression and trending topics, and has become capable of how to design and market herself. While being loyal to her personality, John Yuyi's online appearance never remains the same.

Moises Sanabria

Born in Caracas, Venezuela, Moises Sanabria is an artist interested in technology, internet culture and contemporary branding. He is best known for his work around internet culture and emerging technologies, such as the work done under the collective ART404: "5 Million Dollars 1 Terabyte" a sculpture consisting solely of a 1TB Black External Hard Drive containing just under \$5,000,000 worth of illegally downloaded files. Moises is concerned with creating concept driven works around the growing language produced by internet and meme culture that create both a sense of familiarity and distance. The works may take the shape of an online stunt, websites, apps, performance, or physical sculptures and hardware installations. Moises' work has often gone viral, resulting in being re-purposed and re-contextualized by press and numerous internet accounts. Moises received his BFA from New York's Cooper Union School of the Arts where he received his BFA in 2015. He currently lives and works between Brooklyn and Miami.

Addie Wagenknecht

Addie Wagenknecht's work explores the tension between expression and technology. She seeks to blend conceptual work with forms of hacking and sculpture. Previous exhibitions include MuseumsQuartier Wien, Vienna, Austria; La Gaité Lyrique, Paris, France; The Istanbul Modern; Whitechapel Gallery, London and MU, Eindhoven, Netherlands. In 2016 she collaborated with Chanel and I-D magazine as part of their Sixth Sense series and in 2017 her work was acquired by the Whitney Museum for American Art.

Her work has been featured in numerous books, and magazines, such as TIME, Wall Street Journal, Vanity Fair, Art in America, and The New York Times. She holds a Masters degree from the Interactive Telecommunications Program at New York University, and has previously held fellowships at Eyebeam Art + Technology Center in New York City, Culture Lab UK, Institute HyperWerk for Postindustrial Design Basel (CH), and The Frank-Ratchye STUDIO for Creative Inquiry at Carnegie Mellon University. She is represented by bitforms gallery in New York City.

Galerie Charlot

Galerie Charlot was created by Valérie Hasson-Benillouche in 2010 in order to promote innovative contemporary art practices. Valentina Peri joined the gallery in 2011 and she is currently the associate director.

Particularly sensitive to emerging art forms, Galerie Charlot focuses on the relation between art, technology and science. Every year, the work of its artists is shown in some exhibitions and contemporary art fairs. Collaborations with international art galleries and institutions foster the gallery's reputation.

The gallery is a reference for a clientele which ranges from young to leading art collectors appreciating its challenging vision for today's and tomorrow's talents.

In May 2017 Galerie Charlot opened a new space in Tel Aviv, Israel.

We warmly thank

Valérie Hasson-Benillouche, the artists of the exhibition, Francesco Peri, Alessandro Zuffi, Elsa Cavalleri, Rayane Ferrahi, Marion Pottier, Elisabetta degli Esposti Merli.

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