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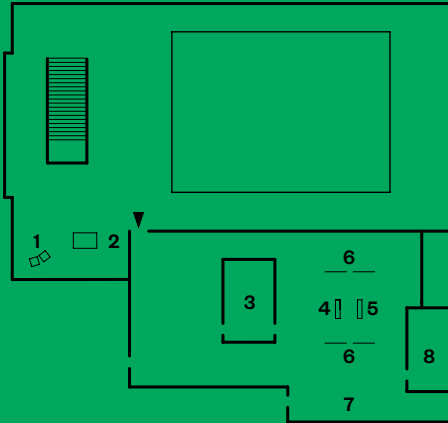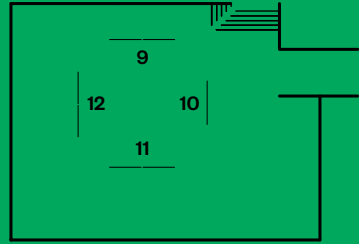## IMAGES

— 08 09

HITO STEYERL, HARUN FAROCKI, PIERRE HUYGHE, DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER, FACTUM ARTE, GINTARAS DIDŽIAPETRIS, SETH PRICE

FIRST FLOOR

BASEMENT HALL

1 Harun Farocki, *Interface*, 1995, video (double projection), color and b/w, sound, 23 min. Courtesy Harun Farocki GbR, Berlin

2 Seth Price, *Redistribution* (2007–), video, color, sound, 44:15 min. Courtesy the artist and Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi, Berlin

3 Hito Steyerl, *How Not to Be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational .MOV File*, 2013, HD video, single screen in architectural environment, 14 min. Courtesy the artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York

4 Pierre Huyghe, *One Million Kingdoms*, 2001, video, color, sound, 6:45 min. Collection Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven

5 Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, *AnnLee in Anzenzone*, 2000, video, color, sound, 3:25 min. Collection Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven

6 3D Lucida Scanner at work; flatbed printer printing a small relief in registration; 3D scanning San Petronio, Bologna; panoramic photography, camera head test. Courtesy Factum Arte, Madrid

7 Gintaras Didžiapetris, *Teapot*, 2015, paper mural, dimensions variable. Courtesy the artist and Elba Benitez Gallery, Madrid

8 Seth Price, *Digital Video Effect: "Editions"*, 2006, video, color, sound, 11 min. Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

9 Harun Farocki, *Serious Games I: Watson is Down*, 2010, video (double projection), color, sound, 8 min. Courtesy Harun Farocki GbR, Berlin

10 Harun Farocki, *Serious Games II: Three Dead*, 2010, video, color, sound, 8 min. Courtesy Harun Farocki GbR, Berlin

11 Harun Farocki, *Serious Games III: Immersion*, 2009, video (double projection), color, sound, 20 min. Courtesy Harun Farocki GbR, Berlin

12 Harun Farocki, *Serious Games IV: A Sun with No Shadow*, 2010, video (double projection), color, sound, 8 min. Courtesy Harun Farocki GbR, Berlin

Alternative titles for this exhibition could have been: *The Happy Pixels*; *How Not To Be Seen*; *Circulation*; *Image After Image*; *The New Spirit of Image*; *.jpeg; Formats*; *The Swarm of Images*; *The Power of a Weak Image*... Collectively, these working titles provide a good overview of the exhibition as well as suggesting the problematic field and different contexts it seeks to investigate — historically unprecedented scales of image distribution enabled by the race of information and image technologies, the mind-boggling speed of image circulation, and the way it effects the contemporary world. In the context of the exhibition, an image, according to the art historian David Joselit, is understood as a certain amount of visual information capable of taking many forms, it is a 'visual bite, vulnerable to virtually infinite remediation.'[1] It is not only screens and information systems that the images inhabit, they even reside happily in our offline world. As a strange inhabitant of screens and streets, the digital image has two superpowers: elasticity (it can be shrunk, enlarged, zipped, cut, pasted, etc.) and multiplicity (it can be in multiple places simultaneously). It is weak and strong, visible (visualisation) and invisible (pure data), and in this aspect, as the philosopher Boris Groys points out, the digital image 'is functioning as a Byzantine icon – as a visible copy of invisible God.'[2] The artworks in this exhibition are by an international group of artists who are concerned with the very power of the image today. The real task for them is to filter the images, to recognise the image systems, to follow the paths of image circulation and distribution in the (art) world, anticipating their abilities and effects, and understanding the kind of sociopolitical, aesthetic, and ethical dimensions that images acquire when they migrate between different content and contexts.

The outcome of a radical contact between the image and reality manifests itself in the work of Harun Farocki and Hito Steyerl — their artworks reveal how actuality is 'anaesthetised' by virtuality, and how images leave the television and computer screens only to 'flood' our everyday world and turn into the lifestyle-forming city quarters and representations of whole nations and races, or (political) bodies (was this not the reason that the former Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi changed his nose through plastic surgery? asks Steyerl). When an image becomes powerful enough to move real objects, it also becomes quite obvious that the archaic fear which was associated with photography as an act that steals one's soul threatens to return through highly modern

forms such as maps of CCTV-free urban corridors that circulate the internet or data from the government surveillance apparatuses leaked by Edward Snowden.

Instead of authenticity or site-specificity, the exhibition features the barely-legal collections of images and the tracks of their fast-paced trajectories of mutations (videos by Seth Price and open files by Gintaras Didžiapetris). The copy-original relationship and its epistemological strength are furthermore challenged by Factum Arte's facsimile workshop armed with the newest technologies. Imagine a huge archive of demiurgic codes — matrixes of cultural heritage and artworks, from Veronese's paintings to Kurt Schwitters' Merzbau — where the performativity of image (i.e. the possibilities of its actualisation) is unlimited.

Finally, the properties of the digital image: mobility, ability to adapt and change, functionality within networks, openness, immediacy, speed, flexibility — all mirror the global norms of human existence that have already been established by global capitalism or 'the new spirit of capitalism' (Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello). The global and, seemingly, poorly controlled multiplicity of images can be understood as a flexible, innovative, and dehierarchised organisation that, besides being profitable, effects the world in a very real way. The exhibition features artworks that reflect on this systemic dependency of images and even use it as a prototype (*No Ghost Just A Shell*). Given all this interdependency of images, can we think of a plastic, liberating consciousness? Would it insist on a certain image austerity, or would it clog the screens with even more of the Internet's dark matter — half-bodies and half-images?

The image is not a theme of the exhibition nor is it (only) a motif; one should imagine the image on this occasion as more of a conceptual tool to help us think about the events and phenomena happening in the world today, in which image is entangled in one way or another.

Inesa Brašiškė

1   David Joselit. *After Art*, Princeton University Press, 2013, p. XV

2   Boris Groys. From Image to Image File and Back: Art in the Age of
     Digitalization, *Art Power*, MIT Press, 2008, p. 84

HITO STEYERL

I AM COMPLETELY INVISIBLE.

B. 1966, LIVES AND WORKS IN BERLIN

In her video pieces, texts, and lectures, Hito Steyerl reflects on the status of pictures and contemporary visual politics — focussing on how visual circulation mediates the world and how it reformulates ideas such as political power, culture, and subject. In the lecture shown in the exhibition Steyerl insists that 'at a certain point in time images started pouring out of the computer and TV screens and materialising in reality.' If our world is inhabited by images, then one must learn the techniques of hiding in a reality covered by endless layers of imagery.

The video *How Not to Be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational .MOV File* (2013) introduces a variety of techniques for becoming invisible in the age of total surveillance and visual excess. By skilfully juggling various contexts and references (the video was filmed on a military base — a location in the Californian desert — designated to test the resolution

of military airforce cameras during the era of analogue photography, the structure and rhythm of the video mimics the format of internet tutorials, while the title refers to *How Not to Be Seen* (1970) — a humorous sketch by Monty Python) the artist creates a specific mixture of documentary and fiction, which comments on issues of invisibility, vanishing, and representation in the contemporary digital world — problems that are central to all of her works. How can one escape the grasp of social networks, facial recognition software, and GPS tracking systems today? How can one remain invisible to the drones? On the other hand, how is it still possible to vanish from the surface of the earth without a trace in the age of total surveillance and recording? Steyerl provides her audience with potential means which are not serious propositions for fooling the intelligence agencies or Google, but, according to a philosopher Sven Lütticken, 'they are nontheless reminders that we all are data-objects and we'd better start acting on that knowledge.'[1]

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1   Sven Lütticken. Hito Steyerl: Postcinematic Essays after the
     Future, *Too Much World*, ed. Nick Aikens, Sternberg Press,
     2014, p. 50

Too Much World: Is the Internet Dead? (Excerpt)

But if images start pouring across screens and invading subject and object matter, the major and quite overlooked consequence is that reality now widely consists of images; or rather, of things, constellations, and processes formerly evident as images. This means one cannot understand reality without understanding cinema, photography, 3D modeling, animation, or other forms of moving or still image. The world is imbued with the shrapnel of former images, as well as images edited, photoshopped, cobbled together from spam and scrap. Reality itself is postproduced and scripted, affect rendered as after-effect. Far from being opposites across an unbridgeable chasm, image and world are in many cases just versions of each other.[1] They are not equivalents however, but deficient, excessive, and uneven in relation to each other. And the gap between them gives way to speculation and intense anxiety.

Under these conditions, production morphs into postproduction, meaning the world can be understood but also altered by its tools. The tools of postproduction: editing, color correction, filtering, cutting, and so on are not aimed at achieving representation. They have become means of creation, not only of images but also of the world in their wake. One possible reason: with digital proliferation of all sorts of imagery, suddenly too much world became available. The map, to use the well-known fable by Borges, has not only become equal to the world, but exceeds it by far.[2] A vast quantity of images covers the surface of the world—very in the case of aerial imaging—in a confusing stack of layers. The map explodes on a material territory, which is increasingly fragmented and also gets entangled with it: in one instance, Google Maps cartography led to near military conflict.[3]

While Borges wagered that the map might wither away, Baudrillard speculated that on the contrary, reality was disintegrating.[4] In fact, *both* proliferate and confuse one another: on handheld devices, at checkpoints, and in between edits. Map and territory reach into one another to realize strokes on trackpads as theme parks or apartheid architecture. Image layers get stuck as geological strata while SWAT teams patrol Amazon shopping carts. The point is that no one can deal with this. This extensive and exhausting mess

needs to be edited down in real time: filtered, scanned, sorted, and select-ed—into so many Wikipedia versions, into layered, libidinal, logistical, lop-sided geographies.

This assigns a new role to image production, and in consequence also to people who deal with it. Image workers now deal directly in a world made of images, and can do so much faster than previously possible. But production has also become mixed up with circulation to the point of be-ing indistinguishable. The factory/studio/tumblr blur with online shopping, oligarch collections, realty branding, and surveillance architecture. Today's workplace could turn out to be a rogue algorithm commandeering your hard drive, eyeballs, and dreams. And tomorrow you might have to disco all the way to insanity.

As the web spills over into a different dimension, image production moves way beyond the confines of specialized fields. It becomes mass post-production in an age of crowd creativity. Today, almost everyone is an artist. We are pitching, phishing, spamming, chain-liking or mansplaining. We are twitching, tweeting, and toasting as some form of solo relational art, high on dual processing and a smartphone flat rate. Image circulation today works by pimping pixels in orbit via strategic sharing of wacky, neo-tribal, and mostly US-American content. Improbable objects, celebrity cat GIFs, and a jumble of unseen anonymous images proliferate and waft through human bodies via Wi-Fi. One could perhaps think of the results as a new and vital form of folk art, that is if one is prepared to completely overhaul one's definition of folk as well as art. A new form of storytelling using emojis and tweeted rape threats is both creating and tearing apart communities loosely linked by shared attention deficit.

1   Oliver Laric, *Versions*, 2012

2   Jorge Luis Borges. On Exactitude in Science, *Collected Fictions*, New York: Penguin, 1999, p. 75—82
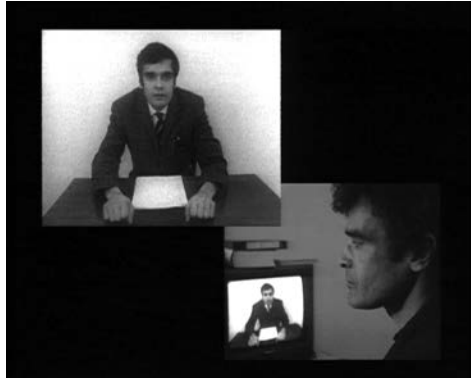
3   L. Arlas. Verbal spat between Costa Rica, Nicaragua continues, *Tico Times*, Sept. 20, 2013. Thanks to Kevan Jenson for mentioning this to me.

4   Jean Baudrillard. Simulacra and Simulations, *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988, p. 166—184

HARUN FAROCKI

1944–2014, LIVED AND WORKED IN BERLIN

The creative legacy of Harun Farocki includes over a hundred films for televison and cinema — feature films, documentaries, cinéma vérité, and visual essays — and video installations. The sociopolitical dimension of moving images, themes of visual technologies, media, war industry, revolution, and social and work relations remained at the centre of artist's attention. In the video *Interface* (*Schnittstelle*) (1995), a double-screened commentary on his own creative principles, Farocki reflects on the meaning of explaining 'images through images' — i.e., of working with appropriated images instead of creating new ones.

The use of visual simulation software and the application of virtual reality for military purposes as well as for treating postwar traumas are the central themes in the video installation *Serious Games I-IV*. The artwork is

comprised of four parts: the first, *Serious Games I: Watson is Down* (*Ernste Spiele I: Watson ist hin*) (2010), depicts military exercises that utilise ultra-high definition digital simulations of Afghan terrain at the marine base Twentynine Palms (California). The second part *Serious Games II: Three Dead* (*Ernste Spiele II: 3 tot*) (2010) shows the military exercise that takes place in a custom-built town at the same location, where the houses look like they are taken straight from a computer game. The third part *Serious Games III: Immersion* (*Ernste Spiele III: Immersion*) (2009) takes place in a post-traumatic workshop where civil therapeutists introduce 'Virtual Iraq', an immersive virtual reality environment that allows patients to 'relive' their traumas and treat the PTSDs (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders). In the last part of the installation *Serious Games IV: A Sun with No Shadow* (*Ernste Spiele IV: Sonne ohne Schatten*) (2010) Farocki comments on the striking similarity between the imagery used in the military exercises and the images used for the treatment of post-war traumas. And yet there is one significant difference: 'the program for recalling traumatic experiences is slightly cheaper. Here, nothing and nobody casts a shadow.'[1]

In *Serious Games I-IV* Farocki not only highlights the contact points between the entertainment and war industries, but talks about the emergence of a new computer-generated image, whereby representation is substituted with man-made images which are 'not just a copy of the world – they are a new creation of the world'. [2] One of Farocki's unspoken rules states: 'if there is a new régime of images in the world never forget to show it.'[3]

1   Harun Farocki. *Serious Games: War. Media. Art*, ed. Ralf Beil, Antje
     Ehmann. p. 83

2   Daphne Dragona. Harun Farocki Interview – Serious Games in
     Samos, *Neural*, 2012 11 15, http://neural.it/2012/11/harun-farocki-in-
     terview-serious-games-in-samos/

3   Antje Ehmann, Kodwo Eshun. A to Z of HF or: 26 Introductions
     to HF, *Harun Farocki. Against What? Against Whom?*, ed. Antje
     Ehmann, Kodwo Eshun, Koenig Books, Raven Row, 2009, p. 214

Immersion (Working title)

Even today the British military still employs painters to recreate battle scenes in oil on canvas. This probably meant to balance out the fleeting news images with something more timeless. The event, recently it was the war against Iraq, is commemorated with an image preceded by an intellectual engagement with the subject matter and requiring exceptional manual skill.

Manual skill and intellectual engagement are also required in the production of the animations used in computer games. The Vietnam theater of war has long been the visual basis of computer games. The iconography of these images has been influenced by many hundreds of Vietnam war films. In the case of Iraq, US military officials have even supplied data records to the games industry. Today the computer game is apparently the major medium in shaping our collective view of a country. Iraq's landscapes, its deserts and palm trees, its concrete expanses and electricity pylons and the numerous Hussein statues today imprint themselves on a child's mind, as did the mountain villages whose kits were the accessories to model railways on earlier generations. Iraq's bewildering cities with their alleyways full of concrete bungalows from whose roof terraces snipers shoot, will outlast memories of television images of this war. When today's computer gamers die in fifty or sixty years, they will not think as Citizen Kane did of a sled, but rather of the veiled female figure who repeatedly appears in such games.

The military not only supplies the games industry but also makes use of the games industry's work. The Institute for Creative Technologies in California has developed a particular method for the treatment of traumatized Iraq veterans. A helmet is put on a patient in which a 3D scene from Iraq streamed. Additionally there are sounds and smells such as burnt hair. The patient is supposed to be deeply submerged within his own experiences of the war — immersions. He is meant to work through the trauma and become conscious of the original scene which was the catalyst of the trauma, instead of suppressing it.

TV sequences or images shown in print media which have been produces with digital cameras, still shown reproductions of the real. This may however only be the case because a computer-generated image or a computer animation is impossible to create within a day.

Computer animators represents a new category of image. A few years ago it was still apparent that they were merely aiming to crudely reproduce photographic or cinematic imagery, but nowadays this is no longer the case. Today when details are missing, this is no longer seen as a deficit, they are perceived as being the "ideal-type" depiction of the real. They are generated by the computer, which has become today's standard as much as the industrial machine was a hundred years ago. A computer animation today reproaches filmed footage for its redundant details, as much as industrial products reproached the handmade object for its irregularities. The fact that in computer-generated images it is possible to adjust the point of view via zoom and the camera position, or that the figure of a soldier or combatant can shoot and be shot, apparently outweights the loss evident relationship to the factual.

The contemporary depiction of the war zone in Iraq is one of computer-generated images. At first glance they resemble children's games. If however these images are then used to recall the horrors of war, the game becomes deadly serious. Apparently the minds of the traumatized soldiers are able to adjust to the rules of these serious games.
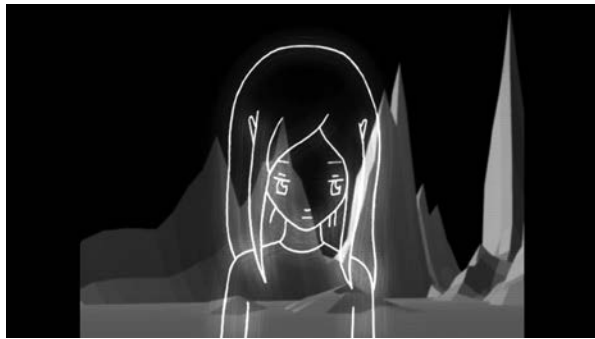
August 16, 2008
Harun Farocki

NO GHOST JUST A SHELL

1999–2002

No Ghost Just A Shell is a collaborative work by French artists Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno. In 1999 the artists acquired the copyright for Annlee — an underdeveloped Manga character designed as an 'extra' for the scenes in comics and video games. After getting hold of the copyright, they invited other artists, philosophers, and writers to use this character in their work. They were each given the following instructions: 'Work with her, in a real story, translate her capabilities into psychological traits, lend her a character, a text, a denunciation and address to the Court a trial in her defense. Do all that you can so that this character lives different stories and experiences. So that she can act as a sign, as a live logo.'[1] The artists Liam Gillick, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Rirkrit Tiravanija and philosopher Mehdi Belhaj Kacem were among those involved

with the project over a period of three years. In 2002 Huyghe and Parreno closed the chain of appropriation by transferring Annlee's copyrights to Annlee itself. The first time in the history of the French legal system the copyrights were given to a sign itself.

This exhibition features two episodes from Annlee's story: Annlee's bilingual monologue *AnnLee in Anzenzone* (2000) by Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster and *One Million Kingdoms* (2001), a video by Huyghe, in which Annlee speaks with the modified voice of Neil Armstrong and relays a mixture of excerpts from the *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* by Jules Verne and fragments from the Apollo 11 mission recordings.

According to Huyghe, Annlee is an 'empty sign' and the goal of the project is 'to see how this sign will be able to create a story and how it can become a tool to grasp reality'.[2] We can describe this reality as one where real subjects and robots generated by software are barely distinguishable, politics is blended with popular culture, and virtual platforms provide the tools to manipulate reality.

1   Amelia Barikin. *Parallel Presents: The Art of Pierre Huyghe*, MIT
     Press, 2012, p. 122

2   Pierre Huyghe, Vincent Dieutre, Christian Merlhiot. Pierre Huyghe:
     Ann Lee en quête d'auteurs, http://www.pointligneplan.com/
     pierre-huyghe
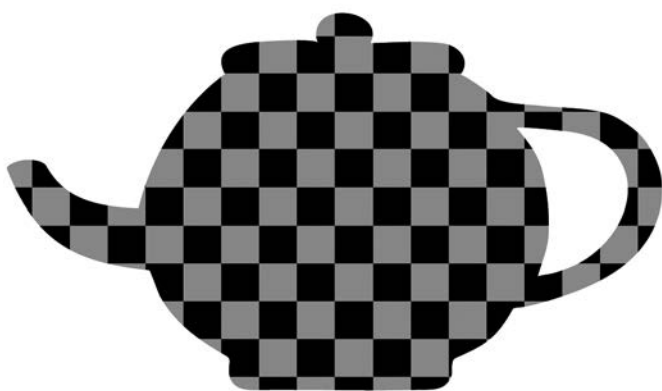
GINTARAS DIDŽIA-PETRIS

B. 1985, LIVES AND WORKS IN VILNIUS

Since 2010 Didžiapetris has made 'open files' — a series of digital images that can be produced by any type of machine and can take different material forms (from projection to gift-wrapping paper) and statuses (from a gallery exhibit to a magazine illustration). The artist has described these open files as 'an actual part of the real world. As an image it is complete, but as an entity it exists between actualisations and other decisions that have very little to do with the image but that correspond directly to instances of travel, translatability, or economic exchange.'[1] For Didžiape-

tris, the open files correspond to a specific amount of digital information that is subjected to a cycle of endless remediation.

Teapot (2015) is the latest transformation of the open file *Transit* (2012). Previously, the file existed as the cover image of the fourth issue of *The Federal* (2013); it can also be found on the inner cover of the artist's book *Color and Device* (Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius, and Museo d'Arte Contemporanea di Villa Croce, Genoa, 2013); it has lined the hoods in a collaborative project with Elena Narbutaite ABP, and finally, for the artwork *Tea* (2013) it appeared as a pattern for pop-up paper teapots and cups. This time Didžiapetris' open file covers a wall in one of the CAC exhibition halls with a paper fresco. The black and silver checkered pattern employed by the artist is reminiscent of a transparency grid used in special image processing software (such as Premier Pro and Photoshop) to trace their contours, add layers, enabling the user to create collages which often transgress the scale and form of real objects. Designed to create representations and be invisible, here, the grid becomes a focal point and metaphor for the potential of the image.

1   Agar Ledo, Gintaras Didžiapetris. Kluge's Conversation, *Atlántica*,
     No. 54, 2014 Spring/Summer, p. 169

Nose of a Figure

I am speaking of realism. Or to be more precise—of realist art that does not find its voice in representations, but follows sequences of events and thinks of them as its composition. Art, which is as complex (simplicity is also complex) as the "big picture." Its autonomy can mean an ongoing process—a work can be blind, but never alone (an item in the atmosphere; changing, being shared and translated). Objects can be aware of other machines that support and compromise their existence and reception. This kind of art is thinking art and in this sense it stands opposite to abstract art (whatever the term might mean). It is realist art (as abstract expressionism is, for instance) although only if we look and think about it, for the idea of "non-figurative" is an expression borrowed from a retinal vocabulary.

A figure can take on many different states of being. It is a group of lines, pictures, bolts and coins. It is a moment in-between two results. A stone leaving its parts to initiate or contribute to new events. This figure is what happens and less about what it is. It is a translation of thoughts into evolving and changing forms. Hence an image of the figure, would not be, for example, photographic, but photography itself. Photography's life-likeness and flatness, beauty and physics or beauty of chemistry. All what it entails becomes a nose of the figure. Any given discipline or perspective alone, though, does not allow us to comprehend a figure. It can be seen through combining, borrowing, inventing or forgetting. Disciplines hide figures.

An ethnobotanist, for instance, sees hand-made objects as transformed plants and animals. A woven bag, fishnet, pottery— everything is made from what is at hand. Considering a similar perspective, the figure appears to be made out of ceramics as well as out of a credit card, a zoo and public transport. The figure itself, if one stands back and looks through it, suggests places and fauna that look like a translation of a text or money transfer. In folk tales and myths, we find many improbable occurrences: a boy is born from grandpa's thumb, an animal transforms into a human, etc. These occurrences may seem strange and unbelievable, but usually they have a simple function. They are natural illustrations (not "natural forms") of word-pots, thought-weavings that are, in a way, not unlike the figure. That is the moment where we all meet—a place of intellect of an organism. What is shared is simultaneity and fluctuation of values.

There is no arbitrariness if one is making a working figure*. On the other hand, a figure cannot be made by rational reflection alone, as information

is just one part of it (although a necessary one), the other part can be made of an old belief or energy. Instances when a figure appears to be more concrete than its composition is always a moment which can be shared by giving a real example. There is something to be said about chance in this context — a line drawn on paper is as unexpected as a line of thread that falls on a surface. Learning to draw life-like is to want to become a drawing machine, but what also gets reproduced even more accurately is the tradition itself. The whole assembly line of imperfect examples.

Simple observation that everything is interconnected makes a condition of invention — the latter is always possible and most likely it can be born with the help of creativity. In the case of a working figure, to invent does not mean to produce an original, but to confront parts that were waiting to be activated again. A known fact is a script according to which we follow the logic of a historian—to recreate sequences. An unknown fact leaves us wondering—how come its philosophy was embedded in us?

The figure is not a text or a camera or a painting. It is a construction that can't be seen all at once ("open only in total darkness," says a film canister), it can only be thought and felt. Just like a friend's face, which in most cases is an image. For it to become the figure I am describing, we need to be able to think it, therefore, we need to know it quite well. Thinking allows making modifications without making representations. And thus a thought model is not equal to a visual script—whereas analytic geometry is based on points and space, thought geometry is a composition of stars, joy and a flute's sound too.

For a long time now certain ideas were externalized from others. They were understood as moments that can be revisited only as something lost or on the verge of being lost. But what if ideas migrate, forming new machines, new figures and new articulations? Most likely, then, we are able to say that "abstract animal," "abstract face" or "abstract referent" could now mean a realist entity without one single image, but rather a life of millions.

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* A working figure might work not only in terms of production of meaning. It can also be working without being useful. In this case usefulness itself is redefined, just as arbitrariness is redefined.

SETH PRICE

B. 1973, LIVES AND WORKS IN NEW YORK

In Seth Price's video pieces, music compilations, books, sculptures and drawings the artist borrows anonymous material from the Internet or appropriates images, sounds and texts created by fellow artists, that he then multiplies, cuts, fragments, and collages. Price is interested in the capability of images to mutate, and the speed of their circulation, enabled by the unprecedented peak of digital and information technologies. The art historian David Joselit has described Price's artistic principles as the 'management of image populations'. The artist's work *Redistribution* (2007-) is an open-form video, performance and essay film, which is constantly renewed and reworked and is built around an artist's talk given by Price at the Solomon R. Guggenheim museum in New York in 2007, in which he discusses his work and his artistic approach in general.

Price is not only involved in questions around the elasticity of images, but also in detecting an image's ability to travel to and act in different distribution systems – his works often exist in multiple formats simultaneously: as a singular gallery piece, a multiple for sale or an open access platform on the Internet. *Digital Video Effect: "Editions"* (2006) is a sampler consisting of fragments of the artist's own videos (themselves created from appropriated images) which were made before 2006 and circulated within the art market. The work was released into unrestricted distribution (it is available on loan through Electronic Arts Intermix, as well as existing as an unlimited DVD for sale). Verging on the edge of coherence, this is a potpourri of fragments of digitally reworked images: a home video of Joan Jonas from early 1970s shows artists Robert Smithson and Richard Serra together with art dealer Joseph Hellman discussing the role economic structures play in the very definition of contemporary art; fragments of Martha Rosler's video *Global Taste: A Meal in Three Courses* (1985) which itself is comprised of appropriated images of television commercials; photos of accident scenes taken from Internet death sites; footage from the television coverage of an assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan; and the digital rendering of a rising wave.

Price freely reedits his own pieces while embedding the images in stories that do not originally belong to them. He also creates his own rules of distribution which become an alternative to the logic of the art market: the sampler *"Editions"* is the only way to see Price's videos which otherwise are all held in private collections away from public eye (*Digital Video Effect: "Holes"*) (2003), *Digital Video Effect: "Spills"*) (2004) et. al). With these operations he not only forces one to rethink the notions of originality, authenticity and value, but also mirrors the change in capabilities of image circulation, enabled by new technologies and supported by the economic system, 'the mechanisms of free market capitalism, history's most sophisticated distribution system to date.'[1] which, one must admit, he effectively makes use of.

1   Seth Price. *Dispersion*, 2002, downloaded from www.distributedhistory.com, n.p.

Dispersion (Excerpts)

Suppose an artist were to release the work directly into a system that depends on reproductionand distribution for its sustenance, a model that encourages contamination, borrowing, stealing, and horizontal blur. The art system usually corrals errant works, but how could it recoup thousands of freely circulating paperbacks?

It is useful to continually question the avant-garde's traditional romantic opposition to bourgeois society and values. The genius of the bourgeoisie manifests itself in the circuits of power and money that regulate the flow of culture. National bourgeois culture, of which art is one element, is based around commercial media, which, together with technology, design, and fashion, generate some of the important differences of our day. These are the arenas in which to conceive of a work positioned within the material and discursive technologies of distributed media.

Distributed media can be defined as social information circulating in theoretically unlimited quantities in the common market, stored or accessed via portable devices such as books and magazines, records and compact discs, videotapes and DVDs, personal computers and data diskettes. Duchamp's question has new life in this space, which has greatly expanded during the last few decades of global corporate sprawl. It's space into which the work of art must project itself lest it be outdistanced entirely by these corporate interests. New strategies are needed to keep up with commercial distribution, decentralization, and dispersion. You must fight something in order to understand it.

<...>

The problem is that situating the work at a singular point in space and time turns it, a priori, into a monument. What if it is instead dispersed and reproduced, its value approaching zero as its accessibility rises? We should recognize that collective experience is now based on simultaneous private experiences, distributed across the field of media culture, knit together by ongoing debate, publicity, promotion, and discussion. Publicness today has as much to do with sites of production and reproduction as it does with any supposed physical commons, so a popular album could be regarded as a more successful instance of public art than a monument tucked away in an urban plaza. The album is available everywhere, since it employs the mechanisms of free

market capitalism, history's most sophisticated distribution system to date. The monumental model of public art is invested in an anachronistic notion of communal appreciation transposed from the church to the museum to the outdoors, and this notion is received skeptically by an audience no longer so interested in direct communal experience.

<...>

An art grounded in distributed media can be seen as a political art and an art of communicative action, not least because it is a reaction to the fact that the merging of art and life has been effected most successfully by the "consciousness industry". The field of culture is a public sphere and a site of struggle, and all of its manifestations are ideological. In Public Sphere and Experience, Oscar Negt and Alexander Kluge insist that each individual, no matter how passive a component of the capitalist consciousness industry, must be considered a producer (despite the fact that this role is denied them). Our task, they say, is to fashion "counter-productions." Kluge himself is an inspiration: acting as a filmmaker, lobbyist, fiction writer, and television producer, he has worked deep changes in the terrain of German media. An object disappears when it becomes a weapon.

<...>

The notion of a mass archive is relatively new, and a notion which is probably philosophically opposed to the traditional understanding of what an archive is and how it functions, but it may be that, behind the veneer of user interfaces floating on its surface—which generate most of the work grouped under the rubric "web art"—the Internet approximates such a structure, or can at least be seen as a working model.

With more and more media readily available through this unruly archive, the task becomes one of packaging, producing, reframing, and distributing; a mode of production analogous not to the creation of material goods, but to the production of social contexts, using existing material. Anything on the internet is a fragment, provisional, pointing elsewhere. Nothing is finished. What a time you chose to be born!

FACTUM ARTE

BASED IN MADRID

Factum Arte comprises a team of technicians, engineers, conservators and artists that work together to produce exceptional facsimiles. Directed by Adam Lowe, the workshop collaborates with some of the most prestigious museums in the world (The Louvre, The British Museum, The Pergamon Museum, Museo Nacional del Prado to name a few) to make copies of paintings, sculptures and even whole chambers such as the tombs of the Pharaohs in the Valley of the Kings, Kurt Schwitters' *Merzbau*, and the paintings of Veronese. In producing each facsimile the workshop apply a three-state process of: *dematerialisation*, *transformation* and *re-materialisation*. Equipped with machine objectivity and a non-contact method of data collection (none of the fragile artworks or objects are touched by the human hand or tool but are instead scanned by advanced optical probes), Factum Arte intends to lead the way in developing an alternate technology for the protection of cultural heritage. To make the most precise and most objective copy they rely on hardware and software designed specifically by the workshop. In the exhibition Factum Arte is represented by 'portraits of technology', i.e. the scanners, printers, photographic technologies and the computer programs at

work, documented by the team. For instance, there is a video showing a 3D Lucida Scanner (created by the artist and one of the founders of the workshop Manuel Franquelo), a new age version of the Camera Lucida, which scans and transfers information about the surfaces of paintings or sculptures using the highest precision possible. The digital information that is recorded has been used for documentation, monitoring and the production of 2D and 3D facsimiles which retain the surface complexity and characteristics of the original.

One of the most important missions of Factum Arte relates to the entire epistemological revolution, i.e. the rethinking of the copy-original relation. The original object, according to Adam Lowe, is a result of a dynamic process and not of a particular singularity: 'No matter how mechanical a reproduction is, once there is no huge gap in the process of production between version n and version n+n, the clear cut distinction between the original and its reproduction becomes less crucial — and the aura begins to hesitate and is uncertain where it should land.'[1] Factum Arte's work makes it possible for every cultural object and artwork to be converted into the information giant and super weight visual matrix, which then waits for its chance of actualisation (when the so called original ceases to exist or deteriorates so badly that it has to be removed from the public eye) which is when the aura begins its journey.

[1] Bruno Latour, Adam Lowe. The Migration of The Aura or How to Explore The Original Through Its Facsimiles, *Switching Codes*, ed. Thomas Bartscherer, University of Chicago Press, 2010, p. 9

The Migration of The Aura or How to Explore The Original Through Its Facsimiles (Excerpt)

"But it's not the original, it's just a facsimile!" How often have we heard such a retort when confronted with an otherwise perfect reproduction of a painting? No question about it, the obsession of the age is for the original version. Only the original possesses an aura, this mysterious and mystical quality that no second hand version will ever get. But paradoxically, this obsession for pinpointing originality increases proportionally with the availability and accessibility of more and more copies of better and better quality. If so much energy is devoted to the search for the original — for archeological and marketing reasons— it is because the possibility of making copies has never been so open-ended. If no copies of the Mona Lisa existed would we pursue it with such energy — and, would we devise so many conspiracy theories to decide whether or not the version held under glass and protected by sophisticated alarms is the original surface painted by Leonardo's hand or not. In other words, the intensity of the search for the original depends on the amount of passion and the number of interests triggered by its copies. No copies, no original. In order to stamp a piece with the mark of originality, you need to apply to its surface the huge pressure that only a great number of reproductions can provide.

So, in spite of the knee-jerk reaction —"But this is just a facsimile"—, we should refuse to decide too quickly when considering the value of either the original or its reproduction. Thus, the real phenomenon to be accounted for is not the punctual delineation of one version divorced from the rest of its copies, but the whole assemblage made up of one —or several— original(s) together with the retinue of its continually re-written biography. It is not a case of "either or" but of "and, and". Is it not because the Nile ends up in such a huge delta that the century-old search for its sources had been so

thrilling? To pursue the metaphor, we want, in this paper, to behave like hy-
drographers intent in deploying the whole catchment area of a river, not only
focusing on an original spring. A given work of art should be compared not
to any isolated locus but to a river's catchment, complete with its estuaries,
its many tributaries, its dramatic rapids, its many meandering turns and, of
course, also, its several hidden sources.

  To give a name to this catchment area, we will use the word trajectory.
A work of art —no matter of which material it is made — has a trajectory or,
to use another expression popularized by anthropologists, a career.[1] What we
want to do in this paper is to specify the trajectory or career of a work of art
and to move from one question that we find moot ("Is it an original or mere-
ly a copy?") to another one that we take to be decisive, especially at the time
of digital reproduction: "Is it well or badly reproduced?" The reason why we
find this second question so important is because the quality, conservation,
continuation, sustenance and appropriation of the original depends entirely
on the distinction between good and bad reproduction. We want to argue
that a badly reproduced original risks disappearing while a well accounted
for original may continue to enhance its originality and to trigger new cop-
ies. This is why we want to show that facsimiles, especially those relying on
complex (digital) techniques, are the most fruitful way to explore the original
and even to help re-define what originality actually is.

1   *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai.
    Cambridge University Press, 1986; Miguel Tamen. *Friends of Interpretable
    Objects*, Harvard University Press, 2001

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