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CART351  
Critical Reflection 1

<https://deaddrops.com/>

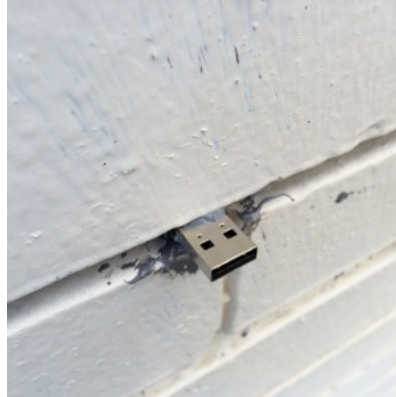


Soon after having a conversation about locative media with my friend (a brain-storming-sesh for the upcoming project-proposal), she sent me a video of someone finding a USB ‘stuck’ in a brick wall, which I excitedly identified as being part of ‘The Dead Drops’ project. Conceived by berlin-based artist Aram Bartholl as part of his ‘EYEBEAM’ residency in New York City, Dead Drops is an “anonymous, offline, peer to peer file-sharing network in public space” that involves USB flash drives that have been embedded (or ‘injected’) into unexpected surfaces of public spaces. Starting in 2010 “as an ongoing participatory project at five different public spaces in New York,” the project has since spread to dozens of countries with over 2,000 USB drops world-wide. Each USB is installed completely empty except for a readme.txt file that explains the project; “the sticks are set to read and write and should mount as a plain mass storage drive,” empty and waiting for files. The public is invited to ‘drop or leave files’ by plugging their laptop or device into the wall. Additionally, a [‘How to make your own dead drop’](#) video provided on the

project's website encourages anyone to install a dead drop in their own neighborhood/city, and submit information and pictures of the new drop to be added to the [database](#).



Montreal



Baltimore

Using this database, I was able to search by location and find images and coordinates of Dead Drops near me in Montreal and in my home-town Baltimore MD. The database also lets people report on the drop's status, reporting it as either "broken/dead/stolen/gone," "unconfirmed, may be broken," or "working," saving me the potential trouble of searching for a 'dead' Dead Drop.

The comment section of the video sent to me by my friend was filled with concern and warnings about the potential 'danger' of plugging your device into a random USB. The artist says that he doesn't take any action regarding security issues, stated in the [FAQ](#) section of the project's website:

Dead Drops are placed in public space in the city. They are public domain. This is part of the concept and part of the game. (If you ever worked in the field of street art you know what it means to place things outside). In general everybody is responsible for the security of their computers and systems. Is the Internet a safe place?!? Malicious code for USB flash drives is a problem in general. They could (and will) be misused for malicious software. Be aware of that! Secure your system! Boot a virtual machine! Or ask your friend to go first ;-). ... (It's the thrill of the 'glory hole' says boingboing ;-). Also! Dead Drops themselves will be subject to digital and or physical vandalism. Don't be sad when it happens. Keep growing and install a new drive in maybe slight different location.