Sean Verba
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Cart 263
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JODI
Reflection 1

Artist Description

JODI, despite sounding like the name of a single artist, is actually more accurately described as a collective consisting of two separate artists, those being Joan Heemskerk and Dirk Paesmans.

Joan Heemskerk was born in 1968 in the Netherlands town of Kaatsheuvel and works on a variety of installations as a jack of trades, being an artist that has primarily taken part in projects including photography / video art, software / games, and website creation.

Dirk Paesmans on the other hand was born in Brussels, the capital of Belgium in 1965. Unlike Joan, he was a bit more focused on photography and video art though he did take part in some variety of other works.

They met at the "Jan van Eyck Academie", an art institute, in 1992. It wasn't until their second year that they had any access to computers, and as soon as they were introduced at the school, they started experimenting with digital arts technologies such as Photoshop, eventually starting to expand their art mediums to fit things like CD-roms, and even started creating art mods for old video games, like the notable "Wolfenstein 3D".

JODI is most well known for their interesting web art displays that play with a bit of disruption and anarchy, leaning heavily into the display of errors and glitching.

The group seems to have taken a great liking to creating websites with jarring and flashy visual elements, often in an attempt to dis-orient or cause discomfort in its users, which in a funny twist of fate leaves many people who find the website by accident confused and creeped out as reported on many, many blogs. It often shows code in places where you might expect function or interactivity, and enjoys pitting text against flashing backgrounds or uncomfortable color palettes to link back to the roots of the old internet and the simplistic "retro" style a lot of technology used to adopt.

While a lot of their art truly is experimentation, a large part of their messaging is bringing to view a glaring visual dissonance in order to highlight a boundary between a machine and its operator. Their projects remind us of the place that the relationship between humans and machines originated from, and explores the fact that this strange disparity still exists even if hidden behind the screen of pleasant designs that a common user often doesn't penetrate.

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Project Discussion

I will be discussing one of their website (https://www.jodi.org/) as my piece. First, an apt description is in order.

The website itself is built as if it were a maze, with the user being thrown into one of many potential redirects as soon as they go on it, often leading to them being led directly to a different website right off the bat. On top of that, some of the links are dead ends, with the only way to continue experiencing the art piece being to reload to the page before.

Jodi.org very prominently features visible (though false) error text as well as random bits of code left as strings for the user to read on the page. It includes a lot of strange imagery and iconography, most of which can be interacted with and often leads to links of its own. Interestingly, a lot of these images can be traced to art displays connected to JODI themselves.

Many pages can be found more commonly or through more methods, at least as far as I can tell. Some interesting finds for me were joid.org/archive/, which leads to a page full of images of their projects and links to blogs or videos made about them, map.jodi.org, which leads to a strange map of random website links, and 404.jodi.org page, which I found to be a pretty common find and includes 3 links to some very notable pages within the displayed 4 0 4.

Said pages all include a rare user input bar, though the website seems to almost try to obscure the fact that your input changes the website itself for everyone. Page one removes vowels and some special characters from your input, page 2 shows a row of IP addresses but if highlighted reveals yours and others text, and page 3, well, I couldn't tell you exactly what it does but your text is there on some level in the top left corner.

I could go on talking about this website (group of websites?) for hours, but it's about time I discuss my experience itself. Jodi.org is a project that is clearly meant to symbolize the very core of what JODI means to its creators. When exploring it, you often feel like an observer watching a website talk to itself as well as other websites. It's a very alienating feeling, with everything clearly being made to be as non-human friendly as possible. No button tells you its purpose, no link takes you to what you expect, and no interactive element simply shows you an expected response.

In a strange way, every bit of this website makes you feel like there's a code to crack, or something made for you to find. But the truth, and in many ways the point of this website, is that the only thing you will find there is the broken code and unexplained links that it was coded to show you.