

Digital Arts within the Post Internet Theory and its Relationship to the Institutional Art World

Bachelor Thesis

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14.4.2015

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Bachelor Program Timebased and Interactive Media
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Artists, Scientists and Theorists

Since we are all standing on the shoulders of giants, I hereby want to mention those, which make up the giant I'm standing on right now. They are artists, scientists and theorist who knowingly or unknowingly passed on some of their knowledge to me – It was internalized, transformed, combined, learned from and now it's passed on for others as a Bachelor Thesis. Thank you for your inspiration!

Kyle McDonald, Lauren McCarthy, Addie Wagenknecht, Memo Akten, Elliot Woods, Danie Shiffman, Paolo Cirio, Aram Barthol, Raffael Rozendaal, F.A.T. Lab, Ole Fach, Kim Asendorf, Lindsay Howard, Heather Corcorhan, Ben Fino-Radin, Shilpa Gupta, Mahzarin Banaji, Ben Fry, Casey Reas, Qayola, Domenico Quaranta, Neo Rauch, Stefan Heidenreich, Roland Barthes, Marshal McLuhan, Walter Benjamin, Golan Levin, Lev Manovic, Megan Newcome, Wolf Lieser, Julian Oliver, Cornelia Sollfrank, Christa Sommerer, Jonas Lund, Evan Roth, Ryan Trecartin, Joreg, Olafur Eliasson, LIA, Julia Kagansky, Marius Watz, Zach Lieberman, Theo Watson, John Whitney, Lilian Schwartz, Carolien Teunisse, Sabrina Verhage, Manuel Rossner.

Intention

There is an ongoing change in the art world and around digital art – for me it's going on for some years now and I feel that I'm directly in it, trying to understand. I see myself as a node that is effected by technological development and the dynamics of art and therefore also society, a node which gathers aspects and ideas, draws connections and then passes them on for others to process the newly gained knowledge as well. It's all about understanding and contributing to a network on the way – to pass on knowledge and points of view.

I'm constantly learning and connect all I know about art and technology and make it visible for others to learn from it as well. I believe that art and scientific research make up the passionate side of life which keeps us going and striving while the other half is the functional and practical world which is needed as a basis for mere existence.

What always attracts my attention is where both sides - which balance each other - are clashing: art being managed, research being dependent on economics, art being dependent on money, labor being a passion – clashes like this are the catalyst for changes and progression – where I think that the dynamics which I described before come from.

This thesis is focused on one of these clashes: an art form very close to technology and its organizational system which is driven by passion as well as money.

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1.1. Digital Art within Post Internet Theory and the Institutional Art System

1.1. Definition of Digital Art within the Post Internet Theory

1.1.1. Origins of Digital Art

Digital Art is part of New Media Art which was defined by Mark Tribe and Reena Jana as the intersection of Art and Technology (such as Electronic Art, Robotic Art, Genomic Art) on the one hand and Media Art (such as Video Art, Transmission Art, Experimental Film) on the other. But in the literature the terms Digital Art, New Media Art, Computer Art or Multimedia Art are often used interchangeably. (Tribe & Jana, 2006)

According to Christiane Paul one aspect of the definition of Digital art is “art that uses digital technologies as a tool [...] and art that employs these technologies as its very own medium”. (Paul, 2008)

Concerning New Media Paul refers to the “fleeting nature of the terminology. [...] What is in fact new is that digital technology has now reached such a stage of development that it offers entirely new possibilities for the creation and experience of art”. (Paul, 2008) But the word new is still part of this explanation.

From Paul's definition it can be assumed that art forms which evolve from “new possibilities” are continuously broadening the term New Media Art – which makes it a very persistent form and not yet historical. Nevertheless since the 2010s art forms “Beyond New Media” are emerging as well. (Quaranta, 2013)

1.1.2. The Post Internet Theory

In 2008 artist Marisa Olson coined the term “Post Internet Art” (Olson, 2008) which has also been described as “Internet Aware”. (Douglas, 2011)

This has become an art form where the Internet is vital and an inherent part. The artworks' origin lies (partly) in online culture and its experience can be in the real world as well as in the virtual world.

Theorist Domenico Quaranta describes “Post Internet Art” or “Internet Aware Art” as follows:

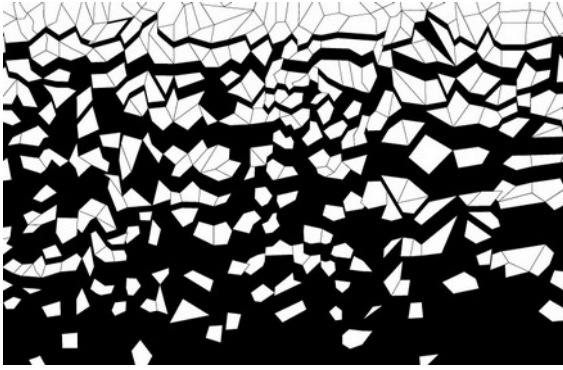
“The two terms emerged around 2008 to label an art that addresses the impact of internet on culture at large without necessarily happening online or using digital media, and at least has the merit of emphasising not the use of a specific medium, but the awareness of its consequences on culture and society.” (Quaranta, 2013)

This art form and its underlying theory can no longer be found within the definition of New Media Art:

“New Media is here denounced as a mode to narrowly focus on the specific workings of novel technologies, rather than a sincere exploration of cultural shifts in which that technology plays only a small role.” (Vierkant, 2010)

Example 1: An Art Work that fits the Post Internet Description

Artist Rafaël Rozendaal who is known for his websites which he also sells as art works and who defines the “internet as his canvas” lives this interconnection: One of his websites called “Broken self” is available from <http://www.brokenself.com/> and was also exhibited in several galleries as an installation composed of empty bottles, a wall and a stroboscopic light – without any visualization of the website. For him, the experience is what counts more than the medium. (cf. Rozendaal, 2012)



(left) Fig. 1 Rafaël Rozendaal – “www.brokenself.com”, Screenshot of the website, 2007

(right) Fig. 2 Rafaël Rozendaal – “www.brokenself.com”, Interactive Sculpture, Brownston Gallery NYC, 2010

Example 2: Artistic concept within the Post Internet Theory

Artist Hito Steyerl – when questioning the Post Internet theory - writes that the internet is dead, because it's everywhere, so it can as well be nowhere:

“Is the internet dead? This is not a metaphorical question. It does not suggest that the internet is dysfunctional, useless or out of fashion. It asks what happened to the internet after it stopped being a possibility. [...] Never before have more people been dependent on, embedded into, surveilled by, and exploited by the web. It seems overwhelming, bedazzling and without immediate alternative. The internet is probably not dead. It has rather gone all-out. Or more precisely: it is all over!” (Steyerl, 2013)

1.1.3. Digital Art within the Post Internet Theory

Due to the lack of a better phrasing the nature of the art form discussed in this paper can be found between Digital Art transcending New Media Art and Post Internet Art.

Following Christian Paul's definition of Digital Art mentioned above applied to one of the most common digital technologies – the Internet – Post Internet Art comprises art which uses the internet as a tool or employs it as a medium, or rather art which can be experienced online or is at least documented online. The art form described here corresponds with most of the works archived at the Rhizome Artbase, an online archive of digital art. Ben Fino-Radin, Digital Conservator at the Rhizome ArtBase refers to them as works by “artists who work on the furthest reaches of technological experimentation”. He uses this definition for Digital Art within the current state of technology and culture (cf. Fino-Radin, 2011).

According to the definition given by Fino-Radin and the description by Domenico Quaranta by which Digital Art today can be beyond New Media, the nature of the art form described in this paper is Digital Art within the Post Internet Theory. It is often referred here though as Digital Art, sometimes abbreviated with DA.



Examples: Digital Artworks within the Post Internet Theory

Fig. 3 Addie Wagenknecht - “Outsourced Outsourcing”, 2m x 1m, Oil on Canvas, 2014

4 images are taken from Google street view and sent to a painting company in China which repaints them on canvas. (cf. Wagenknecht, 2014) The work itself doesn't employ digital elements, but it couldn't have been made not considering the digital and tools accessible online like Google street view.

The new ExtraFile formats

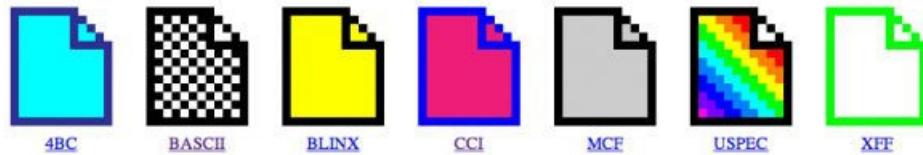


Fig. 4 Kim Asendorf – “ExtraFile”, 7 Fileformats for Mac OS X, 2011

ExtraFile is conceptual software with practical usage. It's main intention is to offer an alternative to the static system of image file formats. It is also an attempt to address an alternative image file format, a piece of art, far away from the mainstream and commercial standards. (Visnjic, 2011)

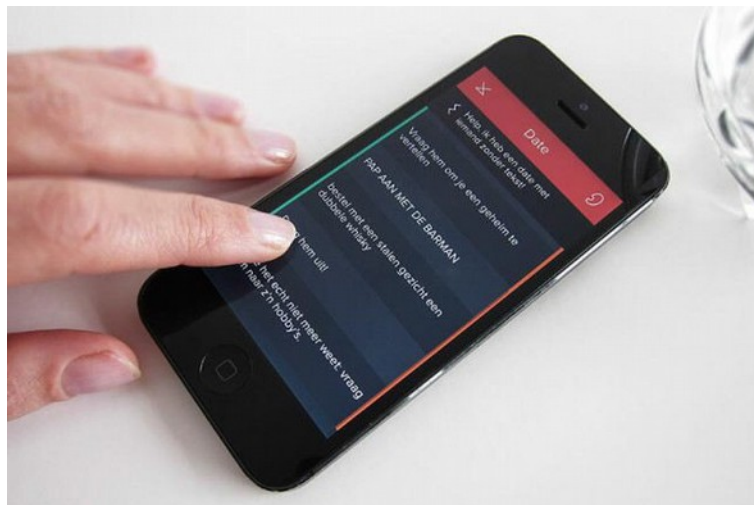


Fig. 5 Lauren McCarthy – “Crowdpilot”, Mobile App for iOS, 2014

Crowdpilot lets you crowdsource your conversations by bringing a group of your friends or strangers along to listen in and assist you in any situation. (McCarthy, 2014)

McCarthy addresses communication channels and ways of interaction between individuals within the digital. A significant part of the concept behind Crowdpilot is the question: Who is responsible for an action that emerges inside a crowd of people who don't know each other?

1. 2. Characteristics of Digital Art

The following is a list of Characteristics by which this art form can be distinguished from others and which should help defining and understand it.

1.2.1. Characteristics by Christiane Paul

The **natural habitat** of a digital art work is an online environment (Paul, 2007) - as part of online culture. The following characteristics are gathered from Cristiane Paul's Essay “The Myth of Immateriality”: According to Paul an inherent part of all works of Digital Art is being **computational** and **based on algorithms**. Additionally they are potentially

- **process oriented** rather than object oriented
- **time-based and dynamic**
- **real-time:** “At any time the viewer might only see a possible configuration of an essential **non-linear** project.”
- **interactive** and **participatory:** “[...] which allow people to navigate, assemble, or contribute to artworks in a way beyond the interactive, mental way of experiencing it - [...]”.
- **collaborative**
- **performative**
- **modular and variable**
- **generative**
- **customizable**

1.2.2. Authorship

According to Lev Manovich “New Media offers some new variations on the previous forms of collaborative authorship. [...] Along with databases, navigatable space, simulation and interactivity, new cultural forms enabled by new media also include new patterns of social communication. In short, the network-enabled process of collaboration, networking, and exchange is a valuable form of contemporary culture, regardless of whether it results in any 'objects' or not.” (Manovich, 2002)

After discussing Sampling, Remixing and Open Source as forms of collaborative authorship in the context of contemporary cultural economies Manovich also quotes Roland Barthes, who in his text “The Death of the Author” wrote that the author is merely the writer who sums up all the ideas, dynamics and stories produced by the people of their time. The so-called author never creates something purely original it's always an interpretation of what already exists and connected with other knowledge. (cf. Barthes, 1968) Barthes claimed that something new can only originate within the reader:

“A text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, as we hitherto said, the author.” (Barthes, 1968)

Manovich concludes by stating “Even an examination of technology and conditions of productions does not rescue aesthetics from finally having to believe in the author. He just looks different.” (Manovich, 2002)

1.2.3. Flow

The term “flow” in media theory goes back to Raymond Williams who described it in the 1970ies as common TV broadcasting politics of continuously providing content for the users: commercials, trailers, films on one channel and the additional possibility of changing channels is a *planned flow*. It's the phenomenon which we generally describe as *listening to the radio* or *watching TV*. (cf. Williams, 1975) Today it would be as well *being online* but with one major difference: While in the history of TV it was always a distributor providing content for the receivers, since web 2.0 everyone is a distributor and a receiver at the same time.

Halvard Moe who reviewed William's theory in 2012 described, that it's typical for users of online communication platforms to create their own flow and experience a *super flow* of content made by the others. “No user experiences Twitter in the same way” nor Facebook or LinkedIn which “[...] depend to a lesser degree on flows of communication but to a larger degree on more static information”. (Moe, 2012) Given the definition of flow is extended by Moes's theory and the phenomenon can be seen as a two-way communication channel, it applies as a characteristics of digital art.

1.2.4. Ephemeral Impressions

When works of art are viewed online they often appear in a certain constellation of contents which are reviewed at the same time and influence the experience of the work: It can be seen within the blog of an artist, together with other projects which share a similar topic, on Twitter or on a news website, on an online gallery, while watching a documentary, by accident while looking for something else, - every possibility adds up to the experience of the work within an online environment and generates an overall impression which can hardly be repeated.

This is also an issue when trying to document, preserve or archive this “complex, immersive experience” (cf. Goel, 2014).



Fig. 6 Amalia Ulman - “Excellence and Perfection”, Social Media Performance, 2014

For a period of 5 months Ulman used her social media channels for an online performance to create an alter ego. Images on Instagram, tweets and Facebook posts created a new person. Everyone who came across one of these channels became a spectator. The experience was different for everybody due to the usage habits of social media. (cf. Conner, 2014)

1.2.5. Conclusion

Digital Art online can be experienced as a **constant flow of ephemeral impressions** which is **accessible for anyone with a connection to the web from anywhere, at anytime**. Due to fast evolving digital technologies which are updated and outdated in high frequency the **single pieces of Digital Art is never static**: it has to be **constantly adapted**. Furthermore it never delivers the same output to different recipients due to the **infinite possibilities of interactivity, generativity and data real-time processing** – above all the **ever changing online environment makes its experience different every time**. There are no art objects, **but processes, statements and discussions** which again represent the **immaterial and concept based nature** of this art form – **viewers are authors at the same time** and part of the **collective experience** by being able to forward, tweak, change and edit Digital Art which makes it **highly participatory**.

1. 3. Definition of Institutional Art System and Art Market

1.3.1. The Institutional Art System

Also known as “art world” - the term was coined by Arthuro Dato meaning “an atmosphere of art theory” (Dato, 1964) – or “Kunstbetrieb” in German which is not directly translatable: it refers to the every day of art – all actions, conventions and relations which are established within the context of art.

In his book “Il sistema dell'arte contemporanea” (“The system of contemporary art”) Francesco Poli describes how this system has evolved: In Europe there were the academies supervised by the state which educated artists who executed commissions (often for clerical purposes) until the 19th century, then the public salons were established where these artists could exhibit their independent works as well (before that independent works were only made for the sake of exercise and not shown publicly) – but with this process of open submissions also the refusals of art works began when they didn't go along with the official standards of art.

Soon a movement away from the official salons began and artists formed in groups of style, genre and intention. But who supported these groups? Where did they exhibit? They needed advocates who defended these styles and made them widely known to the public that there is more to art than standards by the state and the church. When this fact became accepted and any kind of art could potentially be successful, a much more complex system was needed: galleries, museums, newspapers (later media in general) evolved around art and it became an important and lucrative field of work.

According to Poli, this led to an important sociocultural role of art as well as economical significance. (cf. Poli, 2012).

Stefan Heidenreich describes the same historical background of today's art system in his book “Was verspricht die Kunst” (“The promises of Art”) but making a difference when it comes to the origins of this system: He already sees the origins in the academies which next to the church were the first institutions dealing with art.

While Poli is more interested in who is this system driven by, Heidenreich discusses its function.

“The academies became the core of what is known today as the art system. While in Italy they were seen as a guild who trained craftsmen, in France they became independent.” (Heidenreich, 2012, p. 54, translation by the author)

Heidenreich has a very critical view on the art system:

“The museum concluded art as an institutional system which comprises every step from its production to its exhibition.[...] The museum order curtains the fact that the decision if an artwork is successful is not made by the artist but is made respectively by curators, critiques and officers within the realm of the museum.” (Heidenreich, 2012, p. 62, translation by the author)

Heidenreich claims that the institutional art system established an educational branch in order to train their audience and as well raises the artists which are supposed to be successful within it:

“The relationship between the museum and the artist changed. As an institution the museum became so powerful, that it was able to influence artistic decision back in the artist's atelier. It didn't do that by determining the works that should be made, but by showing all works that were already made – and therefore forced the artist to make something completely different. For an artist being successful meant learning to see their works as part of museum conceptions.” (Heidenreich, 2012, p. 69, translation by the author)

For Heidenreich the art world is an active art producer instead of an organization which only exhibits, collects and manages the art.

1.3.2. The Art Market

Generally speaking the art market is one branch of the global market which centers around artistic goods. According to the TEFAF report 2014 the international art market reached € 47.4 billion in 2013, which is close to its highest total in 2007 (€ 48 billion). 53% percent were made by trade while 47% were made by auctions. In 2013 20% of all trades were conducted online (TEFAF, 2014).

Often it seems difficult to understand the art market from an artistic view (cf. McDonald, 2014) and how the material and the ideal value of a piece of art correspond.

Piroschka Dossi describes the apparent disconnection between the artwork and its price witnessed in the last 10 years in her book "Hype. Art and Money" like this:

"The art market is a glamorous outcome of capitalist society. Here money and art are clashing- the sacred and the profane – auction records and artist's poverty – endless creativity and endless consumption – artistic freedom and capitalist dictates. No other market has to deal with such a fundamental insecurity about the value of its goods. The emancipation of art from clerical and feudal powers over centuries today contributes to it's role within economic interests." (Dossi, 2007)

Francesco Poli describes one aspect why this could be.

"Seen from the economics point of view works of art are special goods. [...] The general rule of the market is that the value of trade is determined by the value of the work which was necessary in order to produce it. Demand determines supply – speaking the amount of work necessary. Artistic goods are an exception of this prior principle because of their scarcity and reproducibility. Their value is determined by the extreme limitation of the supply, [...] but like any other good the price ascends the more it is wanted." (Poli, 2012, translation by the author)

He proceeds by stating that (contrary to historic art) contemporary (living) artists are able to regulate the scarcity of artistic goods artificially by specific strategies of the art system. When new works enter the primary art market, they need to be legitimized by a cultural and commercial evaluation process before being accepted as works of art – first by the art world then by the public. (cf. Poli, 2012)

All of these aspects together explain why the art market works so well. The conclusion is the same as Heidenreich's: not the artist makes an artwork, the art system does.

Heidenreich also explained where this assumption lead:

In the 1980ies, the art market and museums interests began to converge. Contemporary art started to bloom in both of them. It was no longer a tabu to speak about the material value of an art work but a system of trade similar to the stock market evolved.

A symbiosis began: museums became responsible for long term validation of art while on the art market purchases were conducted much faster. The art market was the short term rater of art while the long term guarantee came from museums. Buyers didn't care what kind of art they bought when the main reason for their purchase was capital. After all it was a commercial paper in their safe.

In order to assure each others decisions the institutional art system started to provide itself with art and artists. The products of museum and market became more and more self-referential – and lost significance outside of the art system. (cf. Heidenreich, 2012)

1. 4. Acceptance of Digital Art in the Institutional Art System

1.4.1. The significance of the institutional art system's functionality for this paper

The aspect of self-reference of art within the institutional art system (which is described above) is one of the main interests of this thesis. If the museum was dependent on the public instead of the art market, it would have to exhibit art directly for them. Artists would be more involved in how to present their works to people and it would all go back to **the principle of the artist who inspires or communicates to the audience.**

Since the museum is dependent on the art market also artists need to adapt their work to what sells and need to integrate themselves into the art system. **The principle is that the artist is part of the art system in order to be successful.**

Without the art system it's difficult for the artist to make money, but with it it's difficult to express themselves and bring their works to the people. As soon as a new art form is accepted by the art system the machinery of markets and museums comes into action and by that the art form is successively changed and adapted to fit in.

One of the main questions stated in this thesis is if and how digital art within the post internet theory becomes self-referential by being integrated into the institutional art system – How does the art and the attitude of the artists behind it change?

1.4.2. Historical reference to earlier Art Forms



Fig. 7 Louse Lawler - "Pollock and Tureen, Arranged by Mr. and Mrs. Burton Tremaine, Connecticut ", Photograph, 1984

It critically reflects art marketing by showing how famous and expensive paintings fit the interior of their owners.

Most of the art forms which are part of the art system today had to be accepted at some point in art history. From the stage of experimentation within emergent dynamics of society and ideas which were not articulated until then, many of these artistic expressions gradually became en vogue in the art world (some art movements failed, but as they never entered documentation mechanisms there is not a lot of record.)

Photography and Painting

Photography once rendered the art of painting irrelevant by depicting the world with much more accuracy and in less time than painters could be able to. At first it was not accepted within the art world of the 19th century. Only until new strategies in painting (abstract and non-figurative forms) were found and Walter Benjamin described photography as a work of art in times of mechanical reproduction (the beginning of the 20th century) photography was accepted in the art world. The system found mechanisms of integrating photography and also ways to deal with the possibility of endless multiplication of one single picture.

Since the “implosion of painting into a black square” (Heidenreich, 2012) - when absolute abstraction was reached by Kasimir Malewitsch in 1915 painting began to reinvent itself.

Poli lists criteria of how to give an appropriate value to art works of the medium Photography and Paintings: they are limited to a syntactic level like size and material, when it comes to Photography also the edition size is included. He tries to answer the question of why there can be such a vast difference in the pricing of two artworks which are similar in syntactic criteria – he argues that also the **name** and the **date** as well as

the fact that both are written down on the work by the artist are important factors (cf. Poli, 2012)

Heidenreich mentions the same reason, he claims that the artist behind an artwork is important because they are entitled a certain status on the art market: Artists whose works achieve the highest prices are also noted to be the “most gifted” ones. (cf. Heidenreich, 2012)

This means they are evaluated within the art system and its cultural and economical evaluation mechanisms (as mentioned above) and therefore correspond best to what the art world needs.

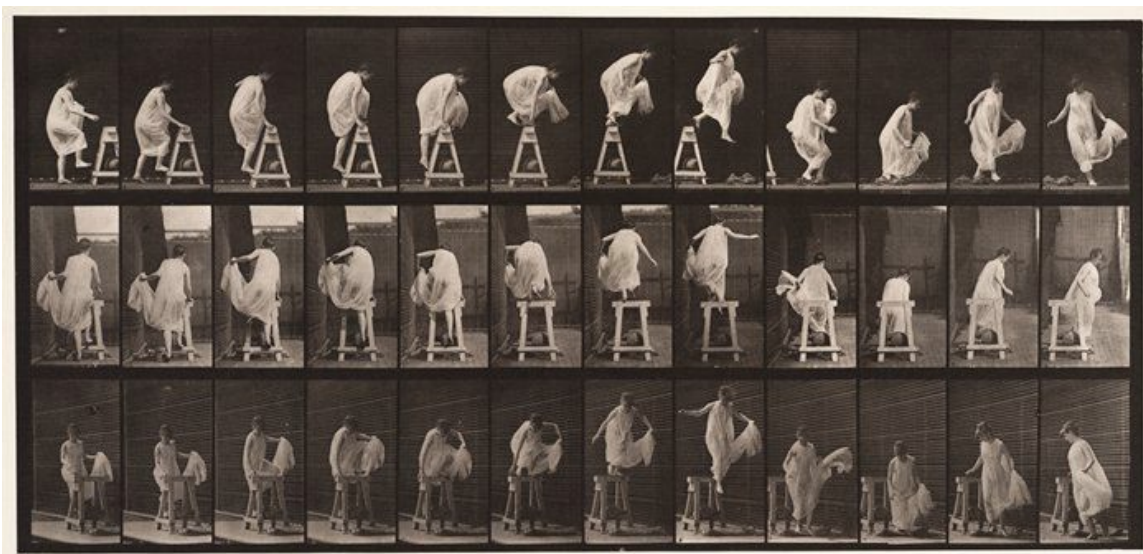


Fig. 8 Eadweard Muybridges -Woman jumping over Barrier, Photograph, 1887

Photography in an early stage of the medium where it was still center of experimentation.



Fig. 9 Andreas Gursky – Rhein II, Photograph, 1999

This photograph which was sold in 2011 for € 3,48 Mio is known as the photograph sold at highest price so far. According to ArtReview Gursky is one of the most influential people of the art world as well one of the best selling artists world wide.

Performance and Sculpture

While performance is one of the most ephemeral art forms, sculpture is the most long lasting one. To make performance art part of art history some form of documentary is needed. Next to photography and film which is more often used in museums and for documentation, another strategy evolved on the art market: To make the work compatible for the market there had to be an representative object for the act.



(left) Fig. 10 Yoko Ono – “Play it by Trust”, Performance, 1971



(right) Fig. 11 Yoko Ono – “Play it by Trust”, Sculpture, 1966 - 1986

“Play it by Trust” by Yoko Ono, which was finished in 1966 was part of a performance with John Lennon in 1971 - chess was played with a board of only white colour. A chess board representing this artwork produced in 1986 was sold for € 1,6 mio in 2012 as a sculpture



(left) Fig. 12 Bruce Nauman "Bound to fail", Performance, 1966

(right) Fig. 13 Henry Moore - "Bound to fail", 1967 – 70, Sculpture;

after the Performance by Bruce Nauman, the Sculpture was sold for € 7,2 mio in 2001

2. Traditional and Possible Future Roles of the Institutional Art System

2. 1. The Relationship to Digital Art within the Post Internet Theory Now

Among others the following institutions of the art world were observed focusing on their attitude towards digital art within post internet theory: Art Basel, Unpublished fair for Media Arts, ZKM Karlsruhe, MoMa New York, Tate, auction houses: Christy's, Sotheby's, Phillips, online auction houses and galleries: artsy, Paddle8, artspace, s|edition, Parlais Tokyo.

The general finding was, that the art form is transitioning from being a cultural phenomenon that happens online and offline into these institutions and thereby becoming part of art history.

Often the attitude towards this art form is the attempt to adapt it to functioning art system mechanisms like trying to find and exhibit objects, separate a flow of works, put the audience into the role of passive spectators and the artists into the role of a single author who presents.

In this chapter common strategies will be examined and also possible others which centre around the art form and its intrinsic needs in order to be mediated, preserved, and documented.

One of the biggest problems of common strategies and the adaptation of the art form to the system may be, that it potentially becomes **self referential**: This process is described in the chapter above – in general this means that artists create works for the institutions themselves so museums and the art market are able to predict future tendencies.

It leads to a system conform branch of digital art within the post internet theory which differs from its initial ideas. The justification of the existence of this branch can be questioned: **Does it have any significance outside the art world?**



(left) Fig. 14 Banksy - Street Art found in London at Hoxton Square



(right) Fig. 15 Banksy- "Keep it spotless", 2007; sold at Sotheby's in 2008 for 1,5 mio

The following is a collection of possible strategies which aim to avoid this art form becoming self-referential. It should be mentioned that this discourse is centred around the institutions inside the art world, not the artists. Barnett Newman stated „Aesthetics is to the artist what ornithology is to the birds.“ (Newman, 1952). Domenico Quaranta set this quote into new context in his book „Beyond New Media Art“: „The art world is to the artist what ornithology is to the birds.“ (cf. Quaranta, 2013). Thereby it should be left out how artists react to the system given that when their art is not self-referential within it, they shouldn't react to it at all.

2. 2. The Museum

Theorist Christiane Paul described the beginning of net art within its natural habitat which follows the same principles as the art form discussed here – the online environment:

„When net art officially came into being with the advent of the WWW in the early 1990ies , an online art world [...] immediately developed in tandem with the art and outside of the institutional art world. One of the inherent promises of net art was the opportunity to establish an „independent“ art world that could function outside of the framework of the institution and its system of validation. Even though it may not be their explicit goal, independent online exhibitions challenge the structures of legitimation created by the museum system and traditional art world.“
(Paul 2007)

She proceeds by discussing how digital art within online culture keeps changing the role of the museum in a similar way.

Nevertheless at this point where many institutions discover digital art, they attempt to fit it into existing museum structures; Also Christiane Paul when writing about the immaterial first describes all the ways how digital art can be documented, preserved and exhibited like all the other pieces of art, before mentioning that maybe a conventional museum is the right place to exhibit it. (cf. Paul, 2007)

The question which comes up when looking at the description of digital art within the post internet theory is, if a museum is even necessary. The online free flow that originates this form of art, the same environment in which it was experienced, can hardly be reproduced. Does it make sense to extract the art from the virtual and show a documentation or „screenshot“ of it in an exhibition space?

2.2.1. Adaptations of Digital Art within the post Internet Theory for the Museum

In the context of digital art the art world is often accused of producing „screensaver art“ - versions of digital art which can be easily hung on walls or “objects” - extracts of this art form which can be put into exhibition spaces.

In an interview artist Addie Wagenknecht states, that her ideas and project seem more like art when they appear in the real world, rather than being viewed online. This is why she transfers 98% of it into physical space. (cf. Wagenknecht, 2014)

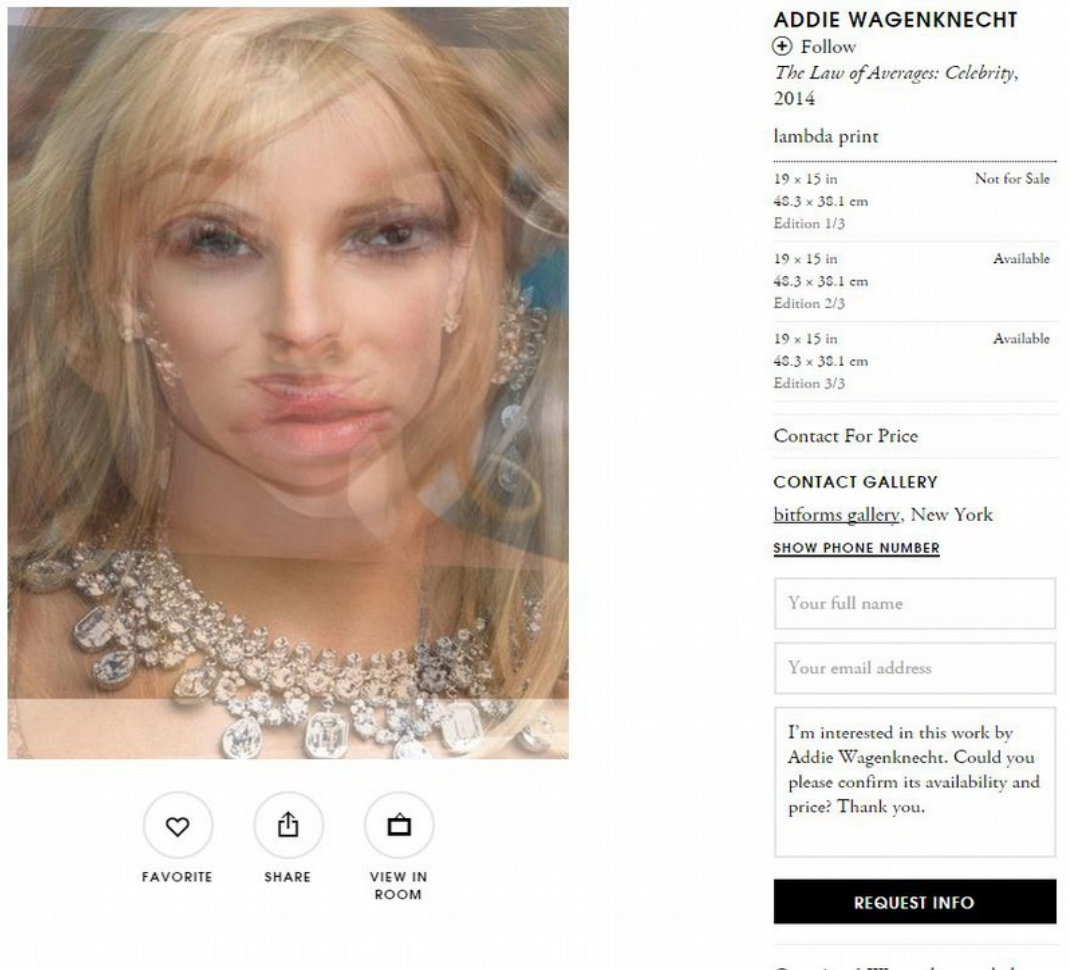


Fig. 16 Addie Wagenknecht - “The Law of the Average: Celebrities”, Digitally Merged JPEG Images – the artists offers them as prints, 2014

Digital Art on External Screens

FRAMED and Electronic Objects are two start-ups which develop screens to view digital art on. These screens are made to replace paintings in living rooms and in galleries. They offer to view animated gifs, video and data visualizations outside of the Internet context and thereby adapt the presentation style of traditional art and often not the needs of a work of digital online art (interactivity, flow of new content, participation).

2.2.2. Possible adaptations of the Museum for Digital Art within the Post Internet Theory

This chapter is a collection of ideas and future visions inspired by artists and theorists who are also concerned about the future of the museum.

The museum as a discussion platform

According to Lauren McCarthy (cf. McCarthy, Interview) and the curator Lindsay Howard (cf. Howard, 2012) even when the art itself can't be hosted by an institution located in physical space, it is still important to have a discussion platform. The museum still needs to fulfill its traditional tasks: documentation, collection, maintenance. Curation and mediation of art grow more important while the field of exhibiting art shrinks: The museum might assume, that the audience is already familiar with the online artworks that will be the main focus of the next exhibition. Therefore it's not necessary to export it from its natural habitat.

Possible scenario:

The museum announces a new *topic*, rather than an exhibition. Then the curator provides the audience with online information about this topic like links to artworks and artists portfolios. The audience and the artists are invited to talk about the works and how they were experienced. The museum then collects all new materials which were developed during the process in a journal and then archives it as a status of the *topic* in time.

Digital Emulsion

Artist, programmer and theorist Elliot Woods describes the simultaneous existence of virtual spaces and the real space as digital emulsion. For the subject both can be present at the same time, it's theoretically possible to distinguish between them, but it's not the purpose. Both worlds are present for the viewer at the same time. He perceives it as a semi-digital material that can be handled in the real world. (Woods, 2014)

Staff pick

Staff Pick or Curators Pick is an emergent online format which on the one hand is in the favor of the free flow of web content and on the other aims to offer a selection of this content arranged by professionals. This strategy could be used as well in art mediation. An exhibition or rather limited number of digital online works may seem too segregated for the endless stream of content, so a selection which still leaves it open may be a considerable strategy.

Art Development on Site: The Communities

When Lauren McCarthy was asked about mediation concepts that fit digital art, she mentioned the importance of the communities behind the works (cf. McCarthy, Interview). Often a work of digital art was made within a collective (e. g. the F.A.T. Lab) or a community which developed a certain tool and brought it into an artistic context. Processing, openFrameworks and vvvv are open programming platforms which all bring together technologists and artists. Arduino is a micro controller which is easily programmable and therefore often used for prototypes.

The developers behind these tools are very interested in a growing user number: an art mediation strategy could therefore be bringing together community members and the museum audience with the mission of creating new art. The process then becomes the art itself.

Daniel Shiffman: He is one of the core developers of processing who accompanied the platform from being used amongst MIT Media Students in 2004 to becoming one of the most widely used programming environments for artists. Processing is an open source software based on Java. It's close to JavaScript, the basic dynamic programming language for web browsers.

Daniel Shiffman is creating openly accessible online tutorials for Processing from entrance to expert level and is now involved in the development of p5.js, which makes it possible to program directly in the browser. (cf. <http://p5js.org/>, <http://shiffman.net/>)

NODE Forum for Digital Arts: It's a biennial festival for digital arts which has its roots in the programming environment vvvv. It's a multipurpose toolkit based on C#, but with a visual programming interface. The tool is license free, except for commercial users.

NODE on the one hand brings digital art to a broader audience and on the other offers workshops for vvvv. The topics range from 3D Animation, to setting up hardware systems and interactive and reactive environments.

The mediation of digital art takes place by teaching a tool and at the same time showing finished works which were done using it. (SOURCE)

open Frameworks Lab: open Frameworks is an open source programming platform based on C++. The hackers and creative coders within its community offer "labs" where they work on new projects during coding marathons which are open to the public. These labs were already conducted at several festivals for art and technology like Ars Electronica, Eyeo Festival and Art & Code which states the following about this format: *[...] conferences and festivals serve not only as venues for sharing the 'finished' and the 'refereed', but also as incubators for the 'experimental', the 'half-baked', the 'unknown', and the 'WTF'. Indeed. In the week immediately prior to ART & CODE, we invited a dozen 133t hackers, artists and researchers. ("Festival-as-Laboratory Presentations", 2011)*

Art Hack Day: This format was spread by curator and researcher Lindsay Howard : An art hack day is a day or series of days where artists and hackers work together in a cultural institution to create new art often inspired by a given topic and then create an exhibition. This concept, which picks up on the ephemeral and collaborative aspects of single digital art pieces which together form a statement was soon spread around the world. In 2014 it was part of the annual festival Transmediale. (cf. <http://www.lindsayhoward.net/>, <http://www.arthackday.net/events/afterglow>)

2.2.3. Critical comments on the connection between Digital Art and the Museum

Aram Bartholl

Despite the very long history of Media Art ranging back into the 1960ies which can be seen for example on the website of DAM – Digital Art Museum (<http://dam.org/timelines/artists>) Digital Art didn't come into museums for most of the time it existed.

Media Artist Aram Bartholl did various works that comment on the different status and receptions of "offline" and "online" art or rather art which is accepted by museums and art that is not (yet).

Offline Art is a project where every work of digital art is only accessible locally by logging onto servers. Every work has its own server installed in the exhibition space that only hosts the digital art work. The audience is asked to bring a device to experience the work on their own display. The servers name is also the title of the work. The work shows how digital art can become restricted by trying to adapt it to traditional museum practice – it can't be experienced by its full extent but rather take on traditional art aesthetics.

In his "How to .." series Bartholl included a video called "**How to turn code into art**". This 5 minute piece is featuring himself giving instructions in preparing an artwork for the museum which consists of code that can be executed with a software. The instructions are: Find a piece of code you like, print it, frame it and bring it to the museum.

MoMA Guerilla Exhibition

Artists Sander Veehof and Mark Skwarek did a guerilla show at MoMA which was only visible with a mobile device and the accompanying app.

The project was part of the Conflux Festival 2010 in New York. The augmented reality project featured digital art works places in certain locations in the physical space. It was planned and started without involving MoMA. The reaction by the museum was positive.

“With the exhibition, the organisers of the event aim to address a contemporary issue, caused by the rapid rise of Augmented Reality usage. What is the impact of AR on our public and private



spaces? Is the distinction between the two fading, or are we approaching a situation with an even increasing fragmentation of realities to be perceived individually?” (Veehof, 2010)

Fig 17 Sander Veehof and Mark Skwarek - MoMA NYC, Augmented Reality exhibition, 2010

2.3. The Art Market

Before an art form is included into the dynamics of the art market it has to be risk free first. Now, that is nearly proven that DA is the art of our decade, collectors start considering investing in it. (cf. Howard, 2014)

In the course of 2013 and 2014 Digital Art and the Post Internet Theory became more and more present on art fairs, at art auctions and in galleries. On the one hand, collectors want to buy it and the integration into the market is pushed from all institutions acting within this system, on the other hand many of these players can't imagine how to handle, deal with and possess this art form.

Raffael Rozendaal states in an interview that he thinks it's good that there is no art system between him and the audience, over the internet he is able to directly communicate to them. He became known for his websites which he started selling as art works in the 00ies (cf. Rozendaal, 2014).

2.3.1. Ownership

Considering the intrinsic characteristics of digital art, it can be assumed that an artwork materialized in digital media only can be copied infinitely often. An original object can't be defined or rather it's not necessary to do so because all of them are instances of the same subject.

According to theorist Tiziana Terranova who says that immateriality is the link between materialities (cf. Terranova, 2005), the essence of a digital artwork can be seen as its immateriality linking all manifestations of it, including all of its virtual copies.

Historically ownership begins with the acquisition of a good in exchange for another good of the same economical value. When it comes to something qualifying as immaterial the questions begin with the definition of "good". When journalist Kyle Chayka wrote about digital art and money in 2011 he asked "*How is it possible to sell something that is impossible to own?*" (Chayka, 2011).

Which assumes that it is impossible to own something that can potentially exist infinitely often.

Crowdfunded Art

The traditional notion of ownership is that one juristic person owns a plurality of individual objects. Megan Newcome from the auction house Philips claims that this may no longer be appropriate.

In online culture it's becoming more and more common to invest in something as an anonymous crowd and then also benefit from it as a crowd. Going back to chapter 1.2.2. about authorship this theory goes along with the development of online remix culture where everyone is a contributor and a beneficiary.

Newcome, who is also working on auctions for digital art is working on funding models where many people invest into an artist who then is able to proceed with their work. (cf. Newcome, 2014)

Limited Editions

A different approach is to limit the offer to increase the demand. The London based start-up **s|edition**'s marketing concept is to limit the amount of copies available from an online work. The amount of copies and the value for one is decided together with the artist who prepares a work of art specifically for the platform. The medium is mainly animated GIF or a digital image. Prices for a copy range from \$ 10,- to \$ 300,- and editions from 300 to 10.000 copies. s|edition delivers a certificate with the acquired copy to assure that it's an approved artwork.

Director Rory Blain explains why this mechanism works:

"... it's purely a matter of acceptance, it takes time to take down these barriers. The reason for limited editions is that some people can own it, some not - the question is where is the value derived?" (Blain, 2014)

Nameble artistic approaches towards limiting the amount of copies that can be considered a work of art are **ArtCommodities/Smart Art** by **Paolo Cirio** and **GIF Market** by **Kim Asendorf and Ole Fach**.

ArtCommodities.com/Smart Art was founded by artist Paolo Cirio who is claiming to analyse the art market and then generates art works that are perfectly adapted to the current economic developments. He invented Smart Art, digitally encrypted digital works that limit or extend their amount of copies by themselves dependent on market demands. He also provides investment contracts for art collectors and provides them with a guarantee.

A Smart Art is a work of art that automatically adapts to the market and changes accordingly, "*... a format invented by the artist to authenticate digital art through cryptography. Ultimately, the idea of a collection, as well as economic and sales models, becomes the conceptual artwork itself, beyond its implementation and use.*" (Cirio, 2014)

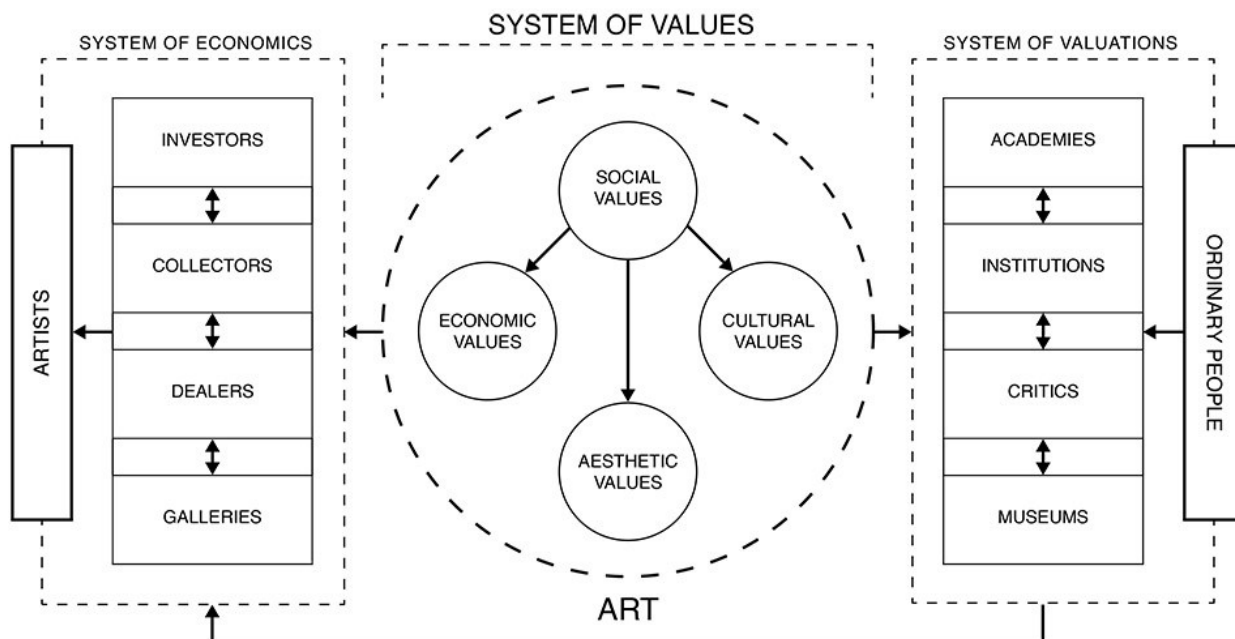
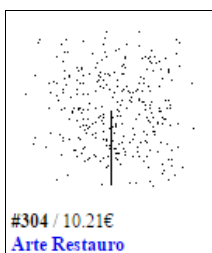


Fig 18 Paolo Cirio - Diagram about creation of art values for the market, 2014

GIF Market



GIF Market by Kim Asendorf and Ole Fach is a series of animated GIFs available on the website gifmarket.net. Each of the 1024 GIFs can be bought. The name of the owner will be written on the website and the amount paid for a GIF influences the price of all GIFs available. The GIFs themselves consist of pointclouds, the amount of points dependent on their index in the price calculating formular which is $PRICE = SALES / NUMBER * 16$.

Fig 19 Kim Asendorf & Ole Fach – GIF Market, 2011

"They [the artists] have created an instant digital art market for selling unique digital files in the form of the increasingly art-friendly format of animated GIFs. [...] Digital files, particularly those that began life on the Internet, naturally lend themselves to being copied, remixed and shared and therefore do not naturally align with a traditional artwork; the value of which is determined by exclusive ownership and scarcity."
(Foote, 2011)

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Appendices

Interview Lauren McCarthy

Interview October 9th 2014 in Frankfurt am Main (ownership, appropriate ways, PaddlesON

What is the essence of a digital art work?

One piece is never finished. It's constantly evolving and undergoing updates and adaptations. Due to hardware and software evolution only the piece can't stay the same but has to be updated. It's also changing its meaning over time.

Artist Julia Scher for example did a lot of works on surveillance in the 80ies and 90ies: included were screens, cameras and video footage. Over the years her work changed its meaning because the footage was no longer up to date and also the technology became outdated.

So she continuously replaced hardware parts, updated the software and even filmed new videos. Even though – or rather because - the piece today doesn't contain any of the parts, its meaning stayed the same.

Are you selling your works? How do you earn money as an artist?

I am not selling the code, that would be what programmers do. I am selling my concepts and ideas as well as everything that contributes to the execution.

The project Social Soul for example [by Lauren McCarthy and Kyle McDonald] was commissioned by Delta Air Lines, the main sponsor of TED2014. But they didn't tell us what project they wanted exactly. It wouldn't work that way. They just said "Do something within the topic of connection." and we had our creative freedom in developing a work.

Sometimes I also sell finished pieces, to me they are objects – like the happiness hat and the Conversacube for Ars Electronica or the Live Twitter Feed Project I am doing for Electric Objects.

What do you think of the online art market like PaddlesON and its online auctions?

It's an interesting idea to sell art online, it broadens the audience and possibilities of buying, but I think they are not doing it quite right: They are still selling objects and not artworks which origin in the online sphere where they can be bought. Even works which are made to experience them in the virtual world are adapted as art objects: Petra Cortright's Youtube Videos or stills from generative works as prints for example. They should take this new field of art more seriously.

What do you think of s|edition?

[s|edition is a company which offers limited editions of digital art. Together with the artists they agree on a contingent of their pieces (between 10 and 10.000) to sell it for observation on various screen formats]

It seems really forced. Often they don't really know the artists and they also don't commission new works but just buy already existing ones to just host them on devices. So, they are only generating new valuables by creating limited editions.

It reminds me of Electric Objects [Company like FRAMDE, which offers screens as frames for digital art works to be exhibited on] who just asked me to do a new project for them. I think this way it makes more sense. They ask artists to create works which go along with their product.

What project are you working on for Electric Objects?

It's a twitter news feed with hourly tweets generated out of all tweets posted in this hour. The tweets are then presented on the screen.

What do you think of organizations like Eyebeam and Rhizome?

[Rhizome is an organisation which researches digital art together with the artists, it has ongoing events and also a vast database of digital art ranging back to the early 90ies. Eyebeam is a researcher as well who offers residencies and research fellowships. Both are based in New York]

They get it. You can see from their history how deeply they are involved in the evolution of digital art. They work together with artists and support new projects, thoughts and artistic strategies. They are part of the art.

What could be the future of museum?

Museums always seem like an exclusive space – to experience art the people at least have to actively decide to visit a museum, pay entrance fees, spend time there. These are factors which keep many people from going there. On the web you can just brows art, most of the time you are on your own and are able to watch and read whatever you want – which is an advantage.

But it makes experiencing art an experience which you have when you are on your own. Museums are still really good in bringing people together, who discuss art, feel and examine it. Having the visitors experience the art together is a very important process in the museum context.

Therefore, even when the art happens online needs not necessarily to be transferred to the exhibition space, talking about it and discussing how every single visitor experienced it still remains as an important function of the museum.

What could be the future of art mediation strategies?

Guided tours are a bit insufficient when it comes to experiencing online digital art. Everyone needs to be connected to the work through a device and at the same time should get insights and information by the art mediator.

Often there are communities behind the works who should be included in the mediation process. Maybe it could be possible to work together with the people behind the project to get a feeling for their art and their thoughts behind them.

Another idea is to produce new pieces live and involve the visitors in the process. For example there are events at museums like the Art Hack Day or the Open Frameworks Lab.

Interview Addie Wagenknecht

[Am 15.10.2014 um 11:05 schrieb Addie Wagenknecht:]

Hi Rosi!

Thanks for your email- let me see if I can answer your questions

Why do you sell your art works?

so I can eat/pay rent/live

Is it appropriate to sell digital art? - I mean when it exists online and everyone can access it anytime from anywhere – how can you sell and buy something that you can't possess – that exists infinitely?

I sell the IP to the work- its like owning a sculpture in a public park- everyone can see it, enjoy it, but the ownership is exclusive.

Do you own your digital works? Or who does? Does anyone?

yes, I do all my own work

When digital art mostly exists in the virtual world, what is the purpose of an exhibition space? Why extracting digital works from their natural habitat?

alot of my work does not live on a screen, so it makes sense it would be exhibited IRL.

What do you think of ideas like s| edition? What about limited editions and what's the purpose of limiting the number of copies of an online file? Could you make loads of money doing so?

I am not sure, I haven't followed their model much, I have many friends who are on their platforms but I don't personally find it of interest. My sales are handled by myself and my gallery in NYC

Happy to talk more,!

Addie

[Am 15.10.2014 um 17:45 schrieb Addie Wagenknecht:]

Hey Rosi!

Your first answer could be as well the answer to "Why do you make money with your art?" but my question was "Why do you sell it?" - In the sense of preparing your works for the art market, running through the process of galleries and auctions and maybe maintenance as well after selling it.

Again it comes back to living.. If I didn't make art, I am not sure what I would do- - which puts me into the place of 'why do I sell it' because I am not sure what else I would do-- really. I have list and list of ideas of things I want to make, when I have the time and money to do so-- I should be totally clear and say, money makes art a reality. if I want to make more art, I have to make more money. the sale of one piece will fund the next 2 or 3 pieces.. and so on and so forth. Does that answer the question?

A lot of your works that originate in the digital world (like screenshot videos, images, texts,...) can be found online on your website - and additionally to this you sell them as prints or on devices. Like "The Law of Averages: Celebrities": Does it make the piece more of an art work when printed, put into a gallery and sold than when I see it on my screen on your website or when it appears in various contexts on the web?

I don't like looking at art on a screen- which is why 98% of my work, is physical. Law of Averages is a series of prints. I like the physical objects, I like to put them in my house, etc. The internet feels much more like a place we experiment and put out ideas, where physical objects have a permanence which digital do not.

Does it make a difference to you if you sell an art object like "Asymmetric Love Number 2" or if you sell a work that only exists digitally and/or online like "brbxoxo.com". Does it make a difference for people or institutions who want to buy or present your works? Is it important to you if they care?

Not sure, I feel like this question is more for the collector or museum. To me, it does not make a difference, I use the medium that makes sense for what it is I am trying to do-- if they want to buy it great.. if not.. ok..

When you are selling a work that only exists online - like a .gif - Would you sell it only once?

depends on the edition number

Only one copy of it would be properly owned by someone but the same work is still there - accessible for anyone. I mean I get your example of the public sculpture but the public sculpture exists only once - no further originals - no sculptures appearing when someone looks at their phone or disappearing when closing the tab again.

There are many iterations- Jeff Koons has many balloon dogs. you can see them both in public or private- each one is an original because he says it is. This is also true of a .gif..it comes down I suppose to how the artist editions the work, what the COA is or isn't etc..

Also I'd love to do coffee! I'm in Basel next week and NYC after that, then Paris but back in Innsbruck end of December

Best regards,

Rosi

Interview Kyle McDonald

Interview November 6th 2014 via Google Hangouts

Do you sell your works?

It would be possible to sell my art and do more commissions like other digital artistst – Addie Wagenknecht for example – do, but I think that selling my works doesn't fit to their nature. They are often statements, ongoing processes or concepts and therefore can be perceived online or on site specific installations.

Sometimes I only talk about them at lectures. Therefore I am still traveling to festivals and talks and work on site specific commissions to finance my projects, I am also a teacher now.

What is the essence of digital art?

Digital Art online has a very fleeting nature, it's ephemeral and reaches from the real world to the virtual one. Therefor it's also very difficult to preserve. It would be necessary to preserve the whole surrounding in which the work can be experienced and this is different for everyone: Did you see it on a blog or on a museum website?

But more importantly – what is the essence that should be preserved? It wouldn't make sense to restore facebook for every user at any time it was running. Maybe it is like this:

When we go back in time what are the things which live on from every epoch?

On the one hand it's things out of stone and other resistant materials: cave drawings, buildings, artifacts,.. But on the other it's the stories which were told and are so relevant for our culture that they will live on. When I ask people – have you ever done something which people will remember in 5 years? Most of them say yes, but when I ask the same question about in 100 years, nobody says yes.

But still something from our culture today is living on – it won't be the single pieces fo digital art because they can't be stored like paintings or sculptures, but the stories which were created.

Nonetheless Rhizome is doing great work in trying to capture these stories. They always find appropriate ways for every kind of work to preserve its essence.

What do you think of s|edition?

[s|edition is a company which offers limited editions of digital art. Together with the artists they agree on a contingent of their pieces (between 10 and 10.000) to the sell it for observation on various screen formats]

They try to fulfill two purposes: They want to be a sponsor and a market for the same thing. Also, they create new valuables by setting a certain amount of how often a piece is allowed to exist – but they do not create or commission new art works. I think this is not a long lasting.

But of course the idea of limited editions is not a bad one. Limited editions exist since there is the printing technology and it triggers peoples fear of missing out. It clearly creates a demand for artwork available in limited editions.

Do you think it's possible to own something that is accessible to anyone at anytime and anyplace? How can something like an online work be possessed when its inherent characteristics make owning it impossible?

The concept of ownership has a long history. Most of the time it was connected to unique projects or limited editions which were owned. It is still important that collectors and institutions support artists by buying their

works, but maybe new models are more appropriate today.

New possibilities could be crowd funded art or sponsorship for an artist instead of one specific work. When a lot of people identify with an artist's work funding them is like an externalization of ones identity: Create something for the crowd by getting help from the crowd.

This model doesn't exist yet but with ideas like PaddlesON and other auctions and art galleries online the art market is evolving into a much more public forum where many people are able to take part in.

What is the difference between the art works of Casey Reas and the Open Processing Codes of his works?

[Casey Reas is one of the founders of Processing who released his codes on the platform Open Processing for students to work with them, tweak them and create something new. Since he is represented by galleries for digital arts his works are no longer available but sold as art works]

Casey just has a lot of different roles. On the one hand he is an active community member of the creative coding scene as well as a teacher – but on the other hand he is a successful artist who exhibits his works in museums and sells them through galleries. His works have completely different functions in both spheres and are adapted to the different rule sets. In one sphere he has complete freedom over his own art but in the other he can earn money with it. Somehow Casey manages to mediate those two worlds by being an important member of both.

I guess that all my questions are related to art and money because for me it is a really complicated relationship – what do you think?

Maybe it's because money is driven by labour and art is driven by passion. But those two can also easily go together. It's something like creative or emotional labor – in Europe there is even funding for this like for any other sector of the economy. There must be the understanding for both which can't exist without the other – art in the world of labor and labor in the world of art. Sometimes it's difficult to translate – like the value of art and the value of money.