

INTRODUCTION

This publication is about Machine Research - research on machines, research with machines, and research as a machine. It thus explores machinic perspectives to suggest a situation where the humanities are put into a critical perspective by machine driven ecologies, ontologies and epistemologies of thinking and acting. It aims to engage research and artistic practice that takes into account the new materialist conditions, implied by nonhuman techno-ecologies. These include new ontologies and intelligence such as algorithmic learning, histories of machine intelligence and legacy technologies, ethics and aesthetics of autonomous systems and other post-anthropocentric reconsiderations of agency, materiality and autonomy.

The articles address these topics using writing machines that enhance our reading and reflections on the ways in which research has become machine-like, following tired protocols and mechanisms that are bound up with the reputation economy and the profiteering of publishing companies that charge huge amounts of money to release texts under restrictive conditions. In this way, the publication also functions as a response to the machinery of academic print.

If new production modes have disrupted other types of publications (of music, movies, etc.), academic print in many ways remains unaffected and is largely controlled by a number of corporate publishers that are subsidized by university libraries. Whereas open access presents itself as an alternative, we ask whether disruption is not also dependent on challenging the very system of accreditation that nurtures academic publishing. This publication and the process leading to it are proposed as an alternative publishing machine in line with this thinking.

We are also conscious of the difficulty of developing various critiques without reflecting upon our production process in terms of the challenges of temporary collectivity, shared responsibility, and the ways in which various hierarchies are both undermined as well as confirmed in group work. Our open process in this sense becomes bound up in its own rhetoric and yet another mechanism or machine of power, despite the wish to think and do otherwise.

The publication results from a three-day workshop held in October in Brussels, hosted by Constant at the Brussels World Trade Center. Using Free, Libre and Open Source collaboration tools, participants experimented with collective notetaking using etherbox and ways to transform their contributions through the intervention of a set of scripts that each addressed different aspects of machinic authoring. The design and layout of this publication are the result of a next step in the process, taken by Sarah Garcin, using her publishing tool, the PJ machine.

The workshop and publication also contribute to the transmediale festival programme for 2017 that focuses on the elusive character of media and technological change and how it is articulated in the contemporary and elusive moment of messy ecologies of the human and non human. Since 2011, Aarhus University and transmediale festival for digital art & culture have organised research workshops of this kind, as part of an ongoing collaboration with shifting partner organizations (Universität der Künste (“In/Compatible Research”, Berlin, 2011); Leuphana University of Lüneburg (“Researching #BWPWAP”, Lüneburg, 2012); Kunsthal Aarhus (“Post-digital Research”, Aarhus, 2013); School of Creative Media, City University Hong Kong (“Datafied Research”, Hong Kong, 2014); Liverpool John Moores University and Liverpool Biennial (“Excessive Research”, Liverpool, 2015). Each of these workshops has applied a research angle to the thematic framework of transmediale, and with an open call for participation they have also sought to open the festival up to emerging academic and/or practice-oriented researchers. The outcomes have, as an experiment in new forms of scholarly publication, been presented in a series of peer-reviewed newspapers, as well as in an open access online academic journal, APRJA (A Peer-reviewed Journal About). This newspaper presents the latest outcomes of a workshop organised in partnership with Constant Association for Art & Media.

Machine Research, the latest issue of the open access online journal APRJA is available at http://www.aprja.net/?page_id=3132 (Proximus NV → NORDUnet → RIPE Network Coordination Centre)

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