



Group Exhibition *The Eternal Network*

The Eternal Network is a group exhibition about the persistence of networks, with a focus on their potentials and limits in response to current social and technological changes.

In times of environmental and political turmoil, networks have lost their mass appeal and are the subject of widespread backlash: blackouts, propa-ganda, hate speech, addiction, and a human desire to disintermediate from the platforms of surveillance capitalism. Still, networks are ubiquitous, and thus both the poison and cure for the act of organizing within activism and politics alike. With the now more tangible limits of networks in mind, the exhibition asks how effectively they respond to future models of sociality, technology, and politics.

Starting with the 1960s concept of “The Eternal Network” by Fluxus artist Robert Filliou, the exhibition features a reference system with three lists of terms, quotes, and visuals that highlight histories and transformations of net cultures. Through new interpretations of archival materials, a series of “Revisions” presents select net culture projects from the 1990s until today. If “The Eternal Network” notion predicted new forms of exchange in an emerging global world, the critical net cultures featured in the Revisions similarly speculated on cultural practice in relation to the emerging infrastructure of the web and society after globalization.

By connecting “The Eternal Network,” critical net cultures, and contemporary artworks, the exhibition closes the loop between the pre- and post-internet moments. With the backlash against networks in mind, it re-examines the legacies of critical net cultures, asking if and how they will continue to have an emancipatory relevance in the future. #

Kristoffer Gansing
Artistic Director



Artworks

Blank & Jeron supported by Sakrowski Clubnetz AR, 2020

Clubnetz was an early internet chat project in the 1990s Berlin art and techno scenes. Hosted from 1994 in clubs and bars like Frisör, WMF, and Tresor, Clubnetz manifested itself through hardware terminals that allowed visitors to connect not only to each other, but also to the internet. For many, it was certainly the first time online, as internet connectivity was not as commonplace then as it is today. A recently developed app has now transformed Clubnetz into an instant messaging service, which was used for a live-chat performance at the exhibition opening. The performance documentation is accessible through a virtual AR sculpture of chat logs that are seemingly immaterial, but will possibly remain for eternity.

Tega Brain, Julian Oliver, and Bengt Sjölén Asunder, 2019

Imagine the earth as a networked system whose data can be collected, analyzed, and acted upon to attempt to solve critical environmental challenges. In *Asunder*, a supercomputer analyzes satellite, climate, and geology data of terrestrial regions, generating environmental engineering plans that address human and nonhuman agendas. These scenarios of redesigned landscapes and ecologies are then simulated and their environmental performance assessed. The system dashboard displays each region's historic satellite data on the left, the process of the algorithm and simulation in the center, and the proposed "solution" on the right. As farmlands are relocated, coastlines straightened, and rivers moved, the work shifts from humorous to preposterous, from eco-fetishistic to bureaucratic.

Johanna Bruckner Molecular Sex, 2020

The future is often described as a toxic breakdown of the human. For Johanna Bruckner, the hybridization of the nonhuman and human is rather a starting point for the indeterminacy and queerness of being. Her video installation shows an entanglement of human, animal, technology, sex, and atmosphere in which molecularization shapes a networked world. The fluid main character is a fictitious sex bot that evokes plastic as a chemical substance impacting biological life; it further performs as a brittle star (a sea creature) as well as nanotechnological beings that distort lovemaking and gender. Pushing the limits of the human sensorium, it invents technological prostheses that redistribute the relations and patterns with which subjects comprehend the world.

With the support of Pro Helvetia, Swiss Arts Council.



Guo Cheng

The Net Wanderer—a Tour of Suspended Handshakes, 2019

The utopian idea of the internet was that of a universal space for all, unbound by borders. In reality, networks are intertwined with real-world territoriality, as Guo Cheng shows by taking on the role of a tourist visiting the elusive sites hosting the network infrastructures of the Great Firewall of China (GFW). The installation lets users become virtual firewall tourists, entering websites of choice that if blocked by the GFW, take them to a game that allows them to submit their usernames. A custom-made wall-mounted machine then engraves the names and scores along with the IP address of a GFW node, while footage shows Guo Cheng using geolocation data to track the physical location of the firewall's network gateway.

The work was originally commissioned within the Digital Earth fellowship program

C& Center of Unfinished Business since 2016

C& Center of Unfinished Business is a walk-in bookcase structure and reading room that offers visitors an extraordinary, sometimes disconcerting selection of books examining the structures and blind spots of colonial power relations, which continue to impact art, sciences, and society today. Centered around questions of the many layers of global “networks, this edition of the C& Center was developed, as a ‘collaborative filtering,’ with students of the Institute of Art in Context (UdK Berlin) in response to transmediale 2020.”

It offers a tool for further reflection on the reach and limits of critical network cultures.

Supported by the Goethe-Institut.

Louise Drulhe

Critical Atlas of the Internet, 2015

How big is the internet? This is the question prompting Louise Drulhe's 15 visual hypotheses for spatializing the internet's properties according to its technical, political, and economic structure. The resulting atlas is a stunningly comprehensive unfolding of network space's complex shape, throwing the web's infrastructures, virtual and physical geographies, and territories into sharp relief. It discusses the relations between informational nodes, users, nations, and corporations, as well as the underlying principles of network design. This atlas is also a modular visual essay, a dynamic computer code that is adaptable to multiple outputs, including screens, paper, and exhibition spaces.



Kyriaki Goni

Networks of Trust, 2019

Islands may seem closed off from the world, but they are also spaces of movement and relationality. For Kyriaki Goni, the island and insular existence combines isolation and connectivity in ways through which we can rethink the past, present, and future of networks.

Referencing networks in the Aegean Sea from antiquity until today, Goni has devised a localized digital network of three nodes, one of which is presented within the exhibition installation. Visitors can use this node to share stories related to the possible future of networks, climate, and population movements. Using fiction as a method for community building, these Networks of Trust are accessible by proximity and indexed as cryptographic hashes on the website archipelago2092.xyz.

The work was initiated as a commission by The New Networked Normal (NNN) and has been co-funded with support from the Creative Europe program.

Darsha Hewitt

100 Year Old Quicksilver Cloud, 2020

100 Year Old Quicksilver Cloud is the first work in High Fidelity Wasteland—a trilogy by Darsha Hewitt that experiments with decomposing sound reproduction technology.

Wading into the toxic haze of early transmission infrastructure, this installation sonifies the decaying atmosphere inside a thyratron, a hundred-year-old vacuum tube radiating a cloud of blue ionized mercury. Vacuum tubes generated, amplified, and controlled some of the earliest flows of electrons signaling the start of widespread communication networks: radio, television, telephony, and computing. Produced prior to practices of planned obsolescence and outliving industrial life cycles of technology today, decommissioned liquified metals of the thyratron are a ruinous substrate of postindustrial ecology.

The work was commissioned by transmediale.

The work is part of the culture program related to Canada's Guest of Honour presentation at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2020. We acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts and the Government of Canada.



Keiken and George Jasper Stone

Feel My Metaverse, 2019

Built within a game engine, Feel My Metaverse is a CGI film set in a hyper-fictional future, when the climate crisis has rendered the earth uninhabitable. Humans escape into a metaverse of virtual worlds, shown through the daily lives of three characters. The narrative critiques the disconnection of the monopolizing desires of corporate and futurist visions in the context of inequality and climate crisis. Considering the increasing fragility of shared belief systems, it contemplates how individuals can trust and live in realities that they intuitively disagree with. It also depicts technology as an emancipatory tool to explore sensory understanding, fluidity of expression, and ability. The installation is on view from 29 January to 2 February, 2020.

Originally commissioned for Jerwood Arts Collaborate!

Olia Lialina

Summer, 2013

In this animated piece, we see the artist swinging back and forth, infinitely looped, basking in bright sunlight. Cut out against a gradient background of blue and white, the swing is hung from the browser's location bar. The animation's 18 still images are located on 26 different websites, with each site redirecting the browser from one server to the next, displaying the images in sequence, thus creating a cross-domain animation. The work is literally scattered across the internet, making it impossible to watch offline. The speed and rhythm of the image sequence, the animation itself, depends on internet infrastructure. It is the most fragile GIF on the internet. Just one node down will result in breaking the work.

Aay Liparoto with HOT BODIES – CHOIR

no bodies welcome | all bodies welcome, 2019

In their work, Aay Liparoto acknowledges our interdependence with technology for information, work, sex, entertainment, socializing, health care, and everything in between. What does this mean for queer feminist bodies, which rely on DIY information exchange? Housed in a "void pod," this speculative choir piece is created through workshops with HOT BODIES – CHOIR, a queer, LGBTQIA+ and feminist choir based in Brussels. Cocooned in light and sound, the singers' voices invite us to reflect upon the power and politics of online spaces. The artwork is informed by Liparoto's research and Not Found On—a nonpublic wiki cocreated through workshops with, by, and for feminist queer bodies to record and exchange knowledge. The accompanying publication chronicles the collective thinking behind the project.

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Robert Luxemburg

The Man with the Personal Computer, 2020, 66'

The Man with the Personal Computer is an animated digital mosaic of Dziga Vertov's 1929 classic The Man with the Movie Camera. In a 256-channel matrix, 25 million miniaturized stills from Vertov's film are arranged, frame by frame, to match the original image as closely as possible. Where The Man with the Movie Camera expresses the frantic joy of mobile movie-making, The Man with the Personal Computer dissolves the stream of images into a new visual dimension that, no less frenetically, celebrates cinema as an object of computation. Unlike most other films, this one is best seen from afar, or through squinted eyes.

Bahar Noorizadeh

After Scarcity, 2018, 31'

In this sci-fi video essay, Bahar Noorizadeh tracks the Soviet Union's attempts to build a fully automated planned economy. These Socialist cybernetic experiments are part of an alternative history of networks and economic and political trajectories that the artist uses to speculate on future technocultural utopias. In tracing this alternate time-space continuum of networks, Noorizadeh critically observes how sluggish materialism gave way to broadband idealism, as giant corporations now channel all things via regulated networks of efficient data transfer. The piece ends on a provocative note. The possibility of a computational utopia beyond the state and free market is not ruled out, but proposed as a planned piece of economic science fiction. The work is part of the culture program related to Canada's Guest of Honour presentation at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2020. We acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts and the Government of Canada.

Luiza Prado de O. Martins

For Those Who Stand at Shorelines, 2020

The installation presents an immersive space in which to contemplate entanglements between the ongoing climate crisis, fertility, land, and belonging. In Brazilian artist Luiza Prado's work, everyday practices turn into radical, decolonizing practices of care and affect. Here, cooking and contemplation challenge the networks of control that monitor and restrict the ability to create futures and sustain worlds that are multiple, plural, and heterogeneous. How to counteract a narrative of scarcity for which the solution presented by the current system is the total consumption of the earth itself, and with it those who stand at its margins; at its shorelines?

Supported by the Goethe-Institut.



Timur Si-Qin

A New Protocol VR (v 1.2), 2018

The New Peace series, launched by Timur Si-Qin in 2016, proposes a cosmology beyond Western dualities of the organic versus the synthetic, the spiritual versus the material, and the natural versus the cultural. This latest VR-based installment (2018) introduces the New Peace campaign through a journey into a procedurally generated desert landscape, signifying the possibility of an all-inclusive wilderness where the simulated is just another branch on the tree of reality. The work posits a new articulation of secular spirituality that is able to respond to climate change and other challenges of the twenty-first century through a re-enchantment of materiality.

Jelena Viskovic

Forum, 2020

Focusing on infrastructure for future networks of care, Forum is an installation and web application by artist Jelena Viskovic inspired by the ReUnion Network.*

Playing on the public/private aspects of fountains and indoor bath culture, the installation is both a “discrete leisure” and public space that features a salt crystallization process, sculpturally marking a local space-time relation. Visitors are invited to interact with this process through a web application as they become part of a network of users connected through shared space and distributed time.

ReUnion is an initiative that proposes an ecosystem for collective well-being through P2P care agreements and relationship-driven cryptocurrency in response to society’s atomization.

<http://reunionnetwork.org>

In cooperation with the Digital Solitude program of Akademie Schloss Solitude.

Tobias Williams

Magi System, 2019

These three animations by Tobias Williams are inspired by today’s true eternal networks: the infrastructural elements of global information networks. If early net culture and the later cloud metaphor once promised escape from physical reality, an infrastructural aesthetic is now inseparable from the public perception of the internet. Data centers, server racks, and colorful network cables became increasingly visible in the early 2010s. Corporations such as Google, who wanted to seem more transparent after Edward Snowden’s leaks on their abuse of personal data, often published such imagery. Magi System is assembled from images on Instagram, where algorithms now assist in creating near psychedelic visual taxonomies of Surveillance Capitalism’s infrastructural backbone.

The work is part of the culture program related to Canada’s Guest of Honour presentation at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2020. We acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts and the Government of Canada.



Revisions

A series of Revisions is presented alongside, and complementary to, the List View part of the exhibition. Revisions are new works and documents that reactivate archival material related to the history of net cultures, from the early 1990s until today. These works explore mailing lists, net radio, and peer-to-peer networks, among other media, and are often created by those who were directly involved in the activities' histories.

convex tv. convex tv.

Streaming media is now the standard for commercial audiovisual content on the internet, but for years the streaming phenomenon was more DIY and user-driven. The Berlin-based net.radio collective convex tv. (1996–99) was part of an international network of experimental internet radio projects in the late 1990s. On display is a new publication that documents convex tv.'s activities and the multiplicity of people involved in its actions. This mainly German-language publication is accompanied by the 1998 audio version of one of convex tv.'s manifestos, *developed arrestment* – make alias. (a pfor ten or six notes on the death of self-organizing). Among other things, it cynically refers to the surplus value generated by expanding networks.

David Garcia, Eric Kluitenberg

The Next 5 Minutes—a Political Poetics for the Media Age

In early-1990s Amsterdam and Rotterdam, TV and radio pirates, hackers, and experimental media artists joined to initiate The Next 5 Minutes, a series of international festivals under the rubric of "Tactical Media." This new and unstable "compound" occupied the no man's land connecting art, political activism, and experimental media. The festival fused campaigning tactics with critiques of representation, and a new awareness of the importance of infrastructure, at the birth of the internet as a transformative mass medium. This documentation, consisting of videos and print materials assembled by Tactical Media Files (David Garcia and Eric Kluitenberg) captures the excitement of the festivals and looks back to the spirit of the times.

With the support of the Creative Industries Fund NL.



David Gauthier

List Server Busy. Full Digest Rescheduled.

Electronic mailing lists were the main channels of 1990s European net cultures and the Net Critique that formed out of the post-1989 era as an ideology-aware alternative to the techno-libertarian Californian Ideology. In an ongoing analysis of list archives, David Gauthier has generated this mammoth survey volume, summarizing data about key net and digital culture mailing lists from the 1990s until today. The resulting reports are based on algorithmic operations, such as extracting certain years' most-discussed subject threads or most replied to messages. The archives of the lists Nettime, Crumb, Emyre, Spectre, and Syndicate are reactivated here through a transversal analysis of quantitative data and discursive themes that move across them.

With the support of the Creative Industries Fund NL.

Alessandro Ludovico

Neural 25+1, Critical Publishing and Archiving

Founded in 1993, the independent Italian magazine Neural is a forerunner in today's discussion on how digitization is transforming culture, taking a role of bringing together different fields of artistic and activist practices. In the past 26 (25+1) years of being a single node within a larger network, the Neural project has been built to echo the networks it nurtures and connects with, in a critical but also open and collaborative way. This installation presents the evolution of the magazine itself, artworks that were commissioned for specific issues, and snapshots of the greater Neural Archive, which includes publications of the community to which it belongs.

With the support of the Creative Industries Fund NL.

The Pervasive Labour Union zine

Issue #13: „Fed Up!“

Federated social networks—a.k.a. the Fediverse—are distributed networks beyond the so-called big platforms, in which users collectively share and uphold decentralized technical infrastructures. Revisiting early internet principles of end-to-end communication and DIY, the Fediverse also readdresses the question of community, catering to fragmented publics and counterpublics. The 13th issue of online zine Pervasive Labour Union, “Fed Up!”, asks what social, economic, and political forces are at play within this realm. For the first time, and especially for this exhibition, the zine will be published in print and accompanied by a poster that visually depicts the Fediverse, developed by Lídia Pereira, Artemis Gryllaki, and Bohye Woo.



Piratbyrån

Piratbyrån (2003–2009)

The think tank Piratbyrån (The Pirate Bureau, 2003–2009) began as a mockery of the Swedish copyright industry lobby group Antipiratbyrån, but soon became involved in net politics, in part by launching the filesharing website The Pirate Bay. Through online chats and public stunts, Piratbyrån investigated how net culture transformed friendship, music, politics, and life in general. The installation contains two silent video loops curated by former members Magnus Eriksson and Rasmus Fleischer. One shows examples of Piratbyrån's documentation of various happenings. The other focuses on representations of Piratbyrån in the media. The contrast between the two, and the confusion it produced on both sides, is one way to look at the group's legacy.

Mindy Seu

Cyberfeminism Catalog 1990–2020

Cyberfeminism as a term for feminist approaches to cyberspace, the internet, and digital culture has existed since the earliest days of net culture. Through a collaborative online index, designer and researcher Mindy Seu has assembled this "catalog" of cyberfeminism, which not only contains canonical projects and protagonists, but also seeks to intersectionally expand this field by including non-white and non-Western variants of Cyberfeminism, including feminist Afrofuturism, Womanism, and Hackfeminista. The texts, organizations, events, and other media aggregated herein push against the dominant understanding of internet history and map the radical technocritical activism that shapes a cyberfeminist counterpublic. The publication takes the name Cyberfeminism as an umbrella, complicates it, and pushes it into plain sight for others to respond and build upon.



List Views

The exhibition features three associative lists of terms, illustrated with quotes and visuals, that highlight histories and transformations of net cultures. These terms fall into one of three categories: Legacies, Shifts, and Dis/Continuities. Legacies are concepts and phenomena of net cultures that have persisted over time, of the past, while not entirely relegated to it. Shifts are technological and cultural game changers, events, movements, and technologies that have significantly altered the terrain of net cultures. Dis/Continuities are cultural practices that both reference and reform Legacies and Shifts, speculating on possible futures with and beyond networks.

The lists are necessarily incomplete, forming an “anarchive” of references to be further activated during the exhibition. A selection of nine Legacies, presented here and in the exhibition space, serve as starting points: The Eternal Network, End to End, Decentralization, Netzkritik, Tactical Media, Cyberfeminism, Infrastructures, Geographies, and Ecologies. Each features iconic and/or inspirational quotes and visuals, followed by Shifts and Dis/Continuities related to the specific Legacy term.

