

## Tilman Baumgaertel on Thu, 9 Dec 1999 19:33:03 +0100 (CET)

[[Date Prev](#)] [[Date Next](#)] [[Thread Prev](#)] [[Thread Next](#)] [[Date Index](#)] [[Thread Index](#)]

### <nettime> Interview with Interview with 0100101110101101.ORG

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Interview with 0100101110101101.ORG (Authorized, final version?

german version at:

<http://www.heise.de/tp/deutsch/inhalt/sa/5572/1.html>

We hope that somebody is going to recuperate us!

Interview with 0100101110101101.ORG

?: You got known in the net scene, because you made a complete copy of the art site Hell.com, and put it on your site. Tell me what you did exactly...

0100101110101101.ORG: We are subscribed to the net.art list „Rhizome“. There we heard that they would open a door to Hell.com for 48 hours, for a show called „surface“. It was only for Rhizome subscribers, and you needed a password to look at it. We had never seen Hell.com, but we had heard about it, and we knew that it was the biggest museum of net.art.

So, during these 48 hours of opening, we downloaded all the stuff of their site. This was not as simple as it seems, it took us 26 hours. Then we put it on our website and sent an e-mail with just the URL repeated hundreds of times to several mailing lists and newspapers.

?: Did you get a reaction from Hell.com?

0100101110101101.ORG. Yes, only two hours later, the people of Hell.com send us, and to the company that is hosting our site in Canada, an e-mail, saying that we were in copyright violation of all the artists and Hell.com itself, and that we had to take down the site immediately. They charged us with international law of copyright... whatever. We didn't do anything, we left it there, and it is still there.

Everybody was talking about this action for weeks, so it created a public debate that was a publicity stunt for us and, of course, for them too. We had a huge amount of visits from all the people who wanted to see Hell.com,

but couldn't.

?: Then again, if you have closed site, you probably don't want that much publicity. I am not so sure how these international laws, that you mentioned, could be executed, by the way. They could probably get your provider to throw you out, but I think you are taking advantage of the fact that you are dealing with some American artists, who can't afford to hire a bunch of lawyers to sue you in Europe. If you would have done the same thing with the site of CNN, they would have sued your ass off in ten minutes, and you would have taken the site down in no time...

0100101110101101.ORG: You can always be more radical than you are. But that for sure would be interpreted as an explicit political action, as an assault against something. But we are not against anything. We are not some kind of anarchists, that want to bring down web art. We just work with what we find and try to transmit and propagate our ideas.

The thing with Hell.com now doesn't interest us anymore. We had only two days, and when we saw it in the end it was so ugly, that we were very upset. If we would have known that it was so bad, we wouldn't have copied it! It's just a design exhibition. There is no idea behind it, no content. I rather agree with Duchamp's idea of non-retinal art. We present our work without computers, if yesterday there was no projector to show the website, it wouldn't be a problem, because our work is not supposed to be aesthetic but ethic, based on contents.

?: So what was the idea behind taking this site? To access a formerly closed system, that was open only to a self-proclaimed elite, and make it accessible to everybody?

0100101110101101.ORG: Yes, first of all was the feeling that Hell.com was exactly the opposite of what we think that the web could and should be, but this is not really our own idea. That's what every hacker do. The difference between us and hackers (in the popular and „misunderstood“ meaning of the word) is that we try to show that our kind of activism is congenital to cyberspace, you don't have to be a „hacker“, because we have entered the „infoware“ age. Hardware and software ages are finished, now you don't have to be an hacker anymore, you've got enough tools to transmit your ideas without „technical abilities“.

?: So why this fixation on art? Why not do the same operation with the website of CNN, for example?

0100101110101101.ORG: If you take two normal objects, like these chairs for example, and put them together, you create art. If you take two paintings of these chairs and put them together, it's something else, call it meta-art, anti-art or activism. It's the same on the net. What is interesting to us is not the creation of art, but the discussion and subversion of art. We should call it „artivism“?

?: So would you agree, that what you are doing is only of interest, or only makes sense at all, because you are doing it within the art system?

0100101110101101.ORG: If you do what we do with a work of art, the operation has a value in itself. If you work with contents that are not art, it becomes more difficult to distinguish the operation from the content. If you steal the CNN site, you are acting against CNN. There are many people doing this kind of hacktivism, think of groups like RTMark and Mongrel, and they are doing great things. But we are not interested in

doing this kind of hacktivism. We work on other contradictions like originality and reproduction, authorship and network, copyright and plagiarism. You don't have to be explicitly political to do something political.

?: So again, you do agree that these acts of recontextualization make only sense as an art practise?

0100101110101101.ORG: Yes. In the beginning it was important for us to make these ideas clear, because these are the presupposition of our way of thinking. Now we can change directions and work with other stuff. The New York Times said it was against the commercialisation of net.art, but that wasn't our point at all.

?: But the only pieces of yours that got talked about were your copies of Hell.com and Art.Teleportacia by Olia Lialina, and they both had something to do with commercialisation of net art.

0100101110101101.ORG: When we copied Hell.com it wasn't a pay-per-view site yet, it was just copyrighted and password protected. Anyway before Hell.com and after Art.Teleportacia we did a lot of clones of other people's sites, we used to do „hybrids" of the pages by other net.artists that had nothing to do with „commercialisation".

?: How is this different from, for example, Duchamp taking a picture of the Mona Lisa and drawing a moustache on it? And all the other acts of appropriation and re-appropriation, that went on all through the 20. century, and especially in the 80's and 90's - with artists such as Sherri Levine, for example?

0100101110101101.ORG: That is a good question. On the web you can do these kind of actions very freely, without destroying the original, because there is no original; it's not that we care that much about „originals", not at all - in fact our off-line works were against „originals" - but the paradigms of the „real world" are so rooted that you will never change anything, you'll always be the umpteenth anti-artist. On the contrary, on the net, you feel that you can change something, you have the power of influence. This discussion on originality hasn't meaning any longer in the net, Duchamp did it only with reproductions of works of art, we do it with the works themselves since the copy in the net is exactly the same as the original. Everybody can use the data on the net. When we clone Jodi, we don't destroy their work, we re-use it.

?: Did they ever complain to you?

0100101110101101.ORG: No. They must be upset, because we deconstruct their site. In Jodi's site, for example, there is an index, but it's hidden, so it is very hard to navigate the site, and you get lost all the time just clicking and clicking. We just took the index and put it on the opening page, so that you can see exactly where the different parts and sections are. When you copy a site you learn a lot of things about its authors. You see what the hierarchical and chronological order of the site is. It is very interesting.

?: So are you saying that you are basically teaching yourself how to be net artists by copying other people's sites?

0100101110101101.ORG: No, we use them interactively. We don't think that clicking on a website is interaction. That is just doing what you are

supposed to do. It's not the work of art being „interactive“, it's the beholder that can use it interactively. Interaction is when you use something in a way that has not been predicted by its author.

?: But that is in the nature of the web anyway. Anybody can look at the source code of a website, and see how it has been done, and they don't need some smart artist to do it for them...

0100101110101101.ORG: We didn't invent anything, we only made it explicit. Of course, we don't claim any kind of copyright for our way of doing. Anybody can download whole sites. You just need some software, and you don't have to be worried about copyright infringements. Our point is that there is a different way of behaving towards the work. You can choose your attitude, or what you want to do with the piece. You are not obliged to just look at it. You have the tools to do something else.

Cloning is just one of the things you can do with these works. You can modify them, you can add things, you can put them in a different order, you can even destroy them, you can do anything you want. We would like to see some more of this kind of interaction on the net. Because the way net.art is developing now is really the same direction as the normal art scene. You have artists with names and surnames, biographies and works, and they are geniuses, and that's the surplus value of what they do.

?: As far as I know, no net artist has called him- or herself a genius so far...

0100101110101101.ORG: But in thirty years they will be. Jodi will be called the Leonardo da Vinci of net.art and Antiorp will be the Van Gogh and Vuk the Warhol... Nobody thinks of himself as a genius. Or maybe, in thirty years, if they hear it over and over again, they start to think: „Well maybe I am a genius for real!“.

The point is that on the net, as well as in the real world, there is not „geniuses“, inspired by the muse, there is only a huge, endless exchange of information and influences. The „knowledge“ is only a big plagiarism. Even in the „real world“ there are a lot of people doing interesting things about these topics, like Piero Cannata on Michelangelo and Pollock, like Aleksander Brener, who created a new painting over the Malevich's one...

?: ...and took away the possibility for people to look at Malevich' „Black Square“...

0100101110101101.ORG: Well, they can look at it in catalogues.

?: Brener is considered to be this Anti-Christ of contemporary art now, the scary anti-artist. Where do you place yourself?

0100101110101101.ORG: We don't consider ourselves „artists“ but „beholders“. We are not against art, we are not anti-artists. We have seen what happened to Dada or Surrealism and all the other historical avant-garde, it doesn't matter if you call yourself an artist or an anti-artist, the only thing we care about are „contents“.

?: So you might as well stop doing what you are doing, because it will be recuperated anyway....

0100101110101101.ORG: This obsession of „being recuperated“ is just a Situationists paranoia. If nobody gives a shit about what you do is not

necessarily because you are so radical, but more probably because you don't have anything to say. Anyway if you meant „recuperate“ as „becoming rich“, we hope that somebody is going to recuperate us!

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I think,  
and then I sink  
into the paper  
like I was ink.  
Eric B. & Raakim: Paid in full

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MY HOMEPAGE HAS MOVED!!! <http://www.thing.de/tilman>

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