

AGRICOLA de Cologne Papers & Articles

[NewMediaArtProjectNetwork]: | | cologne a survival strategy, an experiment, a social challenge in New Media

This year, I am participating as an artist in *FILE – Electronic Language Festival* for the fifth time in sequence which underlines a successful New Media art working during many years. The chance for being personally present in Sao Paulo and *FILE Symposion* became actually only possible, due to the organisation and realisation of the exhibition of my global networking project *[R][R][F]2005- →XP* as an interactive installation in Montevideo/Uruguay, during October/November 2005, and further a series of project related events as lectures and presentations in Argentina and Brazil. In total, they form the highlight of my New Media activities in Latin American countries since many years including not only Argentina and Brazil, but also Chile, Cuba, Venezuela, Colombia and Mexico.

All these activities stand in the context of *[NewMediaArtProjectNetwork]: | | cologne*, I founded as the experimental platform and initiative for art and New Media operating from Cologne/Germany, and without any exaggeration, one can state this platform belongs currently to the most active and successful independently working initiatives in art and New Media in a global context, and as its initiator I am proud to present *[NewMediaArtProjectNetwork]: | | cologne*, on *FILE Symposion* what I will call in sequence simply the “*NETWORK*”.

While taking a look closer it becomes obvious that it is not so easy to give a precise definition of what the *NETWORK* actually might represent.

As a hybrid, simultaneously an art project in its totality, a kind of virtual sculpture and an universe of its own, a curatorial and research project and a virtual and physical network on different levels and as such basically an initiative, it represents its totality an ongoing long term experiment with an open end, sometimes acting as a virtual organisation, but never as a physical institution or organisation in its actual corporate and legal sense.

So; the *NETWORK* has dynamic networking structures in many fields and different levels, and has permanent and temporary, as well as visible and invisible components. The basic structures are permanent and form the starting point for initiating processes, the temporary ones are the processes to be initiated in form of projects and initiatives, visible are the structures manifested in the visualized online presence and the final or intermediate results of initiated processes, manifested in completed or ongoing projects realized in virtual or physical space., invisible are the main components of networking, as this form of collaborating is taking place basically in the background via an very intensive and extensive communicating in a global context, strong social structures of an online community were developing visible and invisible.

As the founder and initiator of the *NETWORK*, I have most different functions. one could define myself as a ruler of an universe of its own. Indeed, besides being an artist who is realizing continuously changing concepts and contexts, I am the director of gigantic virtual organisation, a coordinator and mediator between the participating parties (artists, curators, institutions and organisations) and the audience, the audience represents an essential part of the entire networking idea, a moderator of networking environments, a multi-media developer and programmer, who is responsible for the entire visualization and its transformation in virtual and physical space, a curator who is curating contexts, contents, events, artists and curators, and last but not least, a catalyst who has motivating and encouraging effect on the networking parties. All this includes an extraordinary portion of responsibility, I am taking in favour of all included networking instances.

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At this point, it's time to explain some historically rooted conditions and motivations for a better understanding .

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 did not change only the world at that time, but also the course of my personal life profoundly. While travelling in Eastern Europe, the visits in Poland at places like the former concentration camps of Auschwitz, Majdanek had a long lasting shocking effect, which motivated me to initiate on occasion of the 50th return of World War II in 1995, an artistic project, which was meant to be my personal contribution for a reconciliation between German and Polish, but basically also German and Jewish people.. The title "*1000 years, 50 years and still so terribly young*" indicates that the project was confronting the Neo-Nazi manifestations - at that time quite frequently in all parts of Europe - and the historical context of the historical NAZI ideology. It formed the basis for an extensive and ongoing memorial project against the forgetting, entitled "*A Living Memorial*" which was presented between 1995 & 1998 in 43 installations at 43 places in Poland, Czech Republic & Germany.

After the late president of the Central Jewish Council of Germany , Ignatz Bubis, had taken the patronage in 1995, this project received much public attention resulting an ongoing series of threatening letters and phone calls of antisemitic contents. Sending letter bombs to persons of public relevance happened quite frequently at that time. Each day when I went to the mailbox, I was anxious to receive a suspiciously looking parcel, which might contain a bomb. The strong feeling, that one day something horrible would happen, came true, when on 11 September 1998, a terror attack by right wing activists destroyed in a mad act of vandalism the installation set up in a former synagogue in Southern Germany, which had disastrous effects on my physical and psychological health.

There is no time to go in details, but this traumatic circumstances caused a complete breakdown and I fell at the end of 1998 into a several months lasting coma, which ended my professional career at that time. After my vital function returned slowly, I became aware that I was not able to work physically as an artist anymore and would probably never be able again to work as an artist. In order to overcome the depression and train my intellectual skills, I started learning programming languages like Java and Perl, and surprisingly I felt a close affinity to their logical structures. When later in 1999, the war in Kosovo (former Yugoslavia) was escalating, I felt strongly affected and motivated to become active again as an artist, , but I did not know how. I wondered, whether the field of programming could be a way to try something new. But again I did not know how, because, I was aware programming an art environment from point zero would take really much time, therefore I started experimenting, and finally I found a software environment, which allowed the integration of different media; *FLASH*, which became even more relevant, as the Internet became really popular at that time, and Flash was basically made for creating online contents.

This new situation offered suddenly completely new perspectives, as I saw the chance for using the Internet as an platform for creating a new type of art working, and for my personal situation, it was essential that all was purely virtual.

On 1 January 2000, I did not only launch my net based memorial project " A Virtual Memorial, a thematic continuation of the previous physical memorial project "A Living Memorial", but I started also a completely new life and a life experiment which developed during the past 5 years in 2005 to what I abbreviate, the *NETWORK* .

The *NETWORK* is actually based on four motivations, a personal motivation focussing of the theme "memory", a future orientated motivation focussing on New Media in technological and thematic concern, a socially oriented motivation focussing on building

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social contexts as collaborating and networking , and the motivation for experimenting focussing on the non-existing and un-explored.

The question what is Internet specific in the context of art, is and was essential, It does not only mean just using certain technologies for creating specific contents, but basically using the aspect of communicating for creating social contexts in the online environment, in terms of art it means, for instance, developing collaborative and participatory projects by involving artists and users, and further curating contents, projects and artists, and this way motivating, encouraging and integrating the online audience actively. Creating ongoing platforms, projects or sites which are continuously changing and updated regularly or periodically, represents another Internet specific aspect, displayed in the *NETWORK*.

When I was saying, I started once from point zero, this included also, I had no contacts yet which could have been the basis for any social context. While looking to the start more than 5 years ago, it becomes clear how much energy and how many activities were needed to develop such a global wide network as it can be presented nowadays.

Simultaneously when I launched in 2000, *A Virtual Memorial* as the first active online project , I was also already working on a concept for giving this project long term perspectives in an extended Internet based context.

The vague idea of a virtual museum, by name "*le musée di-visioniste*" took shape, based on philosophical ideas I published some time ago as the *divisionistic* principle which can also be seen as the visualization of the network as a whole.

By exploring and experiencing the Internet as a platform or environment for art, my point of view became more clear and the idea of a virtual museum made only sense if it was aimed to the future, to the non-existing, to temporary and ongoing processes - the virtual museum as a tool for starting processes and a place for managing future.

The logo of the museum already visualizes the form of the general structure, rather a kind of cultural centre including different departments dedicated to different media, which got their actual relevance only when I started to realize projects in their framework.

Since 2000, each year another project environment came into foreground and determined the course of activities. Already at the end of 2000, I also forced the launch of *JavaMuseum - Forum for Internet Technology in Contemporary Art*, in order to start this new museum department as an active platform during the years 2001 and 2002. As its curator, I realized until 2004 18 showcases and international competitions of "netart" in a global context, resulting a unique collection of net based art.

The type of developing projects however, changed, when I was invited to create the online part of a physical festival , resulting "*Violence Online Festival*" (VOF), which started in August 2002, and became most active and dominant also during 2003 . VOF represents a more advanced form of a collaborative project than any other project before. Highly interactive, its was set up in form of a virtual media company including more than 350 artists from more than 40 countries reflecting the phenomenon of violence. By launching this project, I started a new type of activities, presenting VOF in external contexts like festivals and media exhibitions, and extending social structures and collaborations.

Already launched in 2001, another museum department *MediaCentre*, respectively *Cinematheque*, an environment dedicated exclusively to streaming media, became really active in 2003, and after an experimenting phase in 2003, *A Virtual Memorial* launched in 2004 a festival environment of its own, the RRF series, and in particular [R][R][F]2004-→XP which changed its name in 2005 to [R][R][F]2005→XP and made the idea of a global network as a subject for its activities. This project represents again a further step to more extended networking structures by including physical components more consequently. [R][R][F]2005→XP, which will change its name in 2006 to [R][R][F]2006→XP, represents in a certain way the essence what I am doing since 2000 in an ongoing process.

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Three basic aspects determine the course of this work, “memory and identity” the subject, “networking as artworking”, the operating aspect, and the presenting aspect - “the exchange between virtual and physical space” via interactive installations combining online and offline components.

The human brain used for the main project interface, a symbol for the most complex and perfect networking constructions where millions of synapses are connected to each other, stands for the basic networking idea behind. Reduced to 8 main synapses or “memory channels” which may contain different modules in form of subordinated thematic environments or individual artists works, the project is based on open calls in Internet and artists could submit works for participating, the aspect of curating became particular relevant concerning the development of these three “memory channels”.

The basic idea is to invite curators from all parts on the globe to prepare a contribution in concern of of the subject “memory and identity” and a specific technological context.

RRF Channel, containing versions 1 &2 of RRF festival, includes 15 curators contributing interactive net based art by individual artists and artists collectives, it is my task to curate curators and design a specific online space for the presentation of their contributions.

VideoChannel, the place where collective memory can manifest itself also in non-interactive works like video includes currently 18 curators and more than 120 artists and videos, a unique collection of videos around subject “memory and identity”, and “*SoundLab Channel*”, the place where collective memory can manifest itself in non-visual works like soundart includes 10 curators and works by more than 150 artists. Each of these channels form a dynamic networking construction by its own. But the other “memory channels”, like “*Violence Channel*” and its basic modul the final version of “*Violence Online Festival*”, further “*Identity Channel*”, “*Globalization Channel*”, “*Program Channel*” and “*Info Channel*” are not less relevant and include a lot of excellent works by collaborating artists.

Of course, it is not possible to mention all more than 600 participating artists, all more than 50 contributing curators, all collaborating individuals, institutions and organisations by name and their position and function, but you find their names projected on the screen., as well as the impressing list of venues and places all over the world where this project and the *NETWORK* were presented in virtual and physical space, indicating how successful the realisation of the project aims had been and still are.

The start of *RRF* in 2004, can be seen also as the official launch of the *NETWORK*. It was especially the new conception of *RRF* 2004 and the extension from the virtual level to physical space which enforced, encouraged and motivated me to give the *NETWORK* its position and relevance it really deserves. This was underlined also by forming a small staff consisting of physical and virtual assistants.

Moving to a server of its own at the change of 2004 to 2005, made it possible to start in 2005 a complete restructuring of the *NETWORK*, which is not yet completed, and the installation of the common weblog for all corporate sites, i.e “*NetEX – networked experience*” in April this year, caused a dramatic increase of visitors which doubled within a few months.

Working on the development of the *NETWORK* can be also seen as the process of returning to the physical world, which was completely excluded after the traumatic experiences of 1998, it was and is a survival strategy, it was and is my life experiment, and creating social contexts represents again and again a big challenge.

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At the end a short note, yet. Due to the short time available, my presentation could be not more than a brief introduction and an invitation to all of you to explore this unique art universe of the *NETWORK*, and visit all the wonderful projects and art works online on your personal computer, and become a part of the *NETWORK* this way

This simple URL gives you access to everything
www.nmartproject.net

Agricola de Cologne,

is a virtual instance, a multidisciplinary media artist, independent New Media curator and director and chief curator of the award winning [NewMediaArtProjectNetwork]:| |cologne - the experimental platform for art and New Media, operating from Cologne/Germany.

As a curator, he organised between 1989 and 1994 several cultural projects in Europe and curates since 2001 more than 50 New Media projects/events for

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among them 18 showcases, competitions and features for

JavaMuseum - Forum for New Media Technology in Contemporary Art.

He is co-curator and guest curator of several media exhibitions and festivals,

Maf'04 and Maf'05 - New Media Art Festival Bangkok/Thailand 2004&2005,

Biennale of New Media Art Merida/Mexico 2003, and many more.

His selections for VideoChannel are presented & screened on numerous festivals and media exhibitions.

As the director of digital short moving pictures, he is mostly also their producer, composer and editor.

As an artist, he had more than 100 solo exhibitions in cooperation with more than 70 museums throughout Europe, and is participating since 2000 in more than 150 media exhibitions and festivals around the globe (Biennale of Video & New Media Santiago/Chile 2005, Biennale de Montreal 2004, Biennale of Electronic Art Perth/Australia 2004 , Biennale of New Media Art Merida /Mexico 2003, FILE 2001-2005, Ars Electronica 2001-2005, Videoformes 2001-2002-2003-2005, Art on the Net 2001,2002, Mediaterra Athens 2002, ISEA 2002 Nagoya/Japan, SENESE Seoul/S.Korea 2004 & 2005, etc) with his online and offline multi-media works, his Internet based works received several prizes.

Details see on: http://www.agricola-de-cologne.de/bio/bio_agricola1.htm
<http://netex.nmartproject.net/index.php?blog=6>

The search engine Google has the most "Agricola de Cologne" postings
<http://www.google.com/search?q=agricola+de+cologne>

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-experimental platform for New Media art -is an independant, non-profit New Media initiative founded by Agricola de Cologne - operating from Cologne/Germany including following corporate sites-->

[NewMediaArtProjectNetwork] : || cologne

www.nmartproject.net-

NetEx – networked experience (Weblog)

<http://netex.nmartproject.net>

Central Site Administration

<http://service.nmartproject.net>

Project Features

<http://features.nmartproject.net>

A Virtual Memorial

www.a-virtual-memorial.org

Tsunami Memorial

<http://tsunami.a-virtual-memorial.org>

Memorial for the Victims of Terror

<http://terror.a-virtual-memorial.org>

Memorial for the victims of AIDS

<http://aids.a-virtual-memorial.org>

Family Portrait

<http://familyportrait.engad.org>

Women: Memory of Repression in Argentina

<http://argentina.engad.org>

Remembering the Future by Ariel Yanay-Shani

<http://i2imemory.engad.org>

le Musee di-visioniste

www.le-musee-divisioniste.org

Cinematheque at MediaCentre

<http://cinematheque.le-musee-divisioniste.org>

ConcertHall at MediaCentre

<http://concerthall.le-musee-divisioniste.org>

JavaMuseum

Forum for Internet Technologies in Contemporary Art

www.javamuseum.org

Festival site

www.newmediafest.org

Violence Online Festival

<http://violence.newmediafest.org>

[R][R][F] 2005 - global networking project

<http://rrf2005.newmediafest.org>

Agricola de Cologne site

www.agricola-de-cologne.de

Agricola de Cologne Moving Picture Collection

<http://movingpictures.agricola-de-cologne.de>

Agricola TV - documentary channel

<http://tv.agricola-de-cologne.de>