

APA – Agricola de Cologne Papers & Articles Interviews

"//net.art.era//: A conversation with Agricola de Cologne"

POLVO Magazine – Chicago – March 2004

Polvo:

Tell us the history behind the New Media Art Project Network and its projects with the JAVA Museum.

Agricola de Cologne:

To describe the history in a few words is complex.

The project was started in January 2000. For a better understanding of why I began focusing on new media art, and to learn more about the project called [NewMediaArtprojectNetwork]:| |cologne, visit this link--> <http://www.a-virtual-memorial.org/>

From the beginning, it was an experimentation with dynamic structures which would allow me to engage myself with all my art related talents. It was never my intention to use the Internet for commercial purposes, for instance, not even for creating art related Internet portals, as there exists a lot of them. Rather, I was interested in finding my specific way of Internet art working via communicating and networking, and by developing my own language for complex net based multi-media works, and all of this, of course, is an ongoing process.

As an experimental platform for net based art, [NewMediaArtprojectNetwork]:| |cologne represents a dynamic experimenting and networking structure, and also a kind of gigantic virtual sculpture. It holds the framework for a number of corporate networking sites or art projects in which I practice experimenting and networking in a variety of functions. Examples of these corporate components are: A Virtual Memorial (www.a-virtual-memorial.org), Violence Online Festival (www.newmediafest.org/violence/) le Musee di-visioniste (www.le-musee-divisionsite.org) and others. Finally the project functions as a framework for internal and external networking with physical institutions, organizations, professionals and artists. JavaMuseum -Forum for Internet Technologies in Contemporary Art (www.javamuseum.org) belongs to this experimental enterprise as a corporate part. It functions simultaneously as an art work, as well as, a kind of simulation of a physical instance (museum). In the beginning stages, it was not clear what direction the work on JavaMuseum would develop, because at that point, it was unclear what the dimensions of net based art were. So, this was then the basis for developing long and short term structures, such as organizing an annual competition, which honored outstanding net based artists. Later in 2002, JavaMuseum started a series of showcases featuring net based art and artists from different cultural regions on the globe in order to get a kind of overview over what net based art might represent. JavaMuseum has published netart from Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Ireland, and the UK. It features art from Northern European countries. Eastern European countries, the USA, and Asia are soon to follow later in 2004 and 2005. Through these various enterprises it became evident that net based art is redefining contemporary mainstream art, and not simply through "interactivity".

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Polvo:

With your work history of having organized many exhibits in the physical realm, how has your curatorial practice transformed or been modified within cyber space, in particular, the results of your NetArt exhibition series?

Agricola de Cologne:

A curated exhibition at a physical location is an environment where art works are embedded in. Space is never neutral. It always has an influence on the sensual perception of an art work. There are different curatorial positions, to reduce or enforce the influence of physical space on the art work. For instance, virtual space of a website displayed on a computer screen, in front of an online user, has such small dimensions that it is difficult to create a spatial situation in relationship to the viewer. Not even a 3-D simulation would bring the desired effect. In the curatorial process of web art, often the virtual space is filled with links, listings and information about the artist and his work. This is not necessarily the solution, because the virtual space loses much relevance as a curatorial component. When I am curating exhibitions of net based art, my position is completely different, as I create specific exhibition space which can be used as a curatorial component. This space defines very clearly that the visitor is entering an art space based on my personal subjective curatorial view on art and artists, and that I take a special responsibility for both. The online exhibition as a curatorial art work has communication as a basic element and represents a real Internet specific way of curating. Such a curator, must have more skills than simply being able to select a group of art works, but also be able to create curatorial space in order to communicate with the visitor/user, and simultaneously be a real mediator between the art and viewer.

Polvo:

Why is it important to promote net based artists with online exhibitions or projects?

Agricola de Cologne:

In the first place, net based art needs promotion because its location, the Internet, is not yet widely accepted as a serious environment for contemporary art. The more opportunities for online shows, collective, participatory projects, and the promotion of these artists, the more likely they will gain acceptance from a larger audience, and the general art scene. It is easy for a single art work to be lost in the gigantic virtual space which is continuously expanding. Online exhibitions that function in a community with other works and artists, collaboratively, and utilize promotion can be successful. These exhibitions can also enforce communication, the basic element of the Internet.

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Polvo:

Within the New media genre, what are the needs of support for net based artists? Funding sources, education, etc...?

Agricola de Cologne:

Actually I am not the right person to talk about the needs for funding art. I do not know the answer in relation to net art. I am in an advanced age and have my own philosophy of working, in which funding or support do not play an essential role. I am independent from the structures which funding or support represent, as one has to follow certain rules. In this way, I only create projects which can be realized without any funding. This enforces creativity and allows us to think in varied directions. When I receive funding I see it as a welcome addition, but not as a condition to start a project or work. In principle, the structures of funding, the art market, but also education are more conservative, and these structures determine the rules.

Polvo:

What are your thoughts about the development of net based art work or New Media genre in other countries outside of Western Europe and United States?

Agricola de Cologne:

Although I think I have good overview, I am far from estimating the situation in all its dimensions, so, it is difficult to make a general statement. Net based art is principally dependent on technology for its general acceptance. In the rich Western countries, this acceptance, is not really advanced yet. There are many stereotypes and often a principle misunderstanding exists --> net based art would be identical with some Internet related design aspects, on one hand, but on the other hand that any Internet related activity has mainly commercial and economical components. The Internet is not recognized as an art environment. The Internet is based on communicating, and an essential aspect of net based art is communication. In Eastern Europe, for instance, people are not accustomed to communicate, as it was forbidden for decades during the Communist dictatorships. Another major problem represents language, as English represents the basic language of programming and the Internet related technologies. So, the conditions for practicing net based art outside of the Western or English (language) dominated countries, are really difficult.

What can be observed, however, is that many net based artists are active in Latin American countries. The idea of being part of one world in the global context, are stronger developed than in other parts of the world. Also, the fact that many emigrants from Europe are living there, probably plays a role.

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Polvo:

With your own artistic practice, do you see these curatorial projects as a part of it? What are you currently working on or developing at the moment?

Agricola de Cologne:

Yes, from what I described in my previous answers, it becomes evident that my curatorial projects are definitely a specific part of my art working -->"networking".

Currently I am working on another very experimental project - which practices "networking as art working" - the global networking project [R][R][F] 2004 [Remembering-Repressing-Forgetting] - www.newmediafest.org/rrf2004, which, beginning in March 2004, will be at the National Museum of Contemporary Art Bucuresti / Romania (www.mnac.ro), the Bergen Center for Electronic Arts Bergen/Norway (www.bek.no), the NewMedia Art Festival Bangkok/Thailand (<http://thailand.culturebase.org>), and will be developing and operating until the end of 2004. The exchange between virtual and physical space becomes more relevant in my current and future art related working.

Polvo:

On behalf of Polvo, thank you again for participating with this interview!

Agricola de Cologne:

Thank you for the opportunity to explain some aspects of my work in detail.

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Agricola de Cologne,

is a virtual instance, a multidisciplinary media artist and creator and founder of NewMediaArtProjectNetwork. As an artist, he has had more than 100 solo exhibitions in cooperation with more than 70 museums throughout Europe. As a curator he has organized several cultural projects in Europe between 1989 and 1994.

Since 2001, he has founded and run net based New Media projects of NewMediaArtProjectNetwork. He is participating in a variety of media exhibitions and festivals around the globe with his online and offline multi-media works. His net based works have received several prizes. [NewMediaArtProjectNetwork] : | | cologne includes following corporate

sites:

A Virtual Memorial

www.a-virtual-memorial.org

le Musee di-visioniste

www.le-musee-divisioniste.org

MediaCentre

www.le-musee-divisioniste.org/mediacentre

JavaMuseum

www.javamuseum.org

Engaged Art Directory

www.engad.org

Nmartproject.net

www.nmartproject.net

Agricola de Cologne Moving Picture Collection

www.nmartproject.net/agricola/mpc

Festival site

www.newmediafest.org

Violence Online Festival

www.newmediafest.org/violence

[R][R][F] Festival

www.newmediafest.org/rff/

Agricola de Cologne site

www.agricola-de-cologne.de