Methods for studying the (after)lives of Internet art

Over the next two months CRUMB will explore approaches for studying the single online artwork. How can we approach these cultural forms as dynamic entities of an on-going present?

The relatively 'young' online medium of net art has still been understudied within art history. Logically, there are still fundamental methodological questions related to doing Internet art history that need to be examined. This CRUMB discussion aims to share and discuss possible ways of approaching online artworks. Having the benefit of some historical distance, we will focus on pioneering artworks (1994-2000), also taking into account how they have been curated (exhibited and preserved, or not).

There are models for analysing new media artworks, but they're only a few specifically for Internet art. Most Internet art histories are part of the larger new media or digital art histories [GRAU 2006, SHANKEN 2010, SIMANOWSKI 2011, PAUL 2016], although there are also first attempts to analyse and interpret online art as an object of historical study on its own [STALLABRASS 2003, GREEN 2004, BAUMGARTEL 2005, DANIELS 2010, BOSMA 2011]. Coincidently this CRUMB discussion starts around the same time that Rhizome will premiere its online exhibition 'Net Art Anthology', which aims to retell (and preserve) this chapter within art history, which could give valuable new insights.

Focussing on the single online artwork and approaching it as a dynamic entity of an on-going present demands finding new methods. In our perception of the past we always take into account our contemporary perspectives, interpretations and understandings [HUYSSEN 1995, ASSMANN 2011]. History leaves empirical traces that must be explained in socially constructed collective memories [MEAD 1929]. However, in case of Internet artworks, the present does not only influence the reception, but also the artwork itself. The open system of these works moves the normally passive beholders into active users. As Internet artworks are dependent on a network and input of the users, they continuously adapt to present situations.

For a profound understanding of these artworks, we need to analyze their existence in various moments in time (exhibition and preservation) and find a way to describe how they evolve. From this perspective we start the discussion with the following question:

Despite a work of net art's many manifestations, is it possible to formulate a list of key elements, which need to be studied in detail, to get a better understanding of (the lives and afterlives of) pioneering online artworks?
For example code, data, actors, network or behaviours (computable, connected, interactive), etc.

Moderated by Karin de Wild | PhD researcher
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Participants-
Michael Connor - Artistic Director of Rhizome at the New Museum (New York). Michael Connor curated exhibitions worldwide, publishes and lectures widely on topics relating to art and technology. www.rhizome.org

Prof. Dr. Dieter Daniels - Professor of Art History and Media Theory at the Academy of Visual Arts (HGB, Leipzig). Dieter Daniels is the former Director of the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute Media.Art.Research (Linz). He published extensively on 20th century art and media art.

Dr. Annet Dekker - Assistant Professor at the University of Amsterdam, Media Studies: Archival Science, next to being a freelance curator. Annet Dekker publishes widely on issues of digital art and

preservation.
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Steve Dietz is a serial platform creator. He is the Founder and Artistic Director of Northern Lights.mn, and the former Curator of New Media at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis (Minnesota).
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Shu Lea Cheang - Artist, filmmaker and networker. Shu Lea Cheang constructs networked installations and multi-player performances. Her work 'Brandon' was launched in 1998 at the Guggenheim Museum as the first web art commission.
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John G. Hanhardt - Consulting Senior Curator for Media Arts, Memorial Art Gallery, University of Rochester, and former curator at the Smithsonian, Guggenheim and Whitney Museums (New York).

Mark Hellar - Technology consultant for cultural institutions and owner of Hellar Studios LLC. Mark Hellar is currently working on new media conservation initiatives at SFMoMA and as a software developer for artist Lynn Hershman Leeson.
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Dr. Jon Ippolito - A footsoldier in the battle between network and hierarchic culture, Jon Ippolito is an artist, curator, and co-founder of Still Water at the University of Maine.
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Dr. Matthias Kampmann - Art historian, art critic and former curator of AOYS (online exhibition platform of ZKM, Karlsruhe). Matthias Kampmann teaches art history and art criticism at KMT (KulturMediaTechnologie, Karlsruhe). His research focuses upon net art.
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Dr. Christiane Paul - Associate Professor in the School of Media Studies at The New School and Adjunct Curator of New Media Arts at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City.

Richard Rinehart - Director of the Samek Art Museum at Bucknell University and co-author of the book "Re-Collection: Art, New Media, & Social Memory."
re-collection.net

Prof. Dr. Roberto Simanowski - Professor for Digital Media Studies and Digital Humanities at City University of Hong Kong. Author and editor of several books, including 'Data Love' (2016) and 'Digital Art and Meaning' (2011).

Marleen Stikker - Director of Waag Society (Amsterdam) and founder of 'De Digitale Stad' (The Digital City, 1994), the first virtual community introducing free public access to the Internet in The Netherlands.
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Liza Swaving - Curator public programmes at Research Center for Material Culture at the National Museum of World Cultures (Leiden). Co-organizer of the conference 'Digital Horizons, Virtual Selves: Rethinking Cultural Heritage in the Museum' (2015).