

circulating contexts



**CURATING**  
**MEDIA / NET / ART**

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-- "Extended Curatorial Practices on the Internet"

-- "TAGallery--Meta/Collections of Meta/Data"

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introduction



**CURATING  
MEDIA / NET / ART**

# EXTENDED CURATORIAL PRACTICES ON THE INTERNET

By CONT3XT.NET

(Sabine Hochrieser, Michael Kargl, Franz Thalmair)

Curating Internet-based Art in a media of its own developed into a multifaceted communication process on content among users of all backgrounds and provenances.

Net curators are deemed "cultural context providers" (1) "meta artists" (2), "power users" (3), "filter feeders" (4) or simply "proactive consumers" (5). "Curating (on) the Web" (6), as Steve Dietz, founder of the New Media Initiative at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, termed it in 1998, not only creates a public space for Net Art protagonists, but also enables them to participate in creating their own public space, which often takes on the form of discursive models. Handling technological developments and knowledge about existing channels of communication are integral parts of Internet curating, as are providing resources, initiating collaborations and remaining in contact with international networks.

Expanding the curators' field of action--allowing them to incorporate more than the supervision, contextualisation and exhibition of artworks in museums, galleries or off spaces--is closely linked to the media-specific characteristics of art produced on the Internet. Internet Art does not necessarily have to be presented in a customary exhibition space, because as long as there is a computer with Internet access, it can be accessed anywhere any time. In many cases, Net Art emerges through the participation of an audience with diverse approaches to the Internet, which comments on, transforms and disseminates artworks in many different ways. In addition, the somewhat rather communicative mechanisms on which this art is based are simultaneously its subject, thus allowing it to function as a reciprocal "feedback loop" (7) between the original author and the user. In the 20th century, the numerous postulations on the end of authorship and the end of concept of the "work of art" as a definable entity with a definable set of limits (Werkbegriff) gave way to a discourse--which, in turn, is constituted through its own development and reception processes--as they also accompany the advancement and visualisation of these very processes. In this vein, curators are those "who set up contexts for artists who provide contexts" (2).

In contrast to the late 1990s when Internet-based Art was celebrated as avant-garde spectacles, today Technology-based Art views for the attention of a broader public interested in art. Higher demands are made on curators to include these art forms in conventional exhibitions, which simultaneously poses several problems: "curating immateriality" (8), a term postulated a few years ago, is faced with immense technological challenges (9) and at present theoretical groundwork is being laid for providing ways of addressing Technology-based Art that extends beyond viewing it as "Techno Art" and the tacit implication that "the medium is the message" (10).

The goal of the project "circulating contexts--CURATING MEDIA/NET/ART" was to focus on the problems of curatorial work being located at the interface between representational space and presentational forms of traditional art formats, in the Computer Art ghettos as well as in the realm of Electronic Art, Net and Media Art. This project is based on an interdisciplinary approach, is applying and using experimental methods, and is comprised of three projects that are compiled for presentation in this publication. The projects are the information platform [PUBLIC] CURATING (<http://publiccurating.blogspot.com>) [image, p. 15], the exhibition "space" TAGallery (<http://del.icio.us/TAGallery>) [image, p. 16] and the mailing list [CC] (<http://lists.subnet.at/mailman/listinfo/cc>) [image, p. 17], which all address the point of juncture between virtual solutions and real world problems. A call for papers resulted in supplementary essays by theorists reflecting on the present state of the debate on curating Internet Art, particularly since the emergence of the so-called Web 2.0. These essays are presented in this publication, too.

[PUBLIC] CURATING is an ongoing research project collecting methods, resources, and theories concerning the changing conditions of curatorial practices on the Web. The weblog, set up in November 2006, is a database of international curating projects, theoretical approaches, and a resource for curatorial platforms, art-databases and contemporary ways of the so-called New Media curating. The second project is TAGallery, an experimental "online-exhibition-room" based upon social Internet technologies and folksonomy. It is an alternative space for collaborative curating and cooperation, based upon linking and tagging. Thought as the basic method to create a freely accessible and modular network of personal associations on the World Wide Web, TAGallery extends the idea of a tagged exhibition and transfers the main tasks of non-commercial exhibition-spaces

to the discourse of an electronic data space. Last but not least, the third part of "circulating contexts--CURATING MEDIA/NET/ART" is a slightly moderated discussion list named [CC] and temporarily run from 1 June to 31 August 2007. During this period, five common topics concerning the curation of New Media and Internet Art were the starting point for discussions lead by the participants. Excerpts of the contributions to the mailing list are published in the catalogue as well.

The basis for each of the project parts was the development of several questions that simultaneously functioned as a point of departure for the mailing list [CC].

### Visualising Workflows and (Filtering) Processes

Curating on the Internet is a working process that wants to be visualised in the same way as the processes frequently hidden behind Internet-based Art. The curator, "who does not want to get 'inside' or 'outside' the system, but stays at her place to deepen her knowledge" (11), acts not only as an intermediary in the presentation of art but also according to his/her own filtering processes, choices and decisions. The transparency of his/her work is highly relevant for the transparency of the presented artworks, too, and aims to get a broad public involved in a collective discourse.

"With the steady incorporation of the Web into the mainstream arts scene, the launching of exhibitions and the building of archives has become an increasingly creative and authorial practice. However, the act of curating used to be a clandestine affair. Those holding the position would have once worked quietly within the institutional archives, orchestrating their exhibitions anonymously from 'behind the curtain', but now in the past ten to fifteen years the process of curating and the person who practices it have emerged center stage in public discourse" (12).

Metaphorically speaking, the constant and ongoing publication of a "curator's notebook" contributes to the visualisation of a workflow that does not only show the final results of this process in form of an exhibition. It unfolds the existence of a network of non-linear thoughts, relational research and deductive/inductive (filtering) processes.

- Which useful methods of visualisation of a "curator's notebook" exist?
- Is the curator in "danger of losing reputation" by publishing his/her working methods?
- Which benefits does the exhibition viewer get by taking a look at (or even contributing to) the curatorial process?
- Could an exhibition be completely replaced by the display of the curating processes?

### Virtual/Real Representations in Real/Virtual Spaces

It is easier to get an entire museum collection on the Internet than to get a single exhibition of Internet Art in a museum space. Provided that there is a computer with Internet access, Net Art can be viewed at any time and any location and therefore can be left in its own medium of production. But even if Internet-based Art does not require to be exhibited in the traditional context of museums, galleries or off-spaces, curators have to find ways to present this kind of virtuality in real spaces and transform them into a "living information space that is open to interferences" (13). The chance to be shown in museum contexts raises the importance of a whole genre.

In return, the exhibiting of traditional art collections "is not only accommodated by the spatial realisation of architectural spaces any longer. Increasingly influential is the way that the design of an extended typology of spaces, including the Internet, structure creative practices" (14) and rises the chance to get a broader audience and a more effective discourse, abstaining from conventional forms of display.

"Like the best exhibition publications, extending an exhibition online means more than simply re-presenting it but also reformatting it for the best possible experience in the medium--in front of a computer screen, transmitted via the Internet" (15), and the other way around.

- What are the possibilities to show Internet Art in a conventional art space that go beyond simply putting a computer in the hall?
- How can a museum be reformatted?
- How far can the curator go and transform the display of the artefact without violating its autonomy?
- In how far can an active discourse influence the representation of Internet-based Art in exhibition spaces?

## Facing Participation/The Lack of Collaboration

Not everyone is always participating in everything. Curators "whose practice includes facilitating events, screenplayings, temporary discursive situations, writing/publishing, symposia, conferences, talks, research, the creation of open archives, and mailing lists" (16), need to know about how to activate and motivate a potential audience for collaboration. However, the needs of the audience are as diverse as "Net Art's audience is a social medley: geographically dispersed, varying in background, these art enthusiasts are able to involve their involvement constantly, drawing from roles such as artist, critic, collaborator or 'lurker' (one who just watches or reads, without participating)" (17) .

- What are the premises for being able to motivate the public to participate in the curatorial process?
- Does the potential participant need to have a benefit (e.g. co-authorship) to be encouraged to participate?
- Are there any emergency plans if nobody is participating?

## Web 2.0--Curatorial Facilities or Technical Barriers

The hype about the so-called Web 2.0 and its facilities is still unbroken. In the context of representing and contextualising art on the Internet, Joseph Beuys' message "Everyone is an artist" can be transferred to the person of a curator, too: "When we begin to share our experiences of exhibited artefacts with other people on the Internet, we are producing for public use. For instance, we may write about an exhibition on our weblog; post photos about 'The Last Supper' on Flickr; or add to a Wikipedia article" (5).

Total democracy and freedom in usability--often preached with the token "2.0"--are not appropriate for everyone. It "counters the technological fetishism and media exclusivity that surrounds too much Computer-based Art and informs many curatorial practices in the field; and it points beyond a common but nonetheless misguided and shallow linkage of techno-formalism and techno-avant-gardism (this is the new art and it looks like nothing before it because it uses New Media)" (18).

To prevent cooperation and interaction-enhancing tools from being simple technological tools, a social network that interacts with them

"needs to be able to connect. It needs to allow for co-ownership of others in its activities. An insistence in exclusive ownership in an inter-communal collaboration kills the motivation of co-participants. It destroys a sense of cooperation and trust" (16).

- Where are the boundaries of Web 2.0 in curatorial activities?
- Should every new tool be immediately adapted for curatorial activities?
- What are the premises for a reflective use of Web 2.0 in the curatorial processes?

### **Involvement of (Art) Institutions/The Rise of Significance**

The concept of what is traditionally understood as curating is still bound to the institution of the museum and other equivalent exhibition spaces--and so is not only the image of curating but also its mode: "In its evolution since the 17th Century, [curating] centers itself around the 'expert' opinion of the curator as educated connoisseur and archivist of various works. In so doing, the curator determines the works' cultural value, as well as, in present days, their mass entertainment value, which is equally important in the era of ubiquitous free market democracy (at least in most of the Western world)" (19). Contrary to the work of a curator on the Internet, it is frequently ignored that "the global network itself became the educational environment for those without direct access to institutions. The involvement in free and open projects, from where the power user not only builds up reputation, but also gains crucial skills, can easily equal the value of an academic degree" (11).

Problematic within the separation between real and Virtual Art (collecting, curating, etc.) is that neither museums and their protagonists nor the visitors of the institutions recognise the value of Internet-based Art, its working processes and the possibilities of applying it within the museum itself.

In the context of New Media Art, the metaphor of the Internet as a huge archive can be referred to the tasks of museums and other traditional art collections: "The discursivity of multimedia, and how it can be associated with dialectical aesthetics, is characterised by the ways in which montage-like spatial juxtaposition--achieved through hyperlink structures and searchability--is drawn upon for narrative effect. The functionality of links and databases extends upon already

existing tabular, classificatory forms, such as the collection archive, catalogue, and methods of spatial arrangement in galleries--all technologies intimately associated with the historical evolution of the museum. Adopting a museological aesthetics that understands, and is more effectively calibrated to digital communication technologies will see the museum emphasised as a machine for creating juxtaposition, a generator of conditions for dialogical encounters with the unforeseen (enabling, even privileging, the experience of surprise, the unexpected and perhaps the random)" (14). The ongoing neglect of the those similarities leads to the fact that "a broader art audience may still place more trust in the selection, and therefore validation, undertaken by a prestigious museum, but in the online environment, the only signifier of validation may be the brand recognition carried by the museum's name" (13).

-- Is it really necessary to have an institution in the background in order to gain a better reputation as a curator?

-- How can institutions be convinced about the advantages of working with New Media Art and addressing a public that goes beyond the common art scene?

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## Authors' Biographies

CONT3XT.NET is a Vienna-based organisation founded in 2006 as a collaborative platform for the discussion and presentation of issues related to Media Art. Against the background of an interdisciplinary theoretical approach to all forms of communications technologies, its mission is the critical investigation and documentation of relevant tendencies in contemporary art production. CONT3XT.NET works both online and offline and regularly offers news and announcements as well as initiatives developed by its members in collaboration with artists, theorists, curators, writers and other Media Art affiliated people. The organisation was founded by Sabine Hochrieser, Michael Kargl (a.k.a. Carlos Katastrofsky) and Franz Thalmair.

Sabine Hochrieser was born in Steyr (Austria) in 1975. She studied "Art History" and "English Philology" at the University of Salzburg with special focus on "Knowledge Management within Cultural Activities". Amongst others, she works as an exhibition organiser, translator and project coordinator in Vienna.

Michael Kargl (a.k.a. Carlos Katastrofsky) was born in Hall (Austria) in 1975. He studied "Sculpture" at the University Mozarteum Salzburg with special focus on "Virtual Architecture and Cyberspace". He is a professional Media artist and, amongst others, he works as an art mediator and lecturer in Vienna.

Franz Thalmair was born in Wels (Austria) in 1976. He studied "Romance Philology" and "Linguistics" at the University of Salzburg with special focus on "Sociolinguistics and Semiotics". Amongst others, he works as a freelance writer within the cultural field and as a communications manager for museums in Vienna.

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All TAGallery items (172)

Twitter Theory Series \_ Mary-Anne Breeze \_ applied theory \_ 2007 view this  
 \_what\_ : Streaming of live Theory utilizing Twitter software mechanics  
 in TWITTER, THEORY, 2007, a story-view, Group Theory Series 2007 EXHIBITION, view 2 posts  
 tags: theory, ... 2 posts ago

MUTUAL TAGallery | networked\_performance view this  
 007\_Loops\_Rings\_Circles+Infinity  
 in Mutual, Category USERS, tag theory, ... on sep 23

EPHEMERALS \_ Carlos Katsarosky \_ redundant act of communication \_ 2007 view this  
 The problem within the discussions about communication is the "unfulfilling" (re)using of the communication - process) with technical appliances which multiply "communication" in a way that it becomes redundant and breaks itself.  
 in EPHEMERALS, Carlos Katsarosky 2007 ephemeral communication redundancy, view 2 posts  
 EXHIBITION, tag art, ... saved by 1 other user(s) ... on sep 23

APPROPRIATION&IMMATERIALITY \_ Vanessa Onibori \_ tagging/exhibition \_ 2007 view this  
 The exploitation of online customer practice - grant the possibility of custom, modification and amplification via tags, statements and short-cuts of works in a given collection - avoids appropriation by its very nature.  
 in APPROPRIATION&IMMATERIALITY, Vanessa Onibori 2007 EXHIBITION, view art gallery tagging  
 007004-04-0000-0000-0000, saved by 2 other user(s) ... on sep 23

EXHIBITION\_008 | STATEMENT view this  
 The works that make up this collection depart from the extensive catalogue developed by Dispatx Art Collective since 2004 and have a specific focus on appropriation and immateriality.  
 in STATEMENT, view art, ... on sep 23

EXHIBITION\_008 | TAGGER: Vanessa Onibori - Dispatx Art Collective view this  
 Appropriation & Immateriality / 2007 works by: Sandra Gamarra, Antoni Abad, El Hombre que Come Diccionarios, Santiago Onto, The Yes Man, Robert Holgin, Saeve Pindopp  
 in EXHIBITION, view art, ... on sep 23

DISPATX ART COLLECTIVE \_ Oliver Luker + Vanessa Onibori + David Staff \_ curatorial platform \_ 2004-Present view this  
 Dispatx Art Collective is a curatorial platform for the development and presentation of contemporary art and literature. Make is a utopian...  
 in DISPATX ART, COLLECTIVE, Oliver Luker, Vanessa Onibori, David Staff, tagging 2004-Present, collective, curatorial, development, art, view gallery, view art, TAGGER, view art, ... 2 posts ago

LOOPS, RINGS, CIRCLE AND INFINITY \_ Michelle Kasprzak \_ tagging/exhibition \_ 2007 view this  
 Connectivity on the Web is often thought of as linear: fast-but - slower to locate. This perception might be rational and convenient, but the way that we use the web is often more circular: looping, spin, find or seemingly without end.  
 in LOOPS, RINGS, CIRCLE, AND INFINITY, Michelle Kasprzak 2007 EXHIBITION, view art gallery, view art, view art, view art, view art, ... saved by 2 other user(s) ... on sep 23

LIMAC. MUSEO DE ARTE CONTEMPORÁNEO DE LIMA \_ Sandra Gamarra \_ museum \_ unknown date view this  
 Through its collection of more than 2.000 works, periodically exhibited, and its temporary exhibitions, LIMAC is a space conceived for visitors, national and foreign, to get a general but close vision of the artists projects that one way or another...  
 in LIMAC, MUSEO, DE, ARTE, CONTEMPORANEO, DE, LIMA, Sandra Gamarra, museum, unknown date, ... saved by 2 other user(s) ... on sep 23

Z \_ Antoni Abad \_ freeware by \_ unknown date view this  
 Z is a freeware by with various behavioral patterns. Each file is generally unique and only files when the .js & HTML is on-line. Concealed as a virtual swarm, the files are intended to multiply through the internet via file exchange between users.  
 in Antoni, Abad, by, unknown date, ... saved by 2 other user(s) ... on sep 23

EL HOMBRE QUE COME DICIONARIOS \_ El Hombre que Come Diccionarios \_ blog \_ unknown date view this  
 Beyond wikipedia and beyond twitter: wide-ranging collections of other informational links provide a backdrop for today's web.  
 in EL, HOMBRE, QUE, COME, DICIONARIOS, El, Hombre, que, Come, Diccionarios, blog, unknown date, ... 2 posts ago

000\_ABOUT  
 1 About\_TAGallery  
 2 Breeze\_TAGallery  
 3 Import\_TAGallery  
 17 Mutual\_TAGallery

001\_dead.art | missing | LINKsSources  
 10 EXHIBITION\_dead.art  
 1 STATEMENT\_dead.art  
 4 USERS\_dead.art

002\_de-re-Icon-structured | LANG | UtagE  
 10 EXHIBITION\_de-re-Icon  
 1 STATEMENT\_de-re-Icon  
 2 USERS\_de-re-Icon

003\_link.of.thought | thought.of.link...  
 10 EXHIBITION\_link.of.thought  
 2 STATEMENTS\_link.of.thought  
 2 TAGGERS\_link.of.thought  
 5 USERS\_link.of.thought

004\_Electronic\_Literature\_Sampler  
 10 EXHIBITION\_004  
 2 STATEMENTS\_004  
 2 TAGGER\_004  
 3 USERS\_004

005\_Collection\_of\_collections.  
 10 EXHIBITION\_collect  
 1 STATEMENT\_collect  
 2 TAGGER\_collect  
 2 USERS\_collect

006\_i\_tag\_you\_tag\_me\_retagged  
 10 EXHIBITION\_tag\_you  
 2 STATEMENTS\_tag\_you  
 2 TAGGER\_tag\_you  
 1 USERS\_tag\_you  
 1 VIDEO\_ID\_tag\_you

007\_Loops\_Rings\_Circles+Infinity  
 7 EXHIBITION\_loop\_infinity  
 1 STATEMENT\_loop\_infinity  
 2 TAGGER\_loop\_infinity  
 1 USERS\_loop\_infinity

008\_Appropriation&Immateriality  
 7 EXHIBITION\_appropriation  
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 2 TAGGER\_appropriation

ARTISTS/COLLECTIVES  
 1 0100111101111111.ORG  
 1 381.org  
 1 \_\_\_\_\_beta  
 1 \_\_\_\_\_RWS  
 1 Alan\_Eggleston  
 1 Alberto\_Banilla  
 1 Aleksandrs\_Demovic  
 1 Aleksandrs\_Lubovics  
 1 Akshar\_Gearty  
 1 Antoni\_Abad  
 1 Aurora\_Harvey  
 1 Barbara\_Campbell  
 1 Ben\_Rosen  
 1 Brian\_Kim\_Shelton  
 1 Brian\_Watson  
 1 C\_J\_Van  
 2 Carlos\_Katsarosky  
 2 Chana\_France  
 2 Christa\_Schmitt  
 1 Christoph\_Pfeiffer  
 1 Fina\_Thomson

CONT3XT.NET, "TAGallery" (2007)  
<http://del.icio.us/TAGallery>

## CC – circulating contexts–curating media/art

<b>About CC</b>	<b>English (USA)</b>
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[CC] "circulating contexts–curating media/art" is a slightly moderated mailing list as part of a series of experimental long-term research projects funded by the Vienna-based organization **CONTEXT.NET**. From June 1st to August 31st, 2007 five constant topics will be the starting point for discussions around current tendencies in the creation of (New) Media and Internet Art. Excerpts of the contributions to the mailinglist will be published in a catalogue, presented in October 2007.

- 1 visualizing work flows and offering-processes
- 2 virtualized representations in multi/virtual spaces
- 3 facing participation / the lack of collaboration
- 4 web 2.0–environmental facilities or technical barriers
- 5 involvement of art institutions / use of significance

To see the collection of prior postings to the list, visit the [CC Archives](#).

**Using CC**

To post a message to all the list members, send email to [cc@lists.subnet.at](mailto:cc@lists.subnet.at).

You can subscribe to the list, or change your existing subscription, in the sections below.

**Subscribing to CC**

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You may enter a privacy password below. This password will identify the should prevent others from viewing your subscription. **Do not use a reliable password as it will occasionally be emailed back to you in plaintext.**

If you choose not to enter a password, one will be automatically generated for you, and it will be sent to you via your confirmed email subscription. You can always request a new batch of your password when you add your personal options. Once a month, one password will be emailed to you as a reminder.

Put a password:

Remove password to confirm:

Which language do you prefer to display your messages?

Would you like to receive list mail batched in a daily digest?  No  Yes

**CC Subscribers**

(The subscribers list is only available to the list members.)

Enter your address and password to visit the subscribers list:

Address:  Password:

To unsubscribe from CC, get a password reminder, or change your subscription options enter your subscription email address:

If you leave the field blank, you will be prompted for your email address.

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CC: for use by [python-devel@python.org](mailto:python-devel@python.org)  
CC: administrative, technical, programmatic work/discussion  
Discussion of web lists and related mailing lists

Delivered by Mailman version 2.1.3 Python Powered GNU's Not Unix