

NET_CONDITION_ING

Excerpts from a video taped informal discussion I had with Peter Weibel in ZKM in Karlsruhe, Germany on December 8,1999 in conjunction with the NET_CONDITION exhibition in which I participated with my project SmellBytes.

Jenny Marketou : To what extent has the internet effected the structuring distant between signified and signifier?

Peter Weibel : Reversible interaction effects the space of signifier and can move back and forth between the real and the virtual worlds.Events in the space of signifier can have effects in the space of the signified.The incredible can happen that events in the virtual world have an effect in the rest of the world.The observer touches the image of a lamp on the screen of his mobile phone and the real lamp starts to shine via internet.

JM: Peter,do you agree then that we are experiencing a shift from both a representational and material economy of presence and absence to one of pattern and randomness?

PW: What the NET is establishing has in mathematics a counterpart the science of random graphs.

Random graphs connects arbitrarily a set of points with multiple lines.This example delivers a picture how the field of communication is falling apart into random connections. The NET amplifies errors and noise. Even the observer himself is producing noise. So we are reaching a communication model governed not only by information but also from noise.Therefore we have to replace the classical mimetic model of communication by quantum physics model which can reduce and compute the noise.We are opening the model of communication to the concept of randomness and incompleteness. But I do not see this as a loss. On the contrary, I see it as opening up choices.

JM: Peter once you told me that only "tourists" are looking for the original, do you suggest then that in our culture copying is pre history and in that case "sublime nature" becomes "sublime" information?

PW: The mimetic function of the image, strangely enough, is no longer important in the the art..

Only for scientific purposes we need more than ever a precise mimetic function of the image.

When you have a tumor in your brain you need a maximum of visual representation of your brain in the computer to effect with the laserbeam to erase of this tumor. If the picture is not correct you die, if the picture is correct the tumor dies. Since the triumph of abstraction in the art, the true rival of mimetic images have become medical and military images. The artists today is rivaled by military image technology if he wants to stay in the field of representation he will lose the battle, since the target technology of weapons combining media and missiles, intelligent camera systems and bombs is tracking the representation of a house to its final explosion. Therefore mimesis in art has moved from the ruins of representation to open practices of processing and communication. This is another reason why artists today are turning to science to find new ally in exploring the world of data codes, data processing and information codes etc.

On the other hand the idea of sublime information is a classical romantic notion addressed to events in nature which could not be mastered, controlled and computed by main power. Today we are nearly anywhere, any time we are able to control and compute information itself completely. Because of this incompleteness of information, information itself becomes sublime.

JM: Net Art has been as a form of activism and resistance a paradigm of free economy and free art practice. What kind of resistance can be cultivated when the internet is commodified and developed into one of the major sites of marketing?

PW: Open Source is a movement which breaks down the barriers of representation imposed on consumers by the industry through the protected mode of the operating system. Open Source is asking for operating systems which can be handled and processed by the consumer. Open Source ideology is also asking for open artwork, open practices.

We live in a surveillance society therefore we need access to the processing of information. Democracy today means control of information by the people, not power by the people.

Our environment has become very complex information-environment built mainly on spin off of military technology. We even live in a militarization of perception. Therefore it is necessary to develop strategies against the militarization of our vision with help of control of the processing of visual information. Moving into processing is a way for art to gain back its power to create visual information. Net Art can play a pivotal role in this battle, regaining individual control in the field of information processing.

JM: Do you feel taking in consideration the above artistic and social forms that the internet constitutes, that Net Art is the New Avant Garde?

PW: With Net Art the medium of art has become a global medium, a post studio practice which can only be compared to the revolution of "pleine air peinture", the beginning of impressionism. Today the open air of nature is the global information space of man made society. Therefore Net Art is the driving force which is the most radical in transforming the closed system of the esthetic object of modernism into the open system of post -modern fields of action.

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