

The Digital Art: The Philosophical Data Bank of Minus Delta T

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Himalaya—three thousand metres above sea level—a safe built deep into the rock—200 keys for the safe—a Basic-programmable computer—a nearby shelter for people at work—this is the Philosophical Data-Bank of Minus Delta T.

To be exact, it is the second part of what has begun in February 1983 in the Künstlerhaus Stuttgart, the creation of a data-bank, where not simple population data, turnover statistics or whatsoever are stored, but data-banks conserving the philosophy of our time—and a kind of philosophy themselves.

So why did the people of Minus Delta T start this somewhat strange project, why the safe underneath the floor of the Stuttgart Künstlerhaus, containing the original of the group's project share—and a bottle of wine?

It all began in the 1950s during the economic boom, when everybody was just hunting for his share in the general uprising. On and on they went in the hunt for prosperity—and what was left behind were the values, the keys for culture. Not that this phase had not developed its own values, an individualistic quality of life was then considered one of the supreme goals. But every value developed during this era was internalized in the following decades—and it may be unconscious, but an individualistic way of life (without a basis in the cultural traditions) is still a moral value today.

The European moral qualities have come to a point, where they have lost much (not to say almost everything) of their social context, of their social codes and languages.

We think and feel there is a distinct need for a new definition, for reflection and the development of a new universal theory. Now, of universal theories there have been plenty, the Bible presented one, the Koran another, Buddhism a third, socialism, capitalism, anarchism were universal theories—and as the most recent version, "The Green Book" by Muammar Gaddafi. All of these universal theories, however, are obsolete in a Europe considering itself the experimental playground of modern culture. What moral means to Europe is given in a negative definition, in a constant negation.

This unconscious negation must give way to a conscious affirmation, making actions conscious—and this is what we are trying to do by the installation of our philosophical data bank.

But again, why call it Data-Bank?

The term "Bank" was chosen in a deliberate association with today's economic and commercial society, was chosen in order to use (and abuse) the commercial symbols like "Bank," "Money," "Shares," "Data," etc. for individual purposes, maybe even for individual values in the shade of the quest for contents and solutions.

The Philosophical Data Bank shall be open for everybody working at a social Codex or at a European, individual culture (which is not an absolute culture of the individual). If he gets in contact with us, we are ready to reserve him a key and to store his ID in the computer.

Now this computer is not connected to any terminal in Europe. We think it necessary to disconnect the computer from Europe in order to prevent the new universal theory from being written by a single person, not because of distrust, but rather because a single individual might introduce too many of his individual values. Culture does not depend on the outward shape, but rather on the contents of its codex. The shape might be interesting, but is undoubtedly secondary, as are the different areas and activities where members of Minus Delta T come from. Our provenience from different areas of work, from music, art, philosophy, science, and ethnology, from work in the science-fiction area as well as in futurology, lead to the effect, that we are dealing with very global matters. The non-specialization gives the group a certain overview, and in this sense a lot of responsibility for its actions, for activities free from compromises.

As for philosophy the present text is in no case a compromise. This text is the philosophy of Minus Delta T, a philosophy whose philosophy it is to consist of many philosophies...So who is Minus Delta T?

Minus Delta T is a name of a group of people who are not at all uniform, who do not have the same ideas—but who work together. The group has existed since 1978, with a lot of people who were out before they had even really been in (those were mostly the "specialists"). One of the principles of the group is the non-specialization—we want to be open for everybody and everything.

In the beginning we used to work a lot in the musical area, made performances, exhibitions, we did a lot of private works—maybe fifty-fifty between private and public, which seemed quite a good balance. Since 1980 we are working at this project, which had as the first title the "Bangkok Project" (cf. the catalogue of Ars Electronica 1982, p. 157/154).

This project included the transport of a 5 1/2-ton stone, a dolmen, a European monument to Asia, as a catalyst of culture. On the truck we had a multi-media equipment, including sound, movie, and photo equipment, computer technology and laundromat.

The greater part of the group is right now in Asia preparing the further transport of our monolith to China (the monolith as such being completely unimportant) and on a tour in India within the setting of the Bangkok Project.

Minus Delta T is composed of the artists Karel Dudesek, Wolfgang Hofmann, Bernhard Müller, Gerard Couty, Walter Baumann, and Mike Hentz.