Beusch / Cassani
"And what is it that makes it Art?" … and other partykillers from the 20-year history of Ars Electronica

A panel in reference to the anniversary, designed by Beusch / Cassani, with pioneers and early adopters, as well as representatives of a generation of artists young enough to have grown up with computers.

A brief interview with Beusch/Cassani (TNC Network) on playfully dealing with information

Ars Electronica: TNC Network has brought tremendous energy and fresh ideas to the presentation of digital culture in recent years. They have repeatedly succeeded in developing appropriate formats capable of getting across the specific characteristics of new artistic modes of creativity derived from information theory and media technology. "And what is it that makes it art?" investigates the code of rules governing the making of this art, the upshot of which is a new understanding of art and a new role of those who create it. What have been some of the forerunners of this upcoming event?

BC: In recent years, an extraordinarily fruitful process of reciprocal influence and inspiration has been taking place among the various efflorescences of digital culture, which corresponds to what Hannes Leopoldseder wrote on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of Ars Electronica in 1989, when he called upon us "to break down the boundaries separating different fields of art and to overcome barriers, not to differentiate between so-called entertainment and serious culture." The recursive action of DJ and club culture, network link-ups becoming a matter to be taken completely for granted, the convergence of media, the establishment of sampling as a cultural practice, global recycling, interdisciplinary collaboration, and the blurring of the borders between user and producer have been continually generating new forms of digital entertainment.

Ars Electronica: With these forces as cultural background, TNC launched a trial balloon at the Ars Electronica Festival 96 in the form of its open Webstudio, which brought about the emergence in the years that followed of the "walk-through network" *OpenX*. Could one go so far as to regard the Partykiller set-up as an extension and further development of the *OpenX* format?

BC: Most certainly so.

Ars Electronica: The event's title and subtitle open up a somewhat surprising dimension. Do you really believe it's possible for a critical confrontation, for theoretical investigations to even be capable of developing Partykiller qualities?

BC: Naturally! A precondition for this is a stimulating setting that animates exchange among participants and a playful process of dealing with information. We're dispensing with the conventional symposium set-up and going with an open spatial configuration based on a number of separate islands–a DJ/VJ desk, presentation docks, conversation areas and, of course, a bar. The flowing course of events makes it possible for the audience and the participants to circulate freely. This flux is continually punctuated by small-scale program units around which attention coalesces. Sound and video design featuring the interplay of live-mix/remix also have an important function.

Ars Electronica: You've put together a truly impressive line-up for this event.

BC: It brings together more than 30 prominent contributors to international digital culture–pioneers as well as representatives of a generation of artists that has grown up with the computer. Thus, what we have in store for the audience is an extremely fascinating and highly diversified range of experience and insight with a tremendous potential to inform and entertain.

Ars Electronica: For your work in the context of the TNC Network, you coined the term "data jockey" which has subsequently just about assumed a place in common parlance. What role do data jockeys play in the Partykiller event?

BC: This term, as we defined it in 1996, signifies the previously-mentioned shift in the understanding of the artist's role and the conception of the work of art on the part of many artists whose working situations are evolving in the dynamic systems of the infosphere, and are being permanently conditioned and transformed by networked communication technologies. At the Partykiller event, TNC's data jockeys will be processing stimulating infobeats; their activities will generate multiple sources of attention and thus enable the audience to spontaneously hook up with a number of different program levels.

Event design: TNC Network / Beusch/Cassani (with Sabine Wahrmann, Marco Repetto, Stéphane Biabiany, Diego Bontognali, et al.)