

Electrolobby TransIT Room

Ars Electronica has been conducting *open X* and *electrolobby* in conjunction with the festival since 1996 as an experimental series dedicated to “net.working” in which exemplary models designed to facilitate the encounter with the (artistic) practice of new cultural techniques are given a test run. *electrolobby*—*TransIT Room* is the continuation of this series in conjunction with *unplugged*.

The experiments of this series focus on modes of presentation beyond hegemonic formats, one example of which would be a lavish big-screen presentation as the final impression that dominates the ongoing process of net.working. The series itself and the indeterminacy of its formats are outcomes of the intention to design models for the cultural presence of these net-based strategies.

TransIT Room is, on one hand, a plug-in to the attention being paid to a country that in all probability will soon appear “unplugged” only in one blind spot; on the other hand, *TransIT Room* is a confrontation providing alternatives to the tendency toward technological generalization of lifestyle designs and behavioral patterns. One centerpiece is “The Trinity Session” that with *SEARCH* sketches a portrait of the digital culture of a South Africa characterized by internal conflicts and exclusion. Another is *Kingdom of Piracy <KOP>*, an open working platform that conducts piracy on the Web as the ultimate form of art.

SEARCH shows us that digital culture is growing rapidly in South Africa too. In contrast to the frequently affirmative modes of action that typify lifestyle protagonists of Western provenience, the strategies here are rather more focused on resistance and are motivated by an oppositional attitude toward those international enterprises that administer the means of access to and the “spaces” of the Web. At the same time, the emergence of the new hybrid form of artist can also be observed—one who combines DJ, media designer, painter and nightclub promoter into a personal union and has thus changed art’s social environment and the setting in which it is presented. Phenomena that are typical of the cyber-generation in New York, Paris, Tokyo, London and other places are appearing on the South African horizon, especially in Johannesburg and Capetown, where the necessary critical mass of computers and networks was achieved first.

SEARCH was initiated during the time leading up to the festival as a modular workshop, discussion and production platform that will be carried on after the festival as a network in South Africa.

Kingdom of Piracy <KOP> is a significant project for those regions where a high degree of network interconnectedness already so strongly determines cultural standards that artists see unplugging as an important mission (though naturally without being satisfied by simply pulling the plug). In line with this, *TransIT Room* brings together two contrary tendencies—here the need to get connected, there the need to escape the constraint to get connected and to counter it with subversive alternatives.

Thus, in accordance with the nature of *open_X* / *electrolobby* as “experimental arrays,” the point is not just to present the respective protagonists during the festival and establish some form of communication between them and the public. Cooperative

undertakings will also be set up with other initiatives that proceed simultaneously at other locations and remain active beyond the timeframe of the festival. *TransIT Room* is not just “a week in the showcase,” but rather an integrating part of processes currently underway and at the same time a catalyst and amplifier of them.

Translated from the German by Mel Greenwald