

## Medien Kunst Netz

The paradox of facilitating an audience's encounter with media art is an outgrowth of the fact that such art can be mediated only in a most inadequate way by means of text-based and print-based depictions, since those partaking of it can hardly grasp its meaning without experiencing its multimedial quality. Nevertheless, the exhibition catalog and scholarly tome remain this genre's standard media of elaboration and analysis. The online platform *Medien Kunst Netz* has come forward as a response to this situation. Accordingly, its aim is a presentation that is both theoretically and audio-visually definitive, details interrelationships that transcend the borders of individual genres, and is accompanied by insights based on solid historical scholarship describing current trends in media art elaborated before the backdrop of developments in art and media technology over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. To accomplish this, it was necessary not only to assemble a critical mass of over 1,400 works by almost 1,000 artists but also to set up discursive and topic-based interlinkage of this content.

### Four Hypotheses on Facilitating the Encounter with Media Art

The special features of the way viewers partake of works of media art with respect to the direct perception of the artwork itself as well as its technological and theoretical context can be concisely summed up in the following four points:

1. The encounter with media art must be multimedial in order for the art's time-based, processual and interactive aspects to be understood;
2. Media art requires a special theory that combines competence from the fields of art theory, media studies and media technology;
3. The multimedial depiction and the special theory reciprocally determine one another; therefore, they ought to be interrelated and published on a joint platform;

These three hypotheses—the upshot of our experiences over the last few years—now permit the derivation of a fourth one:

4. Contexts can only be produced and presented in network-like fashion. This is illustrated by the total of eight thematic modules that have been realized in cooperation with partner institutions.

### Themes—Modules—Associates—Artistic Projects

The selection of topics addresses the entire spectrum of current discourses that have emerged at the interface of new media and the arts. These themes were independently conceptualized by individual curatorial teams and then assembled at the Center for Art and Media Technology (ZKM) into a unitary form for online publication. The selection underwent ongoing modification due to growing interest in contributing to *Medien Kunst Netz* manifested by curators, scholars and institutions, whereby we welcomed the opportunity to also focus attention on two media on the periphery of media art: film and photography. Following an introductory overview of historical and contemporary positions and contexts in media art, we present the following themes: Image and Sound (HGB Leipzig, curator: Dieter Daniels), Cyborg Bodies (Zurich Institute of Design and Art, curator: Yvonne Volkart), Aesthetics of the Digital (MECAD Barcelona, curator: Claudia Giannetti), Photo/Byte (HGB Leipzig, curator: Susanne Holschbach), Generative Tools (IMG Mainz, curators: Tjark Ihmels and Julia Riedel), Art and Cinema (HfBK Dresden, curator: Gregor Stemmerich), Mapping and Text (ZKM Karlsruhe, curator: Rudolf Frieling), and Public Sphere\_s (ZKM Karlsruhe, curator: Steve Dietz).

In addition to the curated structure and a databank-based search engine, a defining feature of this project is its contextualization of topics through an artistic approach. As a supplement to the content presented in this way, artists have been invited to reflect upon the themes of the projects in specially developed works of net-art. The works are by Sven Bauer, Blank & Jeron, Ismael Celis, Andreja Kuluncic, Ivan Marino, Daniela Alina Plewe and Warren Sack.

### Discursive Linkages—Web/Book

For us, so-called “multiperspectivity” means interlinking two media. Thus, the essential theoretical texts are made available both online and in book form (see *Medienkunst im Überblick*, Vol. 1, Vienna / New York 2004, and *Thematische Schwerpunkte*, Vol. 2, Vienna / New York 2005). The contents are presented differently on the Internet as they are in the book; for example, online they are supplemented by dynamic links to images of the works and source texts. This allows users to read the book and the website parallel, and, at the same time, makes possible a totally new way of writing, in that the author can dispense with detailed and comprehensive descriptions of the works and quotations since these are always available on the second level in the Internet. The hardcopy accompanying the website thus reaches classic readers but also contains softlinks that refer them to the second level online. On the other hand, the behavior displayed by younger people—let’s call them the Google generation—in partaking of this material is in the process of overthrowing the dominance of the book as lead medium, since they do not even register the existence of content that is not available online or take notice of it only grudgingly. We, on the other hand, see the necessity of reformulating related quality standards and coming up with a more comprehensive concept of media so that net culture and book culture can combine their respective potentials instead of functioning as mutually exclusive alternatives.

Translated from German by Mel Greenwald

Medien Kunst Netz was commissioned by the ZKM Karlsruhe and the Goethe Institute Munich, funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, and produced in cooperation with the Leipzig Academy of Visual Arts.

