

Hochschule für Gestaltung und Kunst Nordwestschweiz / HGK FHNW

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Forward to Privacy or Neanalog?

Art

Art, in its pre-verbalized and pre-exploratory phase of germinating a design, is an activity that takes place in a personal thought-space of undisturbed silence. Both the conceptualization process as well as the subsequent work of transforming an idea into a piece of art that can be perceived with the senses engender an internally consistent language and thus an initially “undisturbed” individual mode of coming to terms with the world. Art in its manifold formats does not primarily seek to attain generally valid legibility and comprehensibility. It seeks itself. Its reception—the process of partaking of it—permits decoding, translation and thus understanding and acceptance. It is precisely here that values and identity are created.

Jean-Christophe Ammann wrote in 1998 in *Das Glück zu sehen* (p. 58): “Today, people are called upon to hand over parts of their identity to the data highway and to the process of digital compression, and to bear responsibility for whatever happens with the rest of their identity. This is about the best description of a stressful situation you could possibly come up with. But it's this leftover portion that artists address [...]”

Media art investigates and calls into question essential phenomena of our technologically-determined, digital communications culture, plumbing the depths of interstices and exploring residual spaces. When software becomes a designable medium in art, then the reemergence and reestablishment of undisturbed (perhaps neanalog) ways of doing things also become possible.

In this sense, “forward to privacy” in the digital domain could be the first indication of “digital rebellion” (Stocker, Schöpf).



Sam Graf and Dominik Winkelmann

Photograph “Moving Time” by Sam Graf and Dominik Winkelmann, 4th semester.

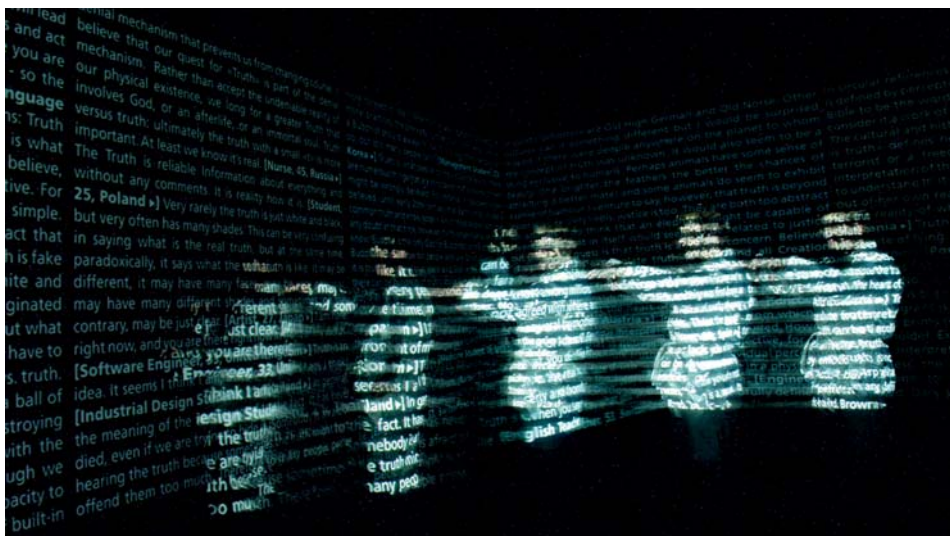
Privacy

The term “privacy” was introduced in the 19th century by future U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis (1856–1941) and defined as an “individual’s right to be let alone” (Louis Brandeis and Samuel Warren, *Harvard Law Review*, Vol. 4, Nr. 5). In German, this is rendered as *Ungestörtheit*; thus, privacy refers to being left undisturbed.

Dr. Rainer Kuhlen, Professor of Information Science at the University of Constance, wrote the following in his 1999 book *Die Konsequenzen von Informationsassistenten*: “Privacy means [...] more than the right to be left alone; rather, it is the proactive right to determine which personal data [...] one consents to release for use by others and which data one permits into one’s own personal sphere” (p. 417).

The realm of digital data is often labeled as “virtual, digital reality.” Embedded within this concept, though, is a latent tendency towards being misconstrued, since “reality” refers to what actually is. Accordingly, a much more apt formulation would be “virtual, digital simulations,” digital correspondences. “Virtual and digital realities” are simulations. They constitute the attempt to take an alternative approach to a possibly expanded individual conception of self using the means of digital technology. The possibilities of medially staging one’s persona and of self-identification (*Second Life, MySpace*, et al.) create simulative, virtual domains of experience. One’s second life turns out to be a private, digitally construed simulation realm. It supplements the one that actually exists and thereby becomes a construct. The process of dealing with these constructs creates new cultural values. Seen from a sociological perspective, this could be termed a new type of cultural capital that is incorporated into social life through daily use that becomes a matter taken completely for granted.

The hypothesis that massive numbers of people putting the private sphere on public display diminishes its cultural value (Zwerger, Medosch) will be addressed by the discourse that will be held in conjunction with *Ars Electronica 2007*. The process of dealing with digital communication creates new forms of collaboration. Before the backdrop of democratic socialization characterized by Western values, collaboration as the current form of production in media art takes an individual’s personal sense of his/her own self and strips it of what is physically individual and thus what is truly his/her own. The pre-emptive assertion that collaboration generates new forms of medial individualism and thus a new sense of self is a position that will have to face scrutiny by intellectuals in the field of art and cultural criticism.



André Hartmann and Hans Peter Wyss

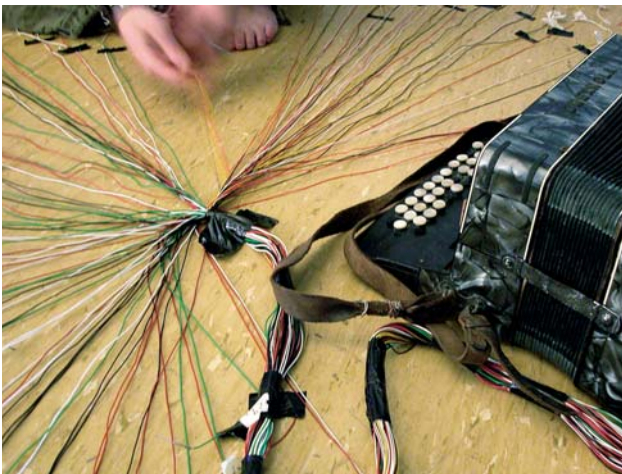
Spatial installation *Truth Project* by André Hartmann and Hans Peter Wyss, 3rd semester.

Campus 2.0

Computer-aided communication creates the possibility of globally accessible “pre-configured virtual public spheres” (Stocker / Schöpf). The undisturbed private sphere can be shifted into the global digital domain in the form of the digital staging of ones persona. As digital self-depiction, the private sphere is thus no longer suffused by modesty. The voluntary revelation of that which is private comes with the acceptance of a new concept of being-in-the-world: I understand myself as part of a digital community, I use its pre-configured, conforming tools, I dispense with my personal, separate individuality, and I relinquish the right to be left alone: goodbye privacy!

Neonalog

The invitation to take part in the *acar2* project in conjunction with Campus 2.0 was my first encounter with the term “neoanalog design.” The result of my initial research was that this concept did not exist in the art and design literature, and I concluded that this must be a recent coinage. Based on a linguistic analysis, the term “neoanalog” seemed to be designating a new interpretation of the debate involving similarities and comparabilities; the term “neoanalog



Angela Erni

Interactive installation “V-COR-DN” by Angela Erni, Pascal Hofer and Effi Tanner, 2nd semester

design” would thus refer to a design or design activity that operated with new interpretations of similarities and comparabilities as well as of the comparability of interrelationships. This admittedly quite abstract definition of a new design concept did not make the process of comprehension any easier: Neoanalog is neoanalog, no more and no less. Accordingly, we’re taking the liberty of artistically interpreting what neoanalog is. What did indeed become clear, though, was that “neoanalog design” cannot be simply understood as high-tech in a shell that gives the impression of a product of handicraft.

For me, McLuhan’s hypothesis articulated in *Understanding Media* (1964) that every form of extension—whether of the skin, the hand or the feet—influences the entire psychic and social entity opens up a gateway to the potential role of media art within the *acar2* project. (*acar2* is striving to achieve its primary objectives within a particular societal and sociopolitical context.) If one of the tasks of media art is to address social and political issues that are the upshot of mediatization, digitization and globalization, then it would be completely consistent with this mission to scrutinize the potential of “neoanalog” as a conceptual construction using the instruments and approaches of media art.