NETWORKED ✕ DISRUPTION

Rethinking Oppositions in Art, Hacktivism and Business

Curated by Tatiana Bazzichelli
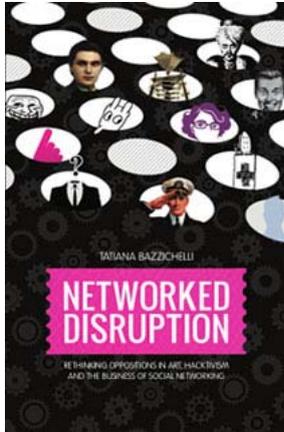aksioma.org/networked.disruption

SEMINAR

Kino Šiška, Trg prekomorskih brigad 3, Ljubljana
March 11–12, 2015

Registration

Please send your full name and e-mail address <u>by March 10th</u> to:
sonjagrdina[AT]gmail[DOT]com

INDEX

fRAME

Drawing upon Tatiana Bazzichelli's book *Networked Disruption: Rethinking Oppositions in Art, Hacktivism and the Business of Social Networking* (2013), this seminar proposes both to expose and to dissipate the tension between art, social networking, political activism and business logics through a network of multiple, distributed and disruptive practices. In parallel with the group exhibition taking place at Škuc gallery (Ljubljana), the seminar develops the topic of Networked Disruption through five discussion sessions and presentations organised over two days, followed by a collective round table.

Participants include Vittore Baroni (IT), Tatiana Bazzichelli (IT/DE), Luther Blissett (IT), Loretta Borrelli (IT), Bani Brusadin (ES), Florian Cramer (DE/NL), Vuk Ćosić (SI), Baruch Gottlieb (CA/DE), Ida Hiršenfelder (SI), Janez Janša (SI), John Law (US) and Annie Machon (UK).

In the last decade, the critical framework of art and hacktivism has shifted from developing strategies of opposition to embarking on the art of disruption. By identifying the emerging contradictions within the current economic and political framework of information technology, this seminar presents a constellation of activist and hacker practices, as well as those of artists, who work on the interferences between networking participation, political criticism and disruptive business innovation. It adopts a historical perspective on the notion of social networking, by connecting together disruptive practices of networked art and hacking in California and Europe. Furthermore, the concept of disruption is applied to the recent debate on geopolitical surveillance after the Edward Snowden's disclosures, investigating critical practices and new strategies of oppositions that are happening *within* closed systems.

pROGRAMME

2:00 pm – 2:30 pm

Introduction by Tatiana Bazzichelli: Overview of the topics addressed in the book *Networked Disruption* and introduction to the seminar and the exhibition.

The departure point of this presentation is the assumption that, on the one hand, networking grassroots communities of hackers and artists have served to accelerate capitalism since the emergence of digital culture and cyber-utopias; on the other hand, they have also served to strengthen antagonism against it, by generating critical artistic practices and hacktivist interventions based on technologies and methodologies of sharing and networking. Such mutual disruption and coexisting oppositions between art, business and networking shows how hackers and artists have been both active agents of business innovation as well as those undermining it. In this presentation, the analysis of disruption as a critical framework, and disruptive business as an artistic strategy, become a means for introducing immanent practices of hackers, artists, networkers and entrepreneurs. The concept of business is questioned by its etymology, and from an ethical point of view. The aim is not to create a historical or philosophical analysis of social and artistic practices, but to reflect on different modalities of generating criticism, shedding light on contradictions and ambiguities both in capitalistic logic and in art and hacktivist strategies, while rethinking oppositional practices in the context of network culture.

2:30 pm – 4:00 pm

Social Networking Out of the Box
A presentation/conversation between <u>Vittore Baroni</u> and <u>Florian Cramer</u>
Moderated by Tatiana Bazzichelli

The current meaning of openness, and the rhetoric of decentralisation, freedom and exchange in social media cannot be fully understood without tracing back the practice of networking in the underground artistic contexts over the past decades. This session proposes to analyse the roots of social networking based on both analogue and digital networked art, and connect them with the post-digital critical reflection. Social networking is seen as a practice of community creation, towards the imagination of common spaces of intervention – and identity identification – where symbols, myths and memes are shared. This panel describes the genesis and the creation of a number of grassroots artistic networks between the Eighties and the Nineties, across both Europe and the US, and question the practice of networking today. A common thread connects the network of mail art, Neoism,

Luther Blissett and, more recently, in the post-digital era, the Anonymous entity. Such practices of disruption have been "social networks out of the box", therefore generating viral practices, strategies of networking and "radical play", both online and offline.

Coffee Break: 30 minutes

4:30 pm – 6:00 pm
When Art Goes Disruptive
A presentation/conversation between Janez Janša and Loretta Borrelli
Moderated by Tatiana Bazzichelli

The presentations in this session share a philosophy, which works towards the embodiment of a shared identity, generating semantic disruptions, questioning social and cultural categorisation and closed systems. The case of the Anna Adamolo fictional identity (Italy, 2008–2009) demonstrates how to conceive of strategies of *un-representability* during demonstrations and strikes. Such action emerges from inside the Italian students movement, acting through the cracks and interstices of institutional Italian politics and viral business logics of social media and Web 2.0. Alongside, Janez Janša focuses on the acts of changing one's personal name and the effects of such a gesture in mainstream press and institutional politics, opening up a series of questions, from what is real and what is mediated to the questions of identity and political in art.

8:00 pm
Networked Disruption
Opening of the exhibition
Škuc Gallery, Stari trg 21, Ljubljana

Thursday, March 12

2:00 pm – 2:15 pm
Introduction by Tatiana Bazzichelli

2:15 – 3:00 pm
Chaos Cacophony and Dark Saturnalia: How an obscure secret society in San Francisco in 1977 changed the way adults play for decades to come
A presentation by John Law
Introduced by Bani Brusadin

Urban exploration and pranks group The Suicide Club, founded in January 1977, was the protean cradle of ideas that, while obscure at the time, have gone on to influence world-wide trends, sub-cultures and social movements. Starting in 1986, The San Francisco Cacophony Society, a more open experimental organisation that rose from the ashes of the secretive Suicide Club, was the group that created the Burning Man Festival. Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*, arguably the most influential American novel of the 1990s as well as a statement defining an entire generation's cultural displacement, was directly inspired by Cacophony and the earlier Suicide Club. The first decade of the 21st century saw the rise of a mass movement of street games and urban play epitomised by the new social media phenomenon of "flash mobs" and the world-wide "urban exploration" culture. Cacophony was one of the primary sources in the early encouragement and implementation of these types of play. Street art and media pranking were a part of the scene as well, embodied in the advertising pranking of the Cacophony affiliated Billboard Liberation Front (starting in 1977) and the punk rock circus and bike rodeo underground that blossomed in the 1990s, instilling a DIY spirit into the alternative performance scene world-wide.

3:00 pm – 4:00 pm
Common Participation and Networking Enterprises
A conversation between Baruch Gottlieb and John Law
Moderated by Bani Brusadin

In the third session, focuses are the libertarian tradition of American counterculture, and the analysis of the intersection between business and libertarian critique of the establishment. Exploring the business strategy of creating a large network of engaged users to produce revenue, presenters argue that today we are facing a progressive commercialisation of networking practices and contexts of sharing and social relationships. Such a process is emphasised by the description of the evolution of the Burning Man Festival, from a countercultural gathering of libertarian and experimental people, drawing from the experiences of The Suicide Club and The Cacophony Society, to a platform designed to shape business strategies based on exchange and participation. Drawing upon Fred Turner's paper "Burning Man at Google" (2009), we propose to consider Burning Man as a metaphor of a social network in which all the participants contribute for free in the creation of a shared commons, but in which the owner receives the final revenues. Alongside, the proposal of an alternative to capitalism by working within capitalistic logic is suggested by the notion of Venture Communism developed by the Telekommunisten collective, who will present the latest miscommunication technologies, including the new release OCTO P7C-ES, a metaphor of a centralised social network made of intertwined pneumatic tube offline-technology, ready to be disrupted by the visitors.

Coffee Break: 30 minutes

4:30 pm – 6:00 pm
Disrupting from Within
A conversation between Annie Machon and Vuk Ćosić

In the last session, the concept of "disruption" is taken from business contexts to the realm of surveillance systems and geopolitical forms of control. How can we apply the strategy of disruption today, in the context of increasingly invasive corporations and surveillance by government agencies, and with the threat of your every move being recorded? Inspired by whistleblowing – revealing social injustices or misconducts by corporations and governments to a wider public – disruption becomes a strategy to start "fighting" the systems we want to oppose from *within*, reflecting on conscious modalities of "oppositions" that come from the inside of the machine. Annie Machon, a former UK MI5 intelligence officer who left the Service to help blow the whistle on the crimes and incompetence of the British spy agencies, discusses how to empower people to act consciously in society, culture and the media environment, and become protagonists of their lives.

6:00 pm – 7:30 pm
Networked Disruption Round Table
Participants: Annie Machon, John Law, Vittore Baroni, Tatiana Bazzichelli, Loretta Borrelli, Luther Blissett, Baruch Gottlieb, Janez Janša
Moderated by Ida Hiršenfelder

The final round table discussion brings together the participants of the symposium to reflect on the logic of disruption as the act of opening up control mechanisms that can effect both institutions, organisations and media corporations. Furthermore, the goal is to make people reflect on such mechanisms, questioning and envisioning a critical perspective to generate unpredictable feedback and unexpected reactions, and new imaginative forms of empowerment that come from our everyday life.

pARTICIPANTS

Tatiana Bazzichelli (IT/DE) is Director of the Disruption Network Lab (Berlin) and a curator and researcher on hacktivism and network culture. In 2011-2014 she worked as programme curator at transmediale festival in Berlin, initiating the reSource transmedial culture, a practice-based project in cooperation with the Centre for Digital Cultures /Leuphana University of Lüneburg, where she was Post-Doc researcher. In 2011, she received a PhD degree in Information and Media Studies at the Faculty of Arts of Aarhus University in Denmark. In 2009, she was a visiting scholar at the H-STAR, the Human Sciences and Technologies Advanced Research Institute of Stanford University in California. She wrote the books *Networked Disruption: Rethinking Oppositions in Art, Hacktivism and the Business of Social Networking* (DARC Press, 2013) and *Networking: The Net as Artwork* (Costa & Nolan, 2006 /DARC Press, 2008). Her latest book is *Disrupting Business: Art and Activism in Times of Financial Crisis* (co-edited with Geoff Cox), published by Autonomedia, New York (2013). Active in the Italian hacker community since the end of the '90s, her networking project "AHA: Activism–Hacking– Artivism" won the honorary mention for digital communities at Ars Electronica in 2007. She was born in Rome (Italy) and since 2003 has been living and working in Berlin.

Vittore Baroni (IT) is an Italian artist, music critic and explorer of countercultures. 1977 he discovered Mail, became heavily addicted and participated in numerous international projects and shows. Baroni has been organizing exhibitions, publications and collective projects based on the correspondence, exchange and the networking cultures that anticipated the Internet. He published the first issue of *ARTE POSTALE!* and various books on radical music and art, amongst them the Mail Art Guide. He is active in the fields of visual poetry, sound art, street art, and comics as well.

Luther Blissett is a multi-use name, an "open reputation" informally adopted and shared by hundreds of artists and social activists all over Europe since Summer 1994. For reasons that remain unknown, the name was borrowed from a 1980's British soccer player of Afro-Caribbean origins. In Italy, between 1994 and 1999, the so-called Luther Blissett Project (an organized network within the open community sharing the "Luther Blissett" identity) became an extremely popular phenomenon, managing to create a legend, the reputation of a folk hero. This Robin Hood of the information age ran unorthodox solidarity campaigns for victims of censorship and repression and - above all - played elaborate media pranks as a form of art, always claiming responsibility and explaining what bugs they had exploited to plant a fake story. Blissett was active also in other countries, especially in Spain and Germany. December 1999 marked the end of the LBP's Five Year Plan. All the "veterans" committed a symbolic *seppuku* (samurai ritual suicide). The end of the LBP did not entail the end of the name, which keeps re-emerging in the cultural debate and is still a popular byline on the web.

Loretta Borrelli (IT) is an activist, artivist and indipendent researcher. Part of the project AHA: Activism-Hacking-Artivism, she joined the autart group. She writes for D'ARS magazine and she cooperates with the project www.aspirinalarivista.it

Bani Brusadin (ES) is a freelance producer and researcher in the troubled waters where art, digital technologies, popular cultures and politics clash. Over the last decade, he has been involved in several art, activist and research projects, exploring the power of fake, improper identities and new forms of subcultural epics. In 2004, he co-founded *The Influencers*, a cult festival about non-conventional forms of art, communication and radical entertainment.

Florian Cramer (DE/NL) is an applied research professor and director of Creating 010, the research center affiliated with the Willem de Kooning Academy and the Piet Zwart Institute at the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, with a personal background in comparative literature and art history combined with post-punk and post-Fluxus DIY culture. Recently, he has been focusing on practice-oriented research, with a renewed interest in non-institutional arts practices outside old/new media, analog/digital and fine art-vs.-applied art dichotomies.

Vuk Ćosić (SI) is well known for his challenging, ground-breaking work as a pioneer in the field of net.art. His oeuvre is characterised by a mix of philosophical, political and conceptual network-related issues on the one hand, and a feeling for contemporary urban and underground aesthetics on the other. He is a co-founder of Nettime, Syndicate, 7-11, and Ljubljana Digital Media Lab.

Baruch Gottlieb (CA/DE) is a media artist exploring navigable fiction and documentary and an active member of the Telekommunisten Network. His work's focus is the industrialisation of the subject of industrially produced media. His book *Gratitude for Technology* explores the persistent materiality of the digital image.

Ida Hiršenfelder (SI) is a Ljubljana, Slovenia based media art critic and curator. She is a collaborator of +MSUM Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova for Network Museum online aggregator of contemporary art archives. From 2007 to 2013 she was an archivist at Digital Video Art Archive, DIVA Station, SCCA-Ljubljana. Archives and their disappearance are one of her interests, resulting in lectures dealing with media archaeology and the history of Internet. She is also an advocate of free and open source software. From 2010 to 2014 she was a curator at Ljudmila, Ljubljana Art and Science Laboratory. She is a member of Theremidi Orchestra and collaborates with media artist Saša Spačal on a series of sonoseismic installations produced by Kibla, with Saša Spačal she also co-initiated ČIPke - Initiative for Women with a Sense for Technology, Science and Art. Web: beepblip.wordpress.com

Janez Janša (SI) is a conceptual artist, performer and producer living in Ljubljana, Slovenia. He is the author of numerous videos, performances, installations and new media works that have been presented in several exhibitions, festivals and lectures around the world. He is the director of the film *My Name Is Janez Janša*, co-founder and director of Aksioma – Institute for Contemporary Art, Ljubljana and artistic director of the Aksioma | Project Space.

Janez Janša (SI) is an artist, writer, performer and director of interdisciplinary performances as well as conceptual and visual artworks. His work contains a strong critical and political dimension and it is focused on the relation between art and the social and political context. He is the author of the book *JAN FABRE – La Discipline du chaos, le chaos de la discipline*, Armand Colin, Paris, 1994) and was the editor-in-chief of *MASKA, Performing Arts Journal* from 1999 to 2006. He is the director of the Maska Institute for Publishing, Production and Education based in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Janez Janša (SI) is a visual artist working in the cross-section of traditional visual art practices, conceptual art and new media. In 2003, he represented Slovenia at the 50th Venice Biennial. He has shown his work at the Sao Paolo Biennial, Prague Biennial, Limerick Biennial and at numerous other venues.

John Law (US) was among the founders in 1986 of the Cacophony Society. Emerging from the ashes of the mysterious and legendary Suicide Club, the Cacophony Society was an informal, unclassifiable group of anonymous people who spent their time exploring the boundaries of a conformist society, and occasionally crashing them. They

sought imagination, adventure and mutual trust beyond the pale of those provided by mainstream society that involved playful ways of disrupting propaganda, mocking respected symbols (like in their infamous Santarchy, an invasion of rebellious Santas), exploring forbidden urban space (from sewers to bridges), rebuilding freedom through mayhem, confusion, dangerous operations and sometimes just outright madness. Mostly harmless, often illegal, always fun.

Annie Machon (UK) was an intelligence officer for the UK's MI5 in the 1990s before leaving to help blow the whistle on the crimes and incompetence of the British spy agencies. As a result, she and her former partner had to go on the run around Europe, live in exile in France, face arrest and imprisonment, and watch as friends, family and journalists were arrested. She is now a writer, media commentator, political campaigner, and an international public speaker on a variety of related issues: the war on terrorism, the war on drugs, the war on whistleblowers and the war on the Internet. In 2012, she started as a Director of LEAP in Europe (www.leap.cc). Annie has an MA (Hons) Classics from Cambridge University. She is the author of *Spies, Lies and Whistleblowers: MI5 and the David Shayler Affair* (The Book Guild, 2005).

cREDITS

Curated by: Tatiana Bazzichelli
Head of production: Janez Janša
Producer: Marcela Okretič
Executive producer: Sonja Grdina
Public relations: Hana Ostan Ožbolt
Documentation: Adriana Aleksić, Jernej Čuček Gerbec

Production: Aksioma – Institute for Contemporary Art, Ljubljana, 2015
Coproduction: CUK Kino Šiška

Networked Disruption is realized in the framework of **Masters & Servers**, a joint project by Aksioma (SI), Drugo more (HR), AND (UK), Link Art Center (IT) and d-i-n-a / The Influencers (ES).
www.mastersandservers.org

Contact:
Hana Ostan Ožbolt
Aksioma – Institute for Contemporary Art, Ljubljana
Tel. +386-(0)40 698843
aksioma.org@gmail.com
www.aksioma.org