

Dokler si neka usmiljena duša ne bo izmislila zanesljivega in cenovno dostopnega teleportacijskega sistema, bodo letališča neusahljiv vir nejevolje za potnike. Ne glede na to, kar nam skušajo v glavo vbiti v revijah, ki jih prebiramo med poleti, potovanje z letalom ni niti najmanj glamurozno ali sproščujoče.

Večina se sprjazni z nadležno situacijo in skrbnim pakiranjem, čakalnimi vrstami, še več čakalnimi vrstami, varnostnimi pregledi in dvojnimi preverjanjem potnih listov, ne da bi si sploh drznili dvigniti glavo.

A ne Evan Roth. Že od leta 2008 naprej ponavlja kamikaze predstavo, ki se zoperstavlja organizaciji, ki si je nihče drug ne bi nikoli drznil izzvati – ameriški agenciji za varnost v transportnem sistemu (Transportation Safety Administration/TSA). Za projekt *TSA komunikacija* (*TSA Communication*) umetnik iz plošč nerjavečega jekla izreže različna sporočila, jih shrani in svojo ročno prtljago in se odpravi na letališče. Kar razkrije običajni varnostni postopek rentgenskega pregledovanja, presega običajno vsebino potnikove torbe. Na zaslonu so jasno vidna sporočila, ki jih je Roth namenil varnostnikom. Vsebinske napisov se spreminja odvisno od cilja potovanja in umetnikovega razpoloženja. Med njimi najdemo »Tu ni kaj videti«, »Hvala, da si to, kar si!«, »Brigaj se zase«, odločno sporočilo poslanstva agencije TSA »Stojim na prvi obrambni črti in uporabljam lastno domišljijo, da iznajdljivo ščitim Ameriko pred nevarnostjo«¹ in moj najljubši primer, »Tu pustite svoje sporočilo«.

Roth preskuša meje tega, česar nihče pri zdravi pameti ne bi smel početi med varnostnim pregledom, z *Vidim, da me vidiš* (*See You See Me*), pri čemer uporablja digitalno kamero, s katero snema prehode skozi rentgenske naprave na različnih mednarodnih letališčih.

Rothu zadošča že vznemirjenje, ki ga občuti zjutraj, ko vstane in ugiba, na kakšen odziv

bodo naletele te drobne kljubovalne geste, zato se mu zdijo težave, ki bi si jih lahko nakopal, vredne tveganja. Toda glavno prizadevanje, ki žene te projekte, je prizadevanje, da bi v »gledališče varnosti«² vpeljal »dejaven glas«³ in da bi iz tega sicer povsem različovečnega izkustva vendarle izvlekel nekaj moči. »Letališča me zanimajo predvsem kot mikrokozmosi družbe pod celovitim in popolnim nadzorom,«⁴ mi je ustvarjalec napisal v elektronskem sporočilu. »Zlahka pozabimo, da znotraj teh sistemov obstajajo še druge možnosti od tega, da preprosto sledimo predpisani poti od točke A do točke B. Nekoč so bila letališča nenavadne, ustvarjalno mrtve cone v mojem življenju, v nekem trenutku pa sem spoznal, da ta omejitve obstaja predvsem v moji glavi.«

In če verjamete ali ne, Roth doslej še nikoli ni zabredel v resne težave med svojim poigravanjem s predpisi, ki urejajo nadzor gibanja na letališčih. »Čeprav sem šel z napisi za TSA v ročni prtljagi skoraj petdesetkrat skozi varnostno kontrolo, se je le malokrat zgodilo, da so varnostniki sploh neposredno omenili te predmete,«⁵ pojasnjuje Roth. »Reakcije tistih, ki so jih omenili, so bile zelo raznolike – od pikrih vprašanj do smeha (ki mi je najljubši). Običajno sem bil bolj živčen zaradi snemanja kot pa zaradi napisov, a le ena varnostnica (v New-arku) je sploh opazila, da snemam (in mi preprosto rekla, naj kamero ugasnem). Najboljšo reakcijo sem doživel na letališču LAX, kjer se je varnostnik začel na ves glas smejeti in je navezadnje poklinal še ostale uslužbence TSA, naj si zadevo ogledajo sami (reakcije ostalih so bile različne). Še en super odziv na podvig pa se je v bistvu pojavil na uradnem blogu agencije TSA. Niz komentarjev, ki so ga po 195 komentarjih ustavili, daje močan vtis o razponu odzivov varnostnega osebja na moj projekt. Dokument je še vedno na spletu in je moja najljubša dokumentacija projekta.«¹

¹ Blog agencije TSA: Sporočilo v ročni prtljagi <http://blog.tsa.gov/2008/10/message-in-carry-on.html>

Umetnikova potovalna zabava se po vzletu nadaljuje z *Osvoboditvijo Skymalla* (*Skymall Liberation*), serijo kolažev, za katere uporablja revijo *Skymall*, čudovito dekadenten katalog za nakupovanje po pošti, ki ga potnik lahko natančno pregleda v udobju svojega sedeža v ekonomskem razredu. *Skymall* dobimo le na ameriških poletih in listanje po tej reviji je prava pustolovščina, ki vodi od »nore verande«, opremljene z odišavljenim hidrantom, ki ga lahko polula vaš pes, preko opekača za kruh z motivom Dartha Vaderja in kipca letečega kroznika, s katerim lahko okrasite svoje dvorišče, do veličastnega kompleta trepalnic in črtala Crystal (s katerim lahko, kajpada, olepšate masko sprednjih žarometov na svojem avtomobilu).² Ko se Roth naužije tistega, kar je na trenutke videti kot kapitalistična inačica japonske umetnosti *čindogu*,³ začne po svojih najboljših močeh rezati (ostrí predmeti so na letalih strogo prepovedani, razen če jih niste kupili v brezcarinski coni) slike izdelkov in ljudi, ki so objavljene v brošuri. Nato jih na svoji zložljivi mizici tematsko uredi in razporedi v skupine, ki jih natančno poimenuje *vizualizacije etnografskih podatkov*. Najzgovornejši med njimi so »Beli proti nebelim«, skupina, v katero na eno stran umesti svetlopolte obraze, ki so upodobljeni v reviji, na drugo stran pa glave ljudi iz vseh ostalih etničnih skupin. Rezultat je moreče krut odstev družbe, ki je bolj podobna Johannesburgu v osemdesetih letih prejšnjega stoletja kot pa sodobni »zahodni«⁴ deželi. Mimogrede, Evan to rutino ponavlja že od leta 2007 in zaenkrat ni videti napredka, kar se tiče bledečih obrazov, nakopičenih na njegovi mizici.

⁴ <http://vimeo.com/63951858>
⁵ Naslov namiguje na ameriškega računalniškega programerja, avtorja in zagovornika odprtokodne računalniške opreme, Erica S. Raymond, ki je izjavil, da je »len kot lisica«⁵ in »prelen, da bi bil lahko neuspešen. <http://www.free-soft.org/literature/papers/esr/cathedral-bazaar/cathedral-bazaar-3.html>
³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chind%C5%BDgu>

Še eno delo »med poletom«⁴ je *Za vašo lastno varnost* (*For Your Safety*),⁴ kratka animacija, izdelana iz več ducatov kart z navodili o ravnanju v primeru nesreče, za katere smo bili vsi priprani, da jih znamo na pamet, in iz katerih je tu skrbno sestavljena živahna pripoved, v kateri sicer nesrečne figure potnikov divje in sunkovito plešejo v položaju, ki bi ga bilo treba zavzeti ob zasilnem pristanku, navdušeno napihujejo svoje rešilne jopiče, histerično odpirajo zasilne izhode in se veselo dričajo po toboganu. Ko boste naslednjič na letalu, boste ta navodila videli v povsem drugačni luči.

Ob zadnjih dveh delih si morda mislite, da je noro zabavno, če se na letalu znajdete na sedežu ob Evanu Rothu. Vsekakor pa se pazite, če se boste znašli na sedežu pred njim, kajti lahko se vam zgodi, da boste žrtev umetnikove izjemno preproste in poceni intervencije *Kako pizdunom preprečiti, da bi spustili svoja naslonjala* (*How To Keep Motherfuckers From Putting Their Seats Back*). Ta kratka video lekcija, ki je dostopna na spletu, vas pouči, kako lahko navadna plastična spojka postane učinkovito orožje proti eni od drobnih nadlog ekonomskega razreda. Intervencija je del serije »Len kot lisica«⁵ (»Lazy Like a Fox«),⁵ ki domiselno pokaže, da lahko postaneš heker tudi brez nakupa tridimenzionalnih tiskalnikov ali izurjenosti v umetnosti kodiranja; že s pomočjo tako vsakdanjega pripomočka, ki je plastična spojka, lahko učinkovito dokažeš svoje trditve in malce spremeniš večji sistem.

In v bistvu delo Evana Rotha dokazuje natanko to: da je hekerska kultura demokratična. Obstaja tako znotraj računalnikov kakor tudi izven

njih in obstaja zato, da preverja infrastrukture in omogoča ljudem, da zaobidejo okorne predpise. Rothova dela dajejo ljudem moč, in to v večji meri kot številna sodobna umetniška dela, ki trdijo, da so prežeta z levičarsko ideologijo. Rothova dela so izraz tega, kar sam imenuje »ustvarjalna nespoštljivost«, in to je drža, ki jo je mogoče uporabiti na številnih področjih življenja, zlasti v zvezi s tehnologijo.

Na tej točki je treba na kratko omeniti Rothovo ozadje. Evan je rolkar, ki je študiral arhitekturo in diplomiral iz oblikovanja in tehnologije, odprtokodni programer, grafitni umetnik in seveda heker, kljub vsemu pa nikakor ni »rojen digitalce«. Večina sodi v drugo skupino in je povsem zadovoljna s tem, da zaupa »fantastični peterici«⁶ - Applu, Googlu, Amazonu, Facebooku in Microsoftu⁶ – in ji izroči vse svoje podatke. Konec koncev so to učinkovite korporacije, ki v naše življenje vnašajo udobje, v njih pa prebivajo »prikupne mucke«⁶ (»LOLcats«). Skratka, peterica je »uporabniku prijazna«. Roth pripada drugi kategoriji pred-digitalnih/digitalnih ljudi – tisti, ki ve, da tehnologija sodi marsikam, le na piedestal ne. To so ljudje, ki se zavedajo, da imajo do interneta zdrav in krepien odnos administratorji in ne uporabniki. Enostavna uporaba tehnologije bi morala vključevati tudi nadzor nad lastnim pikseliranim obstojem, to pa bi pomenilo upravljanje spletnega strežnika in računov za elektronsko pošto ter skrb za varnostno kopiranje podatkov. Pomembne naloge,

⁶ »Že leta 2012 se je zdelo čedalje manj smiselno govoriti o »internetu«, »računalniškem poslu«, »telefonih«, »silicijevi dolini« ali »medijih« in čedalje bolj smiselno preprosto povsetiti pozornost Googlu, Applu, Facebooku, Amazonu in Microsoftu. Teh pet ameriških vertikalno strukturiranih gigantov preoblikuje svet po svoji podobi.« <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2012/12/bruce-sterling-on-why-it-stopped-making-sense-to-talk-about-the-internet-in-2012/266674/>

ki se večini morda zdijo eksotične.

V resnici pa te korporacije, pa naj bodo še tako zapeljive, ne delujejo v naše zadovoljstvo in to, da jim svoje elektronsko življenje izkomišemo na pladnju, je v najboljšem primeru lahkomišelnost. Niz akcij, ki jih je Roth ustvaril z mednarodno skupino Free Art and Technology Lab (oziroma F.A.T. Lab/Laboratorij za svobodno umetnost in tehnologijo), ki jo je Roth ustanovil leta 2007 skupaj z Jamesom Powderlyjem, svojim sodelavcem iz Graffiti Research Lab (Laboratorij za grafitno raziskovanje), je demonstriral njihovo kljubovanje eni od najljubših korporacij uporabnikov interneta: Googlu. Morda najbolj prepoznaven med temi intervencijami je lažni avtomobil Googlovega uličnega pogleda. Člani F.A.T. Lab so se vozili po Berlinu (in kasneje tudi po New Yorku) v najetem avtomobilu, na katerega so namestili na hitro izdelane kartonaste kamere in ga okrasili z Googlovimi nalepkami. Šoferjevo vedenje je bilo predrzno: za volanom je pil, vznemirjal druge voznike, kazal pomanjkljivo poznavanje zemljevidne aplikacije in tako naprej. Njihov cilj je bil privabiti pozornost ljudi – in ta performans bi res lahko podnaslovili »Kako preplaviti internet zgolj z uporabo najetega avtomobila, kartona in lepilnega traku« – in tako opozoriti na »googlifikacijo« interneta, torej na nadzor, ki ga ima neka multinacionalna gospodarska družba nad *velikim delom digitalnega omrežja in javne službe, na katero smo se vsi navadili zelo zanašati*.⁷

To ne pomeni, da se člani F.A.T. Lab v celoti izogibajo Googlu, toda uporabljajo ga premišljeno. Eden od najsilavnejših dosežkov Evana Rotha, na primer, je podvig, s katerim mu je uspelo svoje ime in spletno stran spremeniti v prvi rezultat spletne poizvedbe za ključni besedi »nevaren pizdun«⁸ (»Bad Ass Motherfuckers«).

Navsezadnje pa delo Evana Rotha in F.A.T.

⁷ Fuck Google!!! <http://ffff.at/fuck-google/>

Lab demonstrira predvsem to, da celo najbolj burkaški humor lahko postane sredstvo za spodbujanje razpravljanja in razmišljanja o sodobnih vprašanjih, ki se tičejo infrastrukturnadzora, informacijskih monopolov in revij, namenjenih nakupovanju.

Zadnja, ključna lastnost Rothovih del pa je to, da napovedujejo novo dobo, v kateri se svobodna kultura končno sooča s sodobnim svetom umetnosti. V moralnem, etičnem in ekonomskem pogledu. Stari sistemi intelektualne lastnine, definicije avtorstva in patenti niso edini mehanizmi za upravljanje sodobne umetniške prakse. Morda res še vedno prevladujejo in uspevajo, toda alternative že obstajajo in njihova prihodnost je svetla.

Niti projekt *OkoPisec* (*EyeWriter*) – prefinjena naprava, ki temelji na načelu »naredi si sam«⁹ in ki jo je Roth razvil s pomočjo orodja openFrameworks v sodelovanju z Graffiti Research Lab in podjetjem Ebeling Group, da bi nekemu labintnemu umetniku, ki je paraliziran zaradi amiotrofične lateralne skleroze, omogočil slikanje s premikanjem oči – ni patentiran. Naprava deluje s pomočjo poceni odprtokodne tehnologije in bi lahko tudi drugim pacientom, ki trpijo zaradi simptomov ALS, omogočila izražanje zgolj z uporabo oči. Če bi napravo želeli izdelati za kakšnega znanca, so na spletu na voljo navodila, po katerih izdelava očesnega sledilca stane borih petdeset dolarjev.⁸

Svet umetnosti se je morda pozno pridružil tovrstnim odprtim in velikodušnim praksam, toda Roth je prepričan, da so združljive s plodno umetniško kariero. »Res verjamem, da je mogoče imeti umetniško kariero, ki se stika z umetniškim trgom, in biti hkrati še vedno zagovornik svobodne kulture,«⁹ pojasnjuje.

⁸ Navodila – OkoPisec <http://www.instructables.com/id/The-EyeWriter/>

»Zasebno sem pristaš kopimistične cerkve⁹ in prepričan sem, da vse digitalno vsebuje inherentno željo po kopiranju, to je naravno stanje digitalnega. Tako kot voda, ki teče navzdol po pobočju; lahko ji skušaš postaviti prepreke, toda ne neki točki voda vselej poišče pot do morja. Sam še vedno svobodno dajem (in jemljem) vse digitalno. Ta logika pa ne velja nujno tudi za fizične predmete. V nasprotju z razlogi za izdelavo zgolj treh inaič nekega odtisa ali kipa (ki se običajno tičejo stvarnih časovnih in finančnih omejitev, povezanih s produkcijo) razlogi za omejevanje podatkov na določeno število kopij niso tehtni. Zato menim, da med širjenjem neskončnega števila digitalnih datotek zastoj in prodajanjem omejenega števila fizičnih predmetov za denar ni moralnega konflikta.«

Rothove besede so nenavaden odmev dela, ki sem ga pred kratkim videla na neki razstavi,¹⁰ posvečeni vplivu levičarskih idej na produkcijo in recepcijo umetnosti od francoske revolucije do danes. Eno od osrednjih del razstave je bila slika Jacquesa-Louisa Davida *Maratova smrt* (1793/94). To je slavno delo, manj znano pa je dejstvo, da je neoklasicistični slikar dovolil reproduciranje svojega dela v podporo republikanskim ciljem.

Bliža se nova revolucija – revolucija odprtokodne kulture. Evan Roth je eden njenih najbolj artikuliranih zagovornikov, vem pa, da bo tudi prijaznejši od Francozov v odnosu do elit, ki se oklepajo starih vrednot.

⁹ Misijonarska cerkev kopimizma http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Missionary_Church_of_Kopimism.
¹⁰ *Art Turning Left: How Values Changed Making 1789–2013*, Tate Liverpool <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-liverpool/exhibition/art-turning-left-how-values-changed-making-1789-2013>

Izdaja ob razstavi / Published on the occasion of the exhibition:

Evan Roth
Flight Mode
www.aksioma.org/flight.mode

Aksioma | Projektni prostor / Project Space
Komenskega 18, Ljubljana, Slovenija
27. marec – 12. april 2013 / March 27 – April 12, 2013

Besedilo / Text: Régine Debatty
Prevod / Translation: Polona Petek
Lektura / Proofreading: Eric Dean Scott



Produkcija / Production: Aksioma – Institute for Contemporary Art, Ljubljana, 2013
www.aksioma.org

Umetniški vodja / Artistic Director: Janez Janša
Producentka / Producer: Marcela Okretič
Izvršna producentka / Executive Producer: Sonja Grdina
Stiki z javnostjo / Public Relations: Mojca Zupanič
Tehnični vodja / Technician: Valter Udovičič

Program zavoda Aksioma podpirata: Ministrstvo za kulturo RS in Mestna občina Ljubljana / Supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia and the Municipality of Ljubljana.

Sponzor / Sponsor: Datacenter d.o.o.
Zahvala / Thanks: Roman Ulčnik, Adria Tehnika d.d.



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Flight Mode

Régine Debatty

Until some charitable soul comes up with a reliable and affordable teleportation system, airports will be the bane of travelers' existence. No matter what in-flight magazines try to hammer into our heads, there's nothing remotely glamorous or relaxing about taking the plane.

Most of us accept the ordeal and resign to careful packing, queueing, queuing again, security screening and double passport control without ever daring to raise our head.

Not Evan Roth. Since 2008, he's been repeating a kamikaze performance that takes on the one organization no one would ever dare provoke: the Transportation Safety Administration. For *TSA Communication*, the artist cuts messages out of sheets of stainless steel, places them inside his carry-on baggage and leaves home to catch his plane. The regular X-ray screening process at security reveals more than the usual content of a traveler's bag. They delineate clearly the messages that Roth has left to security agents. The content of the plates varies according to the destination and mood of the artist. It includes "Nothing To See Here", "Thanks for Being You!", "Mind Your Own Business", the TSA's emphatic mission statement "I Am the Frontline of Defense, Drawing on My Imagination to Creatively Protect America from Harm", and my very favorite "Your Message Here".

Roth further pushes the boundaries of what no one in their right mind should do during a security screening with *See You See Me*, in which he uses a digital camera to record the X-Ray passage in various international airports.

For Roth, the thrill of getting up in the morning and wondering how these little acts of defiance will be received are enough to justify the trouble(s) that might ensue. However, the main aspiration behind these projects is to achieve "an active voice in the theater of security" and claw some power back from an otherwise de-



humanizing experience. "My primary interest in airports are as microcosms of society under total and complete control," the artist wrote me in an email exchange. "It's easy to forget that there are other options within these systems besides just following the prescribed path from point A to point B. Airports were a bizarre creative dead zone in my life, but I realized at one point that this was a limitation mostly in my head."

And believe it or not, Roth never ran into serious difficulties while juggling with the regulations that govern the control of movements inside an airport. "After going through security close to 50 times with the TSA plates, I've had relatively few interactions where the security workers even acknowledge them directly," he explains. "Of the ones that did, there was a range of reactions from pointed questions to laughter (my favorites being the latter). I was

usually more nervous about the recoding process than the plates, but I've only ever had one security worker (in Newark) ever figure out that I was filming (and she just told me to turn it off). The best reaction I've ever had was at LAX when the security worker started laughing very hard and ended up calling over the rest of the TSA staff to see for themselves (there was a mixed reaction from the rest of the staff). The other great reaction to the piece was actually on the TSA's official blog. The comment thread, which ended up being shut down after 195 comments, gives a more robust overview of the range of thoughts that the security staff had about the piece. That page is still online and is my favorite documentation of the project."¹

The artist's traveling party continues after take off with *Skymall Liberation*, a series of collages using *Skymall* magazine, a gloriously decadent mail order catalogue that you can peruse from the comfort of your own cattle-class seat. *Skymall* is found exclusively on American flights, and flipping through it is quite the adventure as it will lead to anything from a "porch potty" complete with scented fire hydrant for your dog to pee on to a Darth Vader toaster, from an Alien Flying Saucer Statue with which to adorn your courtyard to a magnificent set of CarLashes and Crystal Eyeliner (to doll up your car's front grill headlights with, of course).² When he's done reveling in what looks at times like a capitalist version of the Japanese art of Chindogu,³ Roth cuts out as best as he can (sharp objects being strictly forbidden on board, unless you've bought them in the duty-free area of course) the images of artifacts and people appearing in the brochure. He then thematically organizes

them on his tray table, dividing them into what he accurately calls *ethnographic data visualizations*. The most revealing of them is "White vs. Non-White", where he puts on one side Caucasian faces featured in the publication and, on the other side, the heads of people from any other ethnic group. The result holds a depressingly cruel mirror up to a society that resembles more the Johannesburg of the 1980s than a contemporary "Western" country. Incidentally, Evan's been repeating the exercise since 2007, and there doesn't seem to be any improvements in the overwhelming preponderance of little pale faces aggregated on his tray table.

Another "in-flight" work is *For Your Safety*,⁴ a short animation that uses dozens of the board safety cards we all thought we knew by heart and meticulously constructs a lively narrative in which the otherwise hapless figures of passengers do a jerky, manic dance of the well-known "Brace! Brace!" positions, inflate their life jackets with gusto, hysterically open emergency exits and bounce merrily down the toboggan. You won't look at the safety card the same way next time you're on a plane.

These last two works might make you think that it's jolly good fun to be sitting next to Evan Roth on a flight. Beware of occupying the seat in front of him, however, as you may become the victim of the artist's extremely simple and cheapo intervention *How To Keep Motherfuckers From Putting Their Seats Back*. The short video tutorial is available online and teaches you how a mundane zip tie can become the ultimate weapon against one of the little vexations of economy class. The intervention is part of a "Lazy Like a Fox"⁵ series that astutely demon-

strates that you don't need to buy 3D printing machines or be versed in the art of coding to be a hacker, and that you can be efficient, prove your point and slightly alter larger systems using a piece of equipment as mundane as a piece of plastic.

And fundamentally that's exactly what Evan Roth's work proves: that hacker culture is democratic. It exists both inside and outside computers to question infrastructures and to enable people to circumvent rigid regulations. His pieces are, more than many contemporary artworks that claim to be embedded with a left-wing ideology, about empowering people. They are expressions of what he calls "creative disrespect", an attitude that can be applied to many aspects of life and in particular to technology.

At this point, it is important to briefly mention the background of Evan Roth. He is a skateboarder, an undergraduate in architecture, a graduate in design and technology, an open source coder, a graffiti artist and a hacker, of course; but what he is not, despite all appearances, is a digital native. Roth belongs to a generation that has experienced both the pre-digital and the digital. People who have lived on both sides of the fence either look at digital technology critically or embrace it complacently. Most people belong to the second group, perfectly happy as they hand all their data and trust to the Fantastic Five: Apple, Google, Amazon, Facebook and Microsoft.⁶ After all, these corporations are efficient, they make our life comfortable and are inhabited by LOLcats. They are, in a nutshell, "user-friendly". Roth belongs to the other category of pre-digital/digital people, the

ones who know that the place of technology is everywhere but on a pedestal. They realize that a healthy and empowering relationship with the Internet is as admins, not as users. Being at ease with technology should involve being in control of your own pixel existence and that involves running a web server, managing email accounts, taking care of backups. Important tasks that might seem exotic to most of us.

The reality is that, as seducing as they might be, these corporations do not operate for our own pleasure and handing them our electronic life on a silver platter is, at best, careless. A series of actions that Roth created with the Free Art and Technology Lab, the international group he co-founded with his Graffiti Research Lab sidekick James Powderly back in 2007, demonstrated their defiance to one of Internet users' favourite corporations: Google. Perhaps the most iconic of these interventions is the fake Google Street View car. Members of the F.A.T. Lab drove through Berlin (and later New York) in a rental car surmounted by hastily crafted cardboard cameras and adorned with Google stickers. The driver of the car behaved brazenly: drinking at the wheel, infuriating other drivers, showing his lack of understanding of a map, etc. The goal was to get people's attention – and indeed, this performance could be subtitled "How to be all over the Internet using only a rental car, cardboard and duct tape" – and from there, to raise attention to the "googleification" of the Internet, the control held by a multinational corporate entity over a *large stake in the digital network and public utility upon which we have all grown so reliant*.⁷

That is not to say that the members of the F.A.T. Lab entirely shun Google; but they use it judiciously. One of Evan Roth's most well-known achievements, for example, involves turning his own name and website into the top search result

for the online query "Bad Ass Motherfucker".

Ultimately, however, what his and F.A.T. Lab's work demonstrates is that even the most slapstick humor can be used as a vehicle to raise a debate, make people think and start a conversation about contemporary issues, whether they involve infrastructures of controls, information monopolies or shopping magazines.

A final, key, characteristic of his works is that they herald a new era when free culture finally confronts the contemporary art world. Morally, ethically and economically. Old systems of intellectual property, definitions of authorship and patents are not the only ones that should govern today's artistic practice. They might still prevail and prosper, but alternatives exist and their future is bright.

Even the EyeWriter project, a DIY but sophisticated eye-tracking apparatus that Roth developed with the Graffiti Research Lab, openFrameworks and The Ebeling Group to allow a graffiti artist paralyzed by Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis to paint by moving his eyes is not a patented one-off. It runs a low-cost, open source technology and it could allow any other ALS patients to express themselves using only their eyes. An instruction set is online⁸ to show you how to replicate the eye-tracker for only \$50 dollars should you wish to make a pair for someone you know.

The art world might be a latecomer to these kinds of open, generous practices, but Roth believes that they are compatible with a fruitful career in art. "I do think it's possible to have an art career that intersects with the art market while still being an advocate for free culture," he explains. "Personally, I subscribe to the church

of kopimi⁹ and believe that everything digital inherently wants to be copied; that is its natural state. Like water flowing down the mountain, you can try to put up false barriers, but at some point the water always finds the sea. I still freely give (and take) everything digital. This same logic doesn't necessarily apply to physical objects, however. There are only false reasons for data to be limited to a certain number of copies, but there are reasons for making only three versions of a print or sculpture (usually having to do with real world constraints of time and money related to production). For this reason, I don't feel that there is a moral conflict in sharing an infinite number of digital files for free and selling a limited number of physical objects for money."

His words strangely echo a work I saw recently in an exhibition¹⁰ that looked at the impact that left-wing ideas had on the production and reception of art from the French Revolution to the present day. One of the highlights of the show was Jacques-Louis David's painting *The Death of Marat* (1793–4). The work is famous. What is less known, however, is that the Neoclassical painter granted permission for his piece to be reproduced on other supports in order to assist the Republican cause.

Another revolution, the one called Open Source Culture, is approaching. Evan Roth is one of its most eloquent champions, and I know he will be kinder than the French were to the elite clinging to their old values.



EVAN ROTH

FLIGHT MODE

⁹ Missionary Church of Kopimism, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Missionary_Church_of_Kopimism
¹⁰ Art Turning Left: How Values Changed Making 1789–2013, at Tate Liverpool, <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-liverpool/exhibition/art-turning-left-how-values-changed-making-1789-2013>

www.aksioma.org/flight.mode

¹ The TSA Blog: Message In a Carry-On, <http://blog.tsa.gov/2008/10/message-in-carry-on.html>

² look at what was on offer in the catalogue for the sake of researching this article. I will never get that hour back! Do spare yourself and take a short-cut to more jaw-dropping items with "The Very Best and Worst of *Skymall*", skymall.tumblr.com/

³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chind%C5%8Dgu>

⁴ <http://vimeo.com/63951858>

⁵ In reference to American computer programmer, author and open source software advocate Eric S. Raymond's declaration that he is "Lazy like a fox" and "too lazy to fail". <http://www.free-software.org/literature/papers/esr/cathedral-bazaar/cathedral-bazaar-3.html>

⁶ less and less sense to talk about 'the Internet', 'the PC business', 'telephones', 'Silicon Valley' or 'the media', and much more sense to just study Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft. These big five American, vertically organized silos are re-making the world in their image." <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2012/12/bruce-sterling-on-why-it-stopped-making-sense-to-talk-about-the-internet-in-2012/266674/>

⁷ Fuck Google!!!, <http://ffff.at/fuck-google/>

⁸ Instructables – The EyeWriter, <http://www.instructables.com/id/The-EyeWriter/>