



The **PostScript**^{UM} Anthology (2010–2023)

Essays on Art, Technology,
Society and the Environment

With: Aude Launay, Bojana Kunst, Clémence Seurat, Daniela Silvestrin, **Daphne Dragona & Domenico Quaranta (Eds)**, Dušan Kažić, Eva & Franco Mattes, Felix Stalder, Florian Cramer, Geoff Cox, Ida Hiršfenfelder, Inke Arns, James Bridle, Jaya Klara Brekke, Jon Lackman, Lev Kreft, Marc Garrett, Martin Zeilinger, Matthew Fuller, Mojca Kumerdej, monochrom, Nika Mahnič, Paolo Ruffino, Primož Krašovec, Régine Debatty, RYBN, Silvio Lorusso, Steve Rushton, Tomislav Medak, Trevor Paglen, Valentina Tanni, Vuk Ćosić

AKSIOMA

CIP - Kataložni zapis o publikaciji
Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, Ljubljana

7.01(082)
316.74:7(082)

The POSTSCRIPTUM anthology : (2010–2023) : essays on art, technology, society and the environment / [contributors Aude Launay ... [et al.] ; editors Daphne Dragona, Domenico Quaranta]. - Ljubljana : Aksioma - Institute for Contemporary Art, 2024

ISBN 978-961-7173-51-2
COBISS.SI-ID 196879619

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**POST-SCRIPTUM:
AN AFTERTHOUGHT AS AN INTRODUCTION**
Daphne Dragona

A postscript, or a post scriptum in Latin, is an afterthought. Noted with abbreviation (P.S., P.S. or PS), a postscript is what is often written after a letter is completed and signed. Read literally, in English or in Latin, it describes what follows the writing. It comes after a finished body of text, and it is used to express a forgotten thought, a feeling or other information. Postscripts are usually brief, only a sentence or a short paragraph long, but they can hold more essence than the main letter. They often reveal what the author found the courage to write just before sending the letter off. Postscripts became less frequent after synchronous communication based on platforms and apps arrived. Since then, whatever needs to be expressed as an afterthought becomes a new message or is stated with an emoji. Responses are immediate and the rhythm of correspondence and interaction is fast. Technology has affected not only communication but also our perception of time. In the era of apps, postscripts are no longer of use, and yet everything feels like a postscript: brief, expressive and fragmented.

The *PostScript^{UM}* publication series was launched in 2009 by Janez Fakin Janša and Marcela Okretič as a response to the need for further contextualisation of and theoretical discussion on the artistic programme of Aksioma | Institute for Contemporary Art. The short essays were to be based on the organised exhibitions and events, but the authors were given the freedom to expand beyond them. Resembling long postscripts added to something that preceded them, the essays were statements that shed light on a different aspect or a new angle related to Aksioma's exhibition programme. When *PostScript^{UM}* started,

its lifespan was not planned, but it easily reached fourteen years, and now a new iteration of the series is on its way. The present publication has been created at this moment of transition and features some of the contributions of the period now being concluded. *The PostScript^{UM} Anthology (2010–2023): Essays on Art, Technology, Society and the Environment* is not, however, simply an anniversary publication. It also reflects Aksioma's role in the local and international community of digital arts, bringing together various disciplines and cultures. Domenico Quaranta and myself, as editors of this publication, were invited to offer our own afterthoughts, looking back through time, noticing how the different texts capture what happened not only at Aksioma and in Ljubljana, but also in the world of connectivity and digital culture at large. Reading afresh essays that we first read years ago, we were overwhelmed by the pace and character of technological developments, and we found connecting threads that at the time of writing might have been different. In *PostScript^{UM}'s* various issues, feelings of excitement and desire alternate with feelings of anxiety and scepticism about the impact of technological changes on society and the environment. The time span covered in the essays expands further into the past and the future through multiple references to works, texts and incidents, allowing different temporalities to come together and intersect.

The book is divided into six sections, each with four to five contributions capturing the challenges, possibilities and implications of technology for society and the planet, while also commenting on the role of art. The contributions are mainly essays, some are interviews

and one is a fiction story. Most were written by theorists, others by artists. Artistic practices, works, interventions and tools are in the foreground in almost all cases, and a great genealogy of examples with a critical perspective emerges through the whole publication. It is important to keep in mind that each one of these contributions was written at a specific time, on the occasion of a specific event and, therefore, published individually. They were clustered only for this special edition, as a retrospection and reflection upon the topics discussed, and are presented chronologically in each section to render the changes that happened throughout these years in the intersection of art, technology, society and ecology noticeable and comprehensible.

The book opens with the section “Infrastructures of Surveillance and the Politics of Seeing”, which features texts from the early 2010s and discusses ways and modes of seeing used on the grounds of safety and security, paying attention to forms of agency that are enabled or impeded. Sound artist and archivist **Ida Hiršenfelder** interviewed **Trevor Paglen** following his exhibition *A Hidden Landscape* with which Aksioma | Project Space came into existence in 2011. In the conversation, the American artist, geographer and author, known for his photographic work on military and corporate infrastructures hidden from public view, explains why he is interested in moments of seeing and how he has been exploring the extent to which photography can provide evidence. Art critic and curator **Domenico Quaranta** writes about artist and writer **Jill Magid**’s performative work *Evidence Locker*, which also focuses on evidence, but takes us back to older

discussions about CCTV and surveillance in the public space. Magid established a personal relationship with the CCTV system in Liverpool, finding small cracks in its network. She called it the “observer” and wrote letters to it as she would to someone with a male gaze, stalking her. The **monochrom** art group tells a different story about evidence in a text that introduces *Zeigerpointers*, images used to document people pointing in a direction or to a spot as witnesses to an incident. This is the “wonderful world of absence” as the artists put it, with its politics of representation. Art critic and reporter **Régine Debatty** comments on the work of artist **Evan Roth** and the small acts of resistance against surveillance systems that people can share. Like Magid, Roth managed to establish a form of communication, addressing the people behind the systems of surveillance and control. In this case, monitoring allows for moments of reflection and questioning. **Bojana Kunst**, a philosopher and performance theorist, shifts her focus to individual responsibility, which she considers through the performances of the Croatian group **BAD.co** and proceeds to examine what we are usually attentive to and how our movement becomes one with the systems that capture us. A form of resistance can only start from the body itself, with its “labour, effort and capacity”.

The contributions in the next section of the book look into the possibilities and challenges of telling stories to reveal facts and truth. “Information Storytelling, Fakes and the Algorithmic Imaginary” opens with a text by **Inke Arns** about the work of the artist duo **UBERMORGEN**. The German curator and theorist reminds us how storytelling can be used as a media hacking practice that

helps us grasp complex topics and ideas in the era of connectivity. Narratives (and counter-narratives) build the needed associations of what might otherwise remain largely unseen and uncomprehended. Artist and writer **Steven Rushton** takes us back to the media interventions of the multidisciplinary collective **Ant Farm** and highlights the power of media to produce facts and create pseudo-events – “events designed solely to be reported”. Stories, though, can be edited and re-told, he reminds us, with the use of radical practices and software tools, while media (specifically video, nowadays) have their own limitations of possibilities. Interestingly, a project from the mid-1970s is used as an example of the recurrent promises of technologies, as well as the failed attempts to serve anything but the dominant system. Next, net. art pioneer **Vuk Ćosić** interviews the artist duo **Eva & Franco Mattes**, which is famous for its interventions on the internet, within video gaming worlds and also in public spaces. The importance, as they argue, is to leave the safe space of a gallery or a museum and move where people are online or offline. Their events have for the most part been fake, but in some cases also real – in their words, fake pranks that stretch the expectations and trust of an audience. **Primož Krašovec**, professor of sociology, discusses the role of memes as a different form of contemporary storytelling, focusing on the work of **Smetnjak**, the anonymous collective from Slovenia that has been mixing memes with theory and art for over a decade now. Going beyond mainstream and alternative, right and left, good and evil, Smetnjak uses the language of memes to tell stories about Ljubljana, its culture and

politics. The section closes with an essay by **Valentina Tanni**, discussing the power of users against platforms. The Italian art historian and curator looks into narratives and stories built specifically to train algorithms or hack algorithmically generated content. Facts and truth are nowadays often told over common imagery or users' performances to avoid filters and censorship.

The section "Citizenship, Authorship and Data Haunts" looks into the changes that last decade's continuous datafication brought to individual rights and claims in relation not only to states and companies but also to machines. Philosopher and sociologist **Lev Kreft** discusses the work of artists **Janez Janša**, **Janez Janša** and **Janez Janša**; the triptych portrait made of customised bank cards recalls the issues of ownership and personalisation. How much power does an individual really have as a customer of a bank? And how can simple loopholes be used to expose this? These questions also become manifest in **Jennifer Lyn Morone**'s project, which is analysed by writer, artist and curator **Marc Garrett** in the next essay. Garrett contextualises Morone's work by referring to the disenchantment with technology which followed the Snowden revelations. Morone is an artist who famously turned herself into a corporation, announcing her decision to make profit through the commodification of her own data as an act of over-identification with network capitalism. While Morone focuses on gaining her agency within today's connected reality, writer and artist **James Bridle** claims in his essay the right to one's citizenship and sheds light on a different financial and societal topic. What has changed since wealthy people have been able to

buy passports issued by other states? What does it mean that some can possess multiple identities and citizenships, while others have no passport and, hence, no national identity? Bridle argues for a stateless ecological future that can surpass borders and bring together the human and more-than-human world. Complementing these texts, philosopher **Aude Launay** takes the artworks of Slovenian artist **Sanela Jahić** as a starting point to raise questions of authorship in the era of algorithms and machine learning. Can artistic authorship still be claimed when both concept and form are decided by AI? This remains to be seen in the years and decades to come.

In the last fifteen years, the potential of decentralised technologies and peer-to-peer systems has been at the forefront as an alternative to sovereign networks, platforms and systems. Within this context and in the section “Decentralisation, Encryption and the Blockchain”, **Geoff Cox**, professor at the School of Communication and Culture at Aarhus University, comments on artist **Nicolas Maigret’s** *The Pirate Cinema*. Piracy is a starting point to discuss the free sharing of information, the temporalities involved within peer-to-peer networks as well as the assemblages that have occurred between humans and machines. In the same period that Maigret created *The Pirate Cinema*, the artist duo **!Mediengruppe Bitnik** launched the *Random Darknet Shopper* (2014), a bot that was programmed to buy different items on the darknet. Art historian and writer **Jon Lackman** wrote about this bot’s life and purchases over a one-year time span. The diary-like essay offers opportunities to ask what is right or wrong, legal or illegal, moral or immoral

in the internet of our times. **Florian Cramer**, research professor in Autonomous Art and Design Practices at Willem de Kooning Academy, presents the associations and differences between cryptography and steganography. Studying **Amy Suo Wu**'s artworks that use analogue steganography as a medium, Cramer succeeds in offering a genealogy not only of the culture of cryptography but also of related artistic practices. From a different perspective, geographer, designer and writer **Jaya Klara Brekke** speaks of the future and limitations of cryptography. She reminds us of its dependence on code and mathematics – a point also emphasised by Cramer – of its openness to possibilities and, most importantly, of the fact that humans have agency, responsibility and control over technologies. Addressing a call to further rethink technologies and their use, the section ends with the text written by curator **Martin Zeilinger**, which brings in a different perspective: from Zeilinger's point of view, the blockchain also encodes a desire to belong. Covering the spectrum of NFTs to DAOs with different forms of ownership being involved, the essay shows that the future, which is still to be imagined, can also be based on the values of the commons, of co-sharing and community owning.

“Labour, Money and Extractivism” maps asymmetries and forms of exploitation and profit-making as they unfolded in the last decade. Artist and academic **Paolo Ruffino**, who has worked extensively on games, examines the projects of game designer **Paolo Pedercini** aka **Molleindustria** and the issues of digital labour through examples from the gaming industry and

its horrible working conditions. Paolo Pedercini uses games as a medium of artistic expression to tell stories of a precarious class that emerged in the 2000s and still suffers under neoliberalism. The *Mayday Netparade*, for example, a work created in 2005, tackled the absence of representation and the lack of unions for many of these workers, and even foresaw the problems that people working in warehouses of companies like Amazon had to face later on. Writer and artist **Silvio Lorusso** discusses how precarious labour took on new forms in the years of the gig economy. Turning to an illuminating text written by philosopher André Gorz in the late 1980s, Lorusso's essay sheds light on how divides between working classes keep being formed and how older forms of services based on trivial and basic skills have reappeared. What has emerged is a new servile class of people that take small, underpaid jobs that allow other, more privileged classes to gain time. Divisions between classes, however, can be porous and positions can vary and change. In an interview conducted by writer and researcher **Nika Mahnič**, members of the **RYBN** artist collective explain their investigation into digital labour regimes and the digital economy, especially in offshoring. They use maps, databases, geolocation systems and references from situationism to show how such abstractions can become tangible and locatable. Finally, in his essay written on the occasion of **Vladan Joler's** solo show at Aksioma | Project Space, **Felix Stalder** discusses extractivism. Stalder, who is a professor of Digital Culture at the Zurich University of the Arts, brings together computing, forms of labour, resource exploitation and planetary-scale in-

terventions. He argues that even though an impasse has been reached with the environmental crisis, new entities and ontologies beyond dualisms and separations are also being born and a new understanding of the role of computing in them has become clear.

The final section of the book, entitled “Technocapitalist Debris, Post-human Ecologies and Post-growth”, examines the ambiguous relationship between technology and the environment. By reading illuminating texts written a decade ago, one realises the extent to which the ecological catastrophe has escalated, leaving old hopes unfulfilled. Curator and writer **Daniela Silvestrin** writes on the emergence of a plastic age, and the work of **Pinar Yoldas** shows that the problems tackled then still haven’t been resolved. Technology might be called upon in the name of progress, as writes researcher **Tomislav Medak**, inspired by the artistic work of **Sašo Sedlaček**, but at the same time, it serves the interests of the capitalist system. What stops us, then, from turning towards technologies that embrace social use-values and take into consideration all life forms? The root of the problem is again and again found in that humans have severed their bond to the planet. Writer and philosopher **Mojca Kumerdej** invites readers to a fictional world in a prehistoric place and time where humans and animals co-exist and are equally acknowledged and respected. In an interview with curator and publisher **Clémence Seurat**, plant anthropologist **Dušan Kažić** questions the modern world’s emphasis on the abstraction of production and speaks of the importance of co-domestication between humans and animals or plants. He argues that

perhaps we are telling the wrong stories for so-called alternatives and that an interspecies approach would require us to learn *with*, to work *with* and to live *with*. Art can play a crucial role in this, as writer and professor of Cultural Studies **Matthew Fuller** writes in his essay; works like those of artist **Joana Moll** that speak of the energy footprint of today's technologies expose what often remains unsaid and invisible. Artworks create the sensoria we need in order to see and perceive the world around us, and they can hopefully bring about the changes that we would like to see.

To conclude, what can an anthology on art, technology, society and the environment tell us about the future? In a period of a prolonged generalised crisis – that is social, economic, political and environmental at the same time, with wars and an ongoing climate catastrophe – what can these essays communicate? To what extent can critical texts and culture at large offer tools for thinking and acting? Overwhelmed with the feeling that we have no agency to affect what happens in the world of today, the only way to step forward might be to look back without losing our desire and urge to change the present and shape the future. This involves acknowledging and reflecting upon gains, shifts and costs of different scales, from the local to the global, from the terrestrial to the planetary, and from the human to the non-human. Returning to different afterthoughts of the recent past and relating them to incidents and phenomena of the present, one unavoidably finds home in the recurrent polyphony and heterogeneity, in stories told and issues long discussed, in the associations and intertwinement across time.

Every now and then, here (wherever that is) and now, one realises that the only connecting thread is the demand to see through the debris of contemporary life and find ways to live and be with each other in this human, more-than-human and machinic world.

Steve Rushton
THEY CAME TO SEE WHO CAME



You know the script: A politician and a military spokesperson mount the stage; each takes their place behind a podium. They face the ladies and gentlemen of the press and a bank of TV cameras. A line of flags provides an appropriate backdrop as the politician begins to speak. The politician reminds us of the necessity of the action they have taken. The politician reminds us that we did not want war; in fact, we did everything in our power to prevent conflict, but if an aggressor wilfully turns aside all overtures for a peaceful resolution, and if the aggressor continues to threaten the fundamental values of our society, then there is no choice.

The military spokesperson now points to a screen that demonstrates the efficiency of the weaponry our forces have employed against the aggressor. It also displays evidence of the military capacity of the aggressor. It seems that if they were afforded the opportunity, they could inflict terrible harm on our forces and to the way of life many have died to preserve.

But the press briefing is more than just a script; you also need the stage, the podium, the uniforms, the flags, the press and the cameras if you really want to master reality. By “mastering reality” I mean that there are certain media events that simply through their performance can have an effect in the world. Maybe you remember back in 2003, when a military man mounted the stage and provided evidence of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). What surprised many about the outcome of this performance was the comparative ease with which it was exercised and how a war could be prosecuted despite any real “evidence” being produced that could suggest

that such weapons did exist. It was as if the whole machinery of the press briefing was a feedback loop, which justified military action but also legitimised the press briefing itself.

For those of us raised with the notion that the press and TV news exist to somehow “get to the bottom” of things and that the news media are a forum in which things can be proven or disproved, the ease with which transparent nonsense became a matter of fact that could justify fatal action came as a shock.

Whatever this thing we call “the news media” is, it is not in its nature to simply test matters of fact. The WMD incident demonstrated that the apparatus of the media actually has the ability to *produce facts*. The press briefing demonstrates two fundamental things about the structure of contemporary media: 1) it is a feedback loop that gives legitimacy and a narrative to those who produce it; 2) the incantation that “produced” WMD reminds us of the most valuable lesson the French philosopher Michel Foucault taught us – *discourse produces its object*.

I’d like to travel back to the beginning of the video revolution and reflect on two media events produced by the collaborative art and design group Ant Farm in 1975: *Media Burn*, in which a customised Cadillac was driven through a pyramid of blazing television sets, and *The Eternal Frame* (with T. R. Uthco), a re-enactment of the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

The twenty-two seconds of home-movie footage of the Kennedy assassination, taken in Dallas in 1963 by bystander Abraham Zapruder, were sold to *Life Magazine* on the night of the shooting for 150,000 dollars. *Life*

published stills from the film shortly afterwards. Later, the Zapruder family would be paid 10 million dollars by the US government for rights to the film. The Warren Commission used the film as the basis for a series of reconstructions that served as part of their investigation into the assassination and reproduced stills in their report of September 1964. The film itself was not broadcast until 1975. It is hard to fathom that well into the 1970s the public did not view a moving image that, perhaps more than any other, came to define the turbulence of the 1960s.

Don Delillo's 1997 novel *Underworld* captures the sense of this moment in a fictional account of one of the film's first public, or semi-public, viewings in the summer of 1974. The scene takes place in an apartment with television sets in every room. In each room a video of the same piece of footage plays, with a slight delay. Delillo writes:

“The event was rare and strange. It was the screening of a bootleg copy of an eight-millimetre home movie that ran for twenty seconds. A little over twenty seconds probably. The footage was known as the Zapruder film and almost no one outside the government had seen it.

Of course the event had a cachet, an edge of special intensity. But if those in attendance felt they were lucky to be here, they also knew a kind of floating fear, mercury reading out of the sixties, with a distinctly trippy edge.

The footage started rolling in one room but not the others and it was filled with slurs and jostles, it was totally jostled footage, a home movie shot

with a Super 8, and the limousine came down the street, muddied by sun glint, and the head dipped out of the frame and reappeared and then the force of the shot that killed him, unexpectedly the head shot, and people in the room went ooh, and then the next ooh, and five seconds later the room at the back went ooh, the same release of breath every time, like blurts of disbelief.”¹

In this scene, Delillo combines multiple screens with the delay techniques of Dan Graham’s video pieces from around that time (techniques also used by Frank Gillette & Ira Schneider in their highly influential *Wipe Cycle* from 1969). It merges the use of video as *radical software* – where elements can be patched and reconfigured in ways that were not possible with film – together with an understanding that television has been around long enough to be regarded as *junk*. All this is blended with the shock tactics of art-media groups from the early 1970s, such as Ant Farm, Radical Software and TVTV (Top Value Television).

If the 8 mm footage was created in the age of the news reel, it is mediated in the age of video, which operates under the economy of the feedback loop – to be re-recorded onto tape and repeated over and over again, to be set in the eternal frame, to cycle within the eternal return of “rolling news”.

Ant Farm’s re-enactment of the Kennedy assassination, *The Eternal Frame*, was made the year that Zapruder’s

1 Delillo, D. (1997). *Underworld*. Scribner, p. 488.

footage became “publicly available”. Ant Farm’s copy of the film came from conspiracy theory sources and was originally bootlegged out of the *Life Magazine* lab. Ant Farm originally wanted to film early in the morning, to avoid the crowds, but it became evident to them that the light was not the same as the light on the Zapruder footage, and they needed it to be as close to the “real thing” as possible.



Ant Farm with T. R. Uthco, *The Eternal Frame*, 1975

Via the Warren Commission, the Zapruder footage was already caught in a media feedback loop, forming a catalyst that generated the noise of speculation, folding back to create a conspiracy panic. Because it was not visible as a moving image for eleven years after the event, the footage had become the absent centre of the Kennedy assassination – 22 seconds of action stretching into eternity.

The re-enactment served as a response to the belief that the Zapruder footage could somehow *reveal* something that had been hidden and repressed. But maybe the footage is replayed and re-enacted so often precisely because it *fails to represent*. A failure of representation is, in psychoanalytical terms, the central characteristic of trauma, but the

re-enactment also fails to speak of something at the centre of the technology of non-scripted film – its promise to display evidence, its promise to *carry the burden of proof*.

Four years after Ant Farm's historic media interventions, Pope John Paul II staged his own media event when he visited Poland. The visit has been described by writers Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz as a *shamanised media event*, which through its staging actually steered a course of events (the rise of the Solidarity movement and the eventual collapse of the Polish government).² The event was a ceremony, but a ceremony of a particular sort. Like the incantation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, through its performance, it established the meaning of the event and institutionalised it in collective memory. It is *at* that moment of shamanistic feedback, when a new definition of what is possible is established, *that* the next step is urged forward. The media event can be seen as a form of consecration because it gathers into itself a series of values that feed back to form a narrative of a state of affairs that requires action. The ceremony of the countdown (which is itself a media invention, introduced in Fritz Lang's *Frau im Mond* in 1929) begins the narrative that ends with the moon landing. This event – staged for television from countdown to touchdown – inscribes a series of values through its performance. It speaks of an era of positivist triumph, when American know-how knew how, and it represented the end of an era in which the vision of a murdered president was finally realised. It joins a string of images that are pre-scripted, including the 22 seconds of

2 Dayan, D., & Katz, E. (1994). *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History*. Harvard University Press, p. 150.

the Zapruder footage and the televised funeral of Kennedy, which folds back into itself to make a narrative of reality.



Ant Farm, *Media Burn*, 1975

The media event *Media Burn* was performed on 4 July 1975 a few months prior to *The Eternal Frame*. A modified 1959 Cadillac El Dorado Biarritz (The Phantom Dream Car), piloted by two drivers guided only by a video monitor, was driven through a pyramid of blazing television sets. As in *The Eternal Frame*, *Media Burn* featured the artist-president, John F. Kennedy, played by Ant Farm member Doug Hall. He gives a content-less speech that sets the stage for the main event. Indeed, the speech highlights the degree to which a media event needs to be ritualised. The speech is one of the support structures that need to be put into place in order to constitute a “real” pseudo-event. The president speaks: “Who can deny that we are a nation addicted to television and the constant flow of media, and not a few of us are frustrated by this addiction. Now I ask you, my fellow Americans, haven’t you ever wanted to put your foot through your television screen?”

The artist-president is the rhetorical shell of politics itself, his speech collapses past, future and present as the ghost of politics' past reports on the significance of what is about to happen.

“Today, there stand before us two media mators, brave young men from Ant Farm who are about to go forth into the unknown, and let me say this, these artists are pioneers, as surly as Louis and Clark when they explored uncharted territory, they are pioneers as surly as Armstrong and Aldrin when they set foot on the moon ...”

Ant Farm's Chip Lord, speaking on the subject of *Media Burn* in 2002, cited Michael Shamberg's seminal book *Guerrilla Television* (1971), which was an inspiration to various initiatives that combined the collectivist ideals of the 1960s with the potentially democratising (new) technologies of video, closed-circuit TV and cable of the 1970s: “[Using TV to destroy TV] was consistent with the *Guerrilla Television* position, to destroy the monopoly of centralised television. There was a lot of rhetoric about how cable TV was going to democratise production.”³

Ant Farm's media critique can be understood as a critical response to the promise of video, and perhaps more than any other artists they articulated its contradictions. In one respect, once released from the monopoly of the networks and accessed by ordinary citizens, the Portapak video recorder and the video tape promised to be person-

3 Chip Lord as quoted in: Lewallen, C. M., & Seid, S. (2004). *Ant Farm 1968–1978*. University of California Press, p. 73.

ally empowering and social: make your own social and technological networks, make and distribute your own programmes, construct your own social software, democratise artistic practice. But the values of self-empowerment could easily be accommodated within a media feedback system in which our performance becomes not only a commodity that we sell to ourselves but also a means by which the media could narrativise and legitimise itself.

As long ago as 1962, Daniel Boorstin coined the term “pseudo-event” to describe events designed solely to be reported: presidential debates, press conferences (and media burns).⁴ But perhaps Andy Warhol understood better than anyone else that the media event isn’t something you simply consume. Describing the unfolding hallucination of the factory, Warhol said: “They came to see who came.”⁵ The people who come to see the party become the party, figure and ground become a single flowing image. In the same way, the figure and ground of the press shift backwards and forwards, from the press as they arrive to report the event to the press as their bodies provide the props for the event.

A version of this text was originally published in 2009 in *The First/Last Newspaper*, edited by Dexter Sinister, as part of the series *How Media Master Reality*.

Additionally published by Aksioma in 2010 in both Slovenian and English as the 3rd issue in the essay series *Aksioma Brochure*, on the occasion of the performance *Closed Circuit (Who, What, Where, When, Why and How #2)* by Rod Dickinson in collaboration with Steve Rushton at the Old Power Station – Elektro Ljubljana in Ljubljana, and republished as the 3rd issue in the essay series *PostScript^{UM}* in 2014.

• https://aksioma.org/closed_circuit

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- 4 Boorstin, D. J. (1962). *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-events in America*. Vintage.
- 5 Andy Warhol as quoted in: Joselit, D. (2007). *Feedback: Television Against Democracy*. The MIT Press, p. 120.

COLOPHON

The PostScript^{UM} Anthology (2010–2023)
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Print:

Collegium Graphicum

No. of copies: 350

Published by:

Aksioma – Institute for Contemporary Art, Ljubljana
<https://aksioma.org>

Represented by: Marcela Okretič



Ljubljana, April 2024

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Sonja Grdina

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