

Marc Lee, *10.000 moving cities - same but different*, 2013
Strategies of participation in art and society.

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Since the advent of digital media, art has undergone a rapid from admiration or reflective contemplation of the work to creative and playful interaction with the work.

Marc Lee's participative net-based installation *10.000 moving cities - same but different* bears witness to an essentially new perception and practice of art, in which the traditional cliché of the isolated artistic genius is superseded by the invitation and real possibilities, as well as the extensive contribution of the public to the content, form, presentation and dissemination of the artwork.

The Korean version of this new work has been created for the grand opening exhibition of the new branch of the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Seoul, in November 2013. By its very nature as a profoundly participative "work in progress" it equally has a part in the new museum's mission statement to establish and advance a new era on Korean fine arts in conjunction with the promotion of diversity and global culture.

Let us briefly recall the importance of this vision.

Some decades ago the term "new media" was connected with far reaching technological visions aiming at the individualization as much as at the globalization of information and communication.¹ It should become possible to connect in real time as an individual, from any location on the globe, to

¹ The term "Global Village" was coined in 1962 by Marshall McLuhan in his famous book "The Gutenberg Galaxy".

any other individual on this planet. The totality of global information should be accessible for anyone at any place in the world, so the vision. But besides the expectation of the uniquely positive outcomes of globally networked communications and understanding, already in the 1960s the imminent danger of manipulation by totalitarian systems has been recognized and delineated.²

Becoming the ultimate and exuberant resource of general prosperity, by overrunning all expectations the rapid and irresistible development of the presaged information super highway within the last two decades leaves us today with the term "new media" as belonging to an elapsed outdated media theory. The irreversible transition from analogue to digital culture has also brought forth an absolute dependency on a technology which is being marketed and controlled by only a few global players, a dependency or even addiction, which cannot be but called "totalitarian". Besides the permanent doxologies of new media, also their negative consequences are being increasingly discovered.³ However, faced with the superiority of these consequences, we already determine a fatal resigning tendency of considering these consequences as "normal", because in a totally networked society they are obviously "given as factual", and so exploitable for any purpose.

In the 1960s, the above-named visions have been sourced by the emergence of two new technologies, the analog video and the military used, so-called Arpanet, the precursor of the internet. Long before the first

² Already in his important book *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. (1964 Cambridge, McGraw-Hill (MIT Press) 1994, p. 3.) Marshall McLuhan had traced the totalitarian character of the upcoming global network: "Today, after more than a century of electric technology, we have extended our central nervous system in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned".

³ Durch die mutigen Enthüllungen des ehemaligen Geheimdienstlers Edward Snowden und anderer wurden weltweite Überwachungstätigkeiten insbesondere durch US-Geheimdienste bekannt, die vor allem die Möglichkeiten elektronischer Vernetzung nutzen um auf breitester Basis weltweit Individuen wie auch Unternehmen auszuspionieren. Der permanente Anschluß aller genutzten Medien an das Internet ermöglicht den Geheimdiensten ein Eindringen in jedes individuell genutzte Gerät, jeden Computer, jedes Smartphone weltweit.

marketing of a portable video system, the Portapak, by Sony, in 1967, the Korean visionary artist Nam June Paik had called attention to the manipulative as well as participative potentials of new media technologies. Already in 1963, he had presented a 12-manipulated custom television set at Gallery Parnass in Düsseldorf (Germany). In countless public performances and art works Paik and with him a whole generation of media artists⁴ had claimed the direct participation of the audience in TV as a mass medium - recalling the profoundly democratizing intentions which had been expressed, already since 1927, by German playwright Bertolt Brecht in his radio theory.⁵ The initial approaches can be already found in the Dadaism of the 1920s. Such were further pursued by the strong movements of Fluxus and recovered themselves as decisive elements, inter alia, in Op-Art, Kinetic Art and the New Tendencies of the 1960s and early 1970s.

In the same way as new digital and networked technologies provide users expanded opportunities for information and communication today, art, too, allows its "user" to participate in content, forms of design and expression.

Reconsidering the relationship between art and technology, it always was assumed that change in technology also gives rise to new developments in art. But finally, what indications do we have, to understand what came first, from where the impulse came, what the change has triggered and brought

⁴ THE CREATIVE ACT, by Marcel Duchamp: "All in all, the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualification and thus adds his contribution to the creative act. This becomes even more obvious when posterity gives a final verdict and sometimes rehabilitates forgotten artists." Session on the Creative Act, Convention of the American Federation of Arts, Houston, Texas, April 1957, THE CREATIVE ACT, by Marcel Duchamp. Published in: Robert Lebel: Marcel Duchamp. New York: Paragraphic Books, 1959, pp. 77/78.

⁵ "... the radio has only one side where it should have two. It is an apparatus of distribution, it merely allocates. Now, in order to become positive, that is, to find out about the positive side of radio broadcasts, here is a suggestion for changing the function of the radio: transform it from an apparatus of distribution into an apparatus of communication. The radio could inarguably be the best apparatus of communication in public life, an enormous system of channels - provided it saw itself as not only a sender but also a receiver. This means making the listener not only listen but also speak; not to isolate him but to place him in relation to others. Bertolt Brecht, *Der Rundfunk als Kommunikationsapparat* (The Radio as apparatus of communication), 1932, p. 129.

about? Was it not at all times the artists, who have prepared and unleashed social transition through their critical-creative attitude, and their continuous inquiries about traditional valuations, and technical advance through their ideas, inventions, experimentations and new productions? Are not, for instance, the pervasive redemptions of the theocentric worldview and the subsequent subordination to paternalistic forms of government, and the emergence emergence of the new anthropocentric and democratic model of society basically due to the knowledge and influence of a whole generations of painters, sculptors, architects, musicians, playwrights, anatomists, mechanics, engineers, philosophers and inventors, poets and writers, yes exactly due to these "artists" who have not restricted themselves to the learned tradition and craftsmanship but have with their knowledge and capability of all disciplines expressed a different interpretation, and thus a comprehensive new vision of human existence?

Art means capability and knowledge, awareness and practice, and it also means expansion of consciousness beyond given borders. Upon closer examination it becomes clear that new developments in "art" precede technological as well as social change at all times. They anticipate, initiate and prepare the thought, model, forms of action and even the technical tools that lend themselves to all of the other social domains for and during change. Finally and definitely we have to understand that not "war is the father of all things", but that "art is the mother of all things". Art is the deepest source of all change and evolution.

At the same time it must be clearly stated that, contrary to some pessimistic anticipations, the rise of new technologies has by no means undermined the traditional forms of artistic formation. As little as painting has become superfluous with the invention of photography, photography has disappeared with the application of digital technology at an equally small extent. Anyone who observes the gigantic mass media and entertainment market with alert eyes today will identify the aesthetic mediocrity of the majority of the products. Unfortunately, particularly of those that are associated with the cultural field. Moreover, in most cases

these products are homogenised for an easy global marketing and customised according to the taste of a broad and therefore uncritical public.

This statement anticipates a threatening and profound change in our cultural landscape: today this landscape is already flooded with an ocean of images and sounds by means of the strong transmission capacity and the homogenising effect of the Internet, as well as mass-produced, individually used DVDs and computer games and also new mass entertainment formats in music, film and television, out of which only minimal artistic intention and creation emerge.

Thus, if a new "script" is being created through the application of new media in art, how we deal with this new, participative writing, and how we define it must also be questioned? By observing the impact of our own interactions, we abandon the limited role of the beholder and simultaneously become the reader, player, and user, but before all, for a limited time we become the co-creator, co-author and co-producer of a work that can unfold into thousands of variations. Just by taking over the selection of content, the organisation of form and the distribution of the work, we become a participating producer of the work rather than a disabled passive consumer.

Digital media has broadened our horizon, yet has immediately retracted this broadening. The price we pay for this unbelievable mass of information is frequently a loss of the direct sensory contact with reality. The debt we should actively reject is to fall under permanent control of powerful services and providers. Rejecting false promises of a "brave new world" has today become the most noble task of the artist. For this purpose he/she appropriates new tools. For the common questioning of the social reality he/she avails us the new tools and thereby constitutes the creative (r)evolutionary act.

The artwork *10.000 moving cities - same but different* deals with the world of information and news about places, cultures, people and movements. User generated content is the source of the Audiovisual information not

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censored nor chosen by a certain community, rather produced by the public including visitors maybe. This Audiovisual information can be sought online from a large number of uncensored internet sources in real time, and the results are projected on a number of physical cubes in the space of the gallery, symbolizing architectural models of cities and their squares. Visitors are able to walk through these models and experience the information in 3D. They are surrounded by countless moving fragments of the own chosen place, which constantly change as the place as itself.

Just as all cities in the world are different, so different and alive appear the projections and sounds in this work. Each new request creates always new representations of the real world as a combination of visitors and digital matrix. And what is more: Each request enables us to join and actively participate in the social movements of our time, focused at a specific location