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Marc Lee

TV Bot 1.0 / *TV Bot 2.0*, 2004 / 2010, Software

The work *TV Bot* by the Swiss artist Marc Lee is an Internet news channel which only broadcasts brand new stories. Never more than an hour old, they are scooped from the Internet's news flux, reformatted for a browser and given a URL. The process is automated, with no editorial hand behind the content selection which is reproduced in apparently random order as live TV streams, live radio streams, webcam images and text-based headlines. The only criterion that matters is *liveness*.

In its graphical representation, *TV Bot* makes obvious reference to well-known international TV broadcasters like CNN and n-tv. By being more live than these TV channels, Marc Lee interrogates the informativeness of broadcasters that are permanently oriented to up-to-dateness and audience numbers. The Swiss media artist, who also works with installation, largely focuses on the Internet and its structures. Also active as a software developer, Lee breaks open the mechanisms of the World Wide Web, revealing them to ordinary users and enabling critical reflection.

Conservation measures

As a case study, Marc Lee's *TV Bot* is fundamentally different from all the other objects of analysis. It is a work which uses the Internet and takes its content from the World Wide Web. Therefore *TV Bot* is fundamentally dependent on technological infrastructures which are themselves subject to rapid and radical change.

The original version of *TV Bot* came about in 2004, created by Marc Lee in the context of, and with the support of the project *56k-bastard Channel TV*. *TV Bot 1.0* functioned by means of a software program which processed the information from online TV and radio stations, searching for the newest material, gathering it together randomly. The program filtered the content, removing anything more than one hour old. In this way, the desired actuality of the information was guaranteed. In making a visible collage of TV and radio programs, webcam images and classic web contents (like Google News headlines), *TV Bot 1.0* uses Real Player, an application for playing video and audio files, as an audio-visual format.

TV Bot was updated in 2010, in the context of the online project *beam me up*. As a result, its appearance was slightly changed. The software update was necessary since the original version had changed considerably in six years. In the meantime, the standard audio-visual Web application had shifted from Real Player to Adobe Flash Player; because of this technical change, *TV Bot 1.0* was simply no longer functional and therefore the artist decided to adapt the artwork to Flash. Since there are already further changes in technical formats under way, it is simply a matter of time before the updated *TV Bot 2.0* is technically outmoded and will be "shut down".

As well as software updates, which can be understood as a conservation strategy of "migration", the artist also undertook a "reinterpretation" of *TV Bot 2.0*. There have been small changes to the work's content and aesthetic appearance, and new content streams have been added, including the community platform Twitter. The *look and feel* of *TV Bot 2.0* is strongly guided by the first version, but has been "modernized" and made "more contemporary" by the artist. So, for example, the montage tempo of the TV, radio and webcam images has been increased in order to bring them closer to the pace of contemporary news streams. Overall, the structure of representation has been given more visual clarity. In addition, *TV Bot 2.0* has been given its own logo in the form of a rotating globe.

Today, *TV Bot 1.0* exists only in the form of a 2005 documentation video, which shows the first version as a "historic sequence". This "documentary time-window" preserves the original aesthetic appearance of the first version. But what happens behind the visible surface presented to the user, and how does this surface come to be? To record the technical elements and document their various functions, relations and mutual interactions – this remains the task of preserving *TV Bot*.

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Events:

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