

From Work of Art to New Media Art as Research

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Today, we come across new media art projects that occur at the intersection of contemporary art, networked economy, new politics, technoscience and new lifestyle. The new media art pieces (web installations, hactivists' interventions, net.art, computer games mods) are often only one click away from Web embedded sites and portals of political organizations, big corporations and e-commerce. This new condition discerns noticeably from the modernist paradigm based on differentiation of artistic realm from the social. The very nature of art is steadily being interrogated and re-conceptualized; the artistic nature of art is getting more and more instantaneous, fluid and temporary. In a fashion, as Hakim Bey has coined the term "temporary autonomous zones", one can talk about the "temporary art projects" as entities that have artistic signification and justification for a very short period of time. They spring up in a very limited time, but in a different time and context such projects could gain quite different signification and functions.

While the traditional aesthetics begin by exploring the specificity of work of art and its crucial features (form, genre, creativity, author, aesthetic value), the contemporary art theory calls into question the very nature of the artwork and its artistic function. Rather than be a stable and aura-based object, the piece of art is a process, an artistic software, an experience, a service devoted to solving a particular (cultural and non-cultural) problem, a research, an interface, which also demands from its user the ability for associative selection, algorithmic (logical) thinking and for procedures pertaining to DJ and VJ culture, such as (re) mixing, cutting, sampling, filtering and recombination.

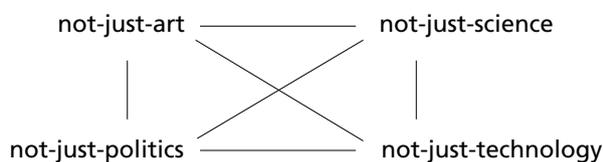
The transformation we must come to terms with can be summarized in this way: in today's world the art-making, embedded in a novel condition of immaterial labor, finds its own purpose in problem-solving and research activities, which bring something into the world that is not there: an alternative mode of knowledge coded in a way that discerns itself from common scientific methods. Such activities are embedded in a present condition

of post-Fordist labor and in a realm of immaterial production for privileged (intellectual) and innovation based services. What do we talk about, when we are mentioning art-making in terms of art service? The art service is not so much the manufacturing of things as it is a process of reshaping the thing, moving it, connecting it and incorporating it into new relations and new contexts. The service presupposes a problem, a challenge or an order to be solved or carried out. The performer of the service is always faced with a certain task, challenged to solve it in a sequence of steps chosen as economically as possible. The service therefore ends with a solution to the problem (or its removal) and not the manufacturing of an object. The service always implies an algorithmic procedure that has to be as rational as possible, economical, divided into phases, steps, with instructions needed for it to be carried out. New media art blurs the lines between "two cultures" (Snow's notion) and can be mentioned even as a dry run for experiencing new forms of communication, research and even post-political politics. The research function of new media art projects is in exploring those features of objects (and concepts, intellectual paradigms) that are left behind within the official scientific investigations and can be understood in terms of public accessed critical science as it is — in terms of Critical Art Ensemble endeavors — opposed to the official one, executed by means of professional scientists.

Although the social system of art is explicitly auto-poetic and self-referential, such noticeable turns in contemporary art are possible, due to profound and essential shifts arising in other fields as well. Reality itself has mutated too, for it has passed over noticeable turns and shifts of paradigm; nowadays we can find out that traditional concepts and devices for its understanding have become useless, even obsolete. All its important components have become included in a new constellation defined by bio-politics, technosciences, globalization, multiculturalism, empire, post-Fordist immaterial labor, post-political politics, (social) networking, the multitude and the cognitive capitalism. The solo play of the new media art could not be possible

today, if the “prime” (given) reality components and forces would not go through such transformations; in the fields of science, technologies and politics processes occurred which lead toward their art-like nature in terms of destabilization of traditional forms, one could say as parallels between destabilization of artifacts in today’s art and destabilizations of national state in the globalized (trans)politics, material wealth in (new) economy and the project of discovering natural laws in techno-sciences.

Today we are witnessing the interactions of “scientific art” and artistic technosciences, technologies as culture, and new forms of politics. Referring to alternative browser Webstalker (as a temporary piece of art), Mathew Fuller (1998) has coined the term *not-just-art*. This term seems to be a proper name for the very nature of the contemporary art-of-in-between spaces, and could also be applied in other fields. The e-science, which refers to other-than-science (its e-research brings cultural innovations to the fore) could be called not-just-science, and within very similar fashion terms like not-just-technology and not-just-politics could be introduced as well. The basic interactions in the field that enables the shifting paradigms of art as research, post-political politics, technology as culture, and e-science can be presented with the following scheme:



In today’s world, the new labor force’s time is being extended to the worker’s entire life, and there are no hard and fast lines separating art from immaterial labor (both are embedded in a social networking reality), and the not-just-politics comes to the fore in terms of “post-political politics” (Virno’s claim), shifting the very nature of politics away from the (national) state and parliament democracy.

The post-political politics of novel subjects (multitude, artists, hactivists...) is in dialogue with art, which consciously gives up the aesthetic function and leaves behind the social irresponsibility of its realm as it used to be defined within modernism. The artistic features of today’s art cannot be defined simply as a characteristic set of artwork properties; neither can they be regarded as the result of a canon and institution of art conventions, we argue instead that the very nature of art is a product of a distinctive mode of temporary interactions between the arts and other key fields of the social. The contemporary, new media based projects of art deliver — let us say, when it is a matter of up-to-date issues of globalization and multiculturalism, surveillance, human rights, personal data protection — new and entirely competent knowledge presented as an artistic surplus, which is complementary to the knowledge produced by natural science, humanities and social sciences. We can encounter the issue of surveillance in the presence by taking into consideration contributions of social theory to this field, but our knowledge about this topic can be enriched also by artistic concepts of this issue in form of artist actions (e. g. Surveillance Camera Players) and hacktivism and net art events.

There are many new media artists that are aware of research as a novel function of their endeavor, meaning that their poetics and statements reflect this cultural turn. E-literature writer Mark Amerika argues for instance that “with *FILMTEXT* I take this surf-sample-manipulate research practice right into the bell of the beast, interfacing Hollywood with hypertext, video games with literary rhetoric, interactive cinema with image *écriture*.” The *FILMTEXT* (as one of his significant projects) demonstrates that text-making in terms of new media paradigm is surf-sample-manipulate research practice; rather than being an artist or author (written with capital letter), the textscape producer could be defined as a (new media) researcher dealing with the issues of the new media verbal. She undertakes research in a way that promotes and privileges a very intimate and rich human experience in embedded knowledge.