

## A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE INTERNET AND THE PHYSICAL FOR THE ART

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### ABSTRACT

In *The Aesthetics of Net.Art*, Julian Stallabrass described, "The 'objects' of Internet art are far from being conventional art objects. They are not only reproducible without degradation but are almost free to transmit." This point is concerned with the immateriality of art. The immaterial nature of the Internet throws the art world into confusion. I want to show the confusion of art from the viewpoint of the relationship between the Internet and the physical. I will examine three cases: *Send me the JPEG* by Winkleman Gallery, *DISOWN* by DIS, the Internet Yami-ichi by IDPW. I will conclude that *Send me the JPEG* by Winkleman Gallery shows the complexity of the dichotomy between the Internet and the physical. *DISOWN* by DIS overcomes the confusion of the dichotomy between the Internet and the physical and transforms the crossing of the two into the Post Internet value. The Internet Yami-ichi by IDPW makes a lot of jokes about the confusion of the dichotomy between the Internet and the physical and reframes an outside of the overlap between the two. Consequently, the Internet-ish is downloaded and installed in reality.

### INTRODUCTION

In *The Aesthetics of Net.Art*, Julian Stallabrass described, "the 'objects' of Internet art are far from being conventional art objects. They are not only reproducible without degradation but are almost free to transmit (or rather, once the initial outlay has been made, the marginal cost of each transmission is close to zero). Cheaply reproducible artistic media have long existed, of course, but attempts at their wide dissemination have foundered on the cost of distribution. [1] This point is concerned with the relationship between the Internet and the physical art. The Internet can show artworks as almost perfect copies anywhere because of its immaterial nature. However, the contemporary art that was based on the physical is rapidly acquiring an immaterial nature and widely stepping on the Internet. The immaterial nature of the Internet throws the art world into confusion.

### THREE CASE STUDIES

Stallabrass described online art almost ten years ago; nowadays, a relationship between the Internet and the physical art is becoming more complicated. In order to show this complicated situation, I will examine three cases: *Send me the JPEG* by Winkleman Gallery, *DISOWN* by DIS and the Internet Yami-ichi by IDPW.

### SEND ME THE JPEG BY WINKLEMAN GALLERY

In short, *Send me the JPEG* seeks to question what is gained and what is lost in this new era of collecting. The increase in accessibility and the flow of information have eliminated the formerly formidable geographic obstacles that made it difficult to disseminate images and ideas. An attendant rise in the amount of capital being devoted to the production and display of

contemporary art has made it possible for more artists than ever before to exist. These have to be seen as positive. By the same token, the basic relationship between viewer and object has been fractured. Indeed, in this new order, the way a work looks in a photograph (even if it is itself a photograph) trumps all other concerns, which has affected what is made, as well as how it is contextualized. "Disruptive technology" is well named and one must adapt. Ultimately, though, we trust that *Send me the JPEG* is an argument that there still is value in experiencing new work in person. [2]

Winkleman Gallery's statement implies that not only the online art, but also the traditional art world is getting to adopt the immaterial nature of the Internet. The paintings, sculptures and installation arts are transformed into the intangible JPEG images in order to spread them all over the world. As a result, many art collectors watch the almost costless JPEG image and buy the actual artwork. Over half of contemporary art collectors purchase an artwork at a glance of its digital image without actually seeing it on the gallery. According to Winkleman Gallery, it is "very excited about the reach that digital opportunities offer to promote our artists outside the gallery space itself, but we're a bit skeptical that the rise in the number of collectors who have purchased some art from JPEGs indicates any dramatic impact for the future of "the physical experience." [3] Nearly perfect immaterial copy of the actual work invades "the physical experience" of the art collectors. In order to inspect this situation, Winkleman Gallery held a gallery's artists group show *Send me the JPEG* in 2013. *Send me the JPEG* exhibited not actual works but digital images of works on large flat monitors. We go to the real gallery in order to watch the physical artwork; however, Winkleman Gallery displayed only digital images of the works.

*Send Me the JPEG* asks us what the significance of the physical space is. The Internet shakes the value of the real space for the art world. Only the real space can show the physical artworks; however, this value in experiencing artwork in person is held in doubt by the Internet. The Internet becomes another exhibition space for the gallery beyond the geological gap; therefore, the gallery space is not an absolute one. As a result, the Internet compels the gallery to rethink how important or not its own real space is. *Send me the JPEG* seems like throwing out its physical space for the actual artworks; the physical space becomes like the Internet, but the gallery space still bonds to the geographical condition.

From 1990s to 2000s, the real space has had overwhelming value against the Internet in the art world. In 2010s, the traditional art has become similar to the net art in terms of spreading itself through the Internet. Consequently, many art collectors regard

the immaterial JPEG images as the actual artwork for making a decision to buy it and the physical gallery place becomes equal to or subordinate to the Internet. Furthermore, *Send me the JPEG* attempts to bring the JPEG image working as the actual artwork on the Internet into the physical space. Winkleman Gallery's experiment shows a subversive relationship between the physical artwork and the immaterial JPEG image. It means that formerly, the Internet belonged to the physical; today, the physical belongs to the Internet.

Is this situation good or not for the art gallery? People almost think that the real is more important than the Internet. But Winkleman Gallery says: "This is a fantasy group exhibition. We could never actually present all these works in our space at the same time." [4] The JPEG image brings its advantage point of the huge Internet space into the physical space, as well as its disadvantage point of the lack of "the physical experience" in the gallery space. In short, the art galleries have not yet fully addressed these negatives and positives.

#### *DISOWN BY DIS*

"*DISOWN – Not For Everyone*," is an art exhibition posing as a retail store. Or maybe it's the other way around. As Karl Lagerfeld for H&M is a diffusion line for fashion, *DISOWN* is a diffusion line for art. Set as an examination of taste and consumerism, *DISOWN* presents a new model for cultural critique. Presenting products from over 30 world-renowned artists including Ryan Trecartin, Jon Rafman, Bjarne Melgaard, Amalia Ulman, Telfar and Hood By Air (HBA), *DISOWN* will be featured in a retail installation by artist Lizzie Fitch. Art collective DIS and curator Agatha Wara present the month long exhibition, starting March 6th at Red Bull Studio New York. [5]

A New York-based collective, DIS represents Post Internet value by publishing the online platform DIS magazine. "Post Internet" means there is no difference between the Internet and the physical world; everything is Internet! Although DIS is mainly active on the Internet, this corrective does not matter whether it is the real and the Internet. For example, DIS held *DISOWN* at New York's Red Bull Studio and will curate 2016 Berlin Biennale. In the physical and the Internet, DIS attempts to diffuse the Post Internet value all over the world, but it is not for everyone.

As shown by the prefix of "dis-" that is their group name, DIS will continue to criticize the existing hierarchy and power. The word "Internet" usually indicates the negative aspects such as "an inferior space to the real" and "a place of pranks," however, DIS use the "Internet" as the indulgence in order to criticize the traditional values scathingly. DIS does not simply deny the values of the past, but takes the way of relativizing the absolute real value via the Internet. They keep criticizing the traditional values via the Internet and gradually overwrite the overlapping area between the real and the Internet into the Post Internet that means "dealing with the real and the Internet as the equivalent." Finally, DIS hopes

to create the relationship that both the real and the Internet are not in either of the alternatives. There is just Post Internet.

DIS tests Post Internet value in everywhere in order to diffuse it. For example, *DISOWN* is a "retail platform and laboratory to test the current status of the art object." [6] Gabby Bess, a multi-media artist, says, "The show cleverly illustrates DIS' ethos of wanting to disrupt existing hierarchies in the art world and to work outside of traditional art economies." [7] *DISOWN* opened as an exhibition using the format of a retail shop in the physical space; now, it has become an online store because the form of real retail store is very limited geographically and temporally. *DISOWN* imported the Post Internet value into the physical place and made the strong impression on the traditional art world and it has gone back to the Internet in order to diffuse the Post Internet continuously. This strategy implies that DIS considers the Internet as not an ends but just a means of the diffusion of the Post Internet value. DIS makes full use of the Internet in order to keep on overwriting everywhere into the Post Internet value.

*DISOWN* plans to make another circulation system of artworks. Each artist, like Ryan Trecartin, Jon Rafman, Amalia Ulman and more, puts his or her feeling of artworks into the goods on *DISOWN*. And furthermore, stocks of *DISOWN* are sold from \$30 to \$4,800 and are cheaper than their artworks in the gallery. Therefore, a relationship exists between the gallery and *DISOWN* where the artwork in the gallery is given priority, rather than what's best for *DISOWN*. Is *DISOWN* just a diffusion line of the traditional art world?

It is little wonder that the goods on *DISOWN* are sold at more expensive prices at the art gallery. Even though the artists who represent post-internet value show and sell their artwork in the traditional art world, they collaborate with DIS to make another art commerce system (*DISOWN*). Moreover, it is interesting that both post-internet artworks and *DISOWN* stocks are under the strong influence of the abundant copy-and-paste images on Tumblr. If we examine the art world from the point view of Tumblr, we might say that first, there are free images on Tumblr and next, the images become the expensive artworks such as the Tumblr images in the gallery. Finally, they change the reasonable prices for good artwork, such as those shown on *DISOWN*. This circulation of image-art-good blurs between the artwork and the good. Besides, it makes the overthrow of the relationship between the traditional art world and the Internet; the art world is no longer first; the Internet is first and everything is the Internet! DIS creates a new place like *DISOWN* with Post Internet artists who play trickster in the traditional art world, which heightens and spreads Post Internet value in both the physical and the Internet.

DIS examines the Post Internet on the Internet or the real space and uses the Internet to revolt against art. The dichotomy between the physical space and the Internet is shifting to another dichotomy between the traditional and material art world and the Post Internet

value that represents the immaterial culture. DIS does not care whether their exhibition is held in the physical space or the Internet because they only hope to spread the Post Internet value. Using both the real and the Internet, DIS attempts to popularize the Post Internet value as the diffusion line of the traditional art as much as they can. As a result, the diffusion line will get more crucial presence than the correction line, the traditional art. DIS will make a new order of the art world via the Post Internet value that comes from the Internet.

Although *Send me the JPEG* by Winkleman Gallery shows an ambivalent feeling for the immateriality of the Internet, DIS straightly represents and uses it for the Post Internet value. DIS not only overcomes the confusion of the art world caused by the ambiguous intangible nature of the Internet, but also uses its nature in order to diffuse the new order-based Post Internet value, *DISOWN* online store. DIS shows the entirely new value beyond the dichotomy between the physical space and the Internet and asks us whether you can keep up with us and the Internet; therefore, *DISOWN*'s slogan is "Not For Everyone."

### THE INTERNET YAMI-ICHI BY IDPW

Stuff happens. Didn't used to. Like when some small off-handed private comment turns into an SNS flame war. Or worrying about not getting enough "Likes." The YouTube videos you can't watch anymore because somebody complained. Or the apps you can't play because they were rejected by Apple. Once upon a time, the Internet was supposed to be a place for "liberty." Nowadays it's so uptight.

So let's turn off, log-out and drop in on the real world. The Internet Yami-ichi is a flea market for "browsing" face-to-face. Take your own Internet liberties\* here, with us.

\*But no dangerous or illegal goods, please! This black market wants to remain free and useful! [8]

The Internet Yami-ichi (Black Market\*) is a flea market which deals with "Internet-ish" things, face-to-face, in actual space. Both flea markets and the Internet are fanatical and chaotic mixes of the amazing and useless. In the Internet Yami-ichi both the wills and desires which brought us to create the Internet and the wills and desires we picked up once we got there are salvaged to be shared in a social space. Together we experience the afterglow, off line, as the "buzz" of the Internet wears off.

\*The Japanese word "Yami-ichi" translates directly into the English "black market," though due to an emphasis created by mixing different Japanese writing systems the word "yami" takes on double meaning of "sick for" / "addicted to" etc., so a more accurate translation might be "Internet Obsessives Market." This market doesn't trade in dangerous or illegal goods. This black market is bright! [9] IDPW, a secret society on the internet since 1914 (it's a joke!) and the organizer of the Internet Yami-ichi,

evaluates the value of the real place via the Internet and makes use of it as a landing place for the "Internet-ish." Therefore, the relationship between the Internet and the physical space is twisted on the Internet Yami-ichi. There is no big art market and art world in Japan as in America and the EU; IDPW does not need to criticize the art world as DIS does. Consequently, IDPW can focus on examining the relationship between the Internet and the physical space and hacking both the Internet and the physical space.

There is no dichotomy to turn over each other for art on the Internet in Japan. There is only blank and marginal space waiting for someone to overwrite its status. IDPW transforms the blank space into a place where the spirit of the Internet is summoned. Members of IDPW and participants of the Internet Yami-ichi sense that the Internet is there, even when they log off from it. Tomoya Watanabe, a member of IDPW, stated: If the Internet is shut down I'm OK. I have the Internet on my body. The Internet is everywhere if you have the Internet-ish sense. I think a handshake is the Internet-ish sense and signal fire is like Poke. If you have the Internet-ish sense, everything becomes the Internet. [10]

Watanabe is sure that we have the Internet-ish sense on our body even though we log off from the Internet. Here, we have to make clear what "the Internet-ish sense" means. The Internet-ish sense represents not the current Internet but the early web. iMAL, a host of the Internet Yami-ichi 5 Brussels, describes, "The Japanese collective IDPW.org invites us to perpetuate "in real life" the freedom and joyful anarchy of the early web." [11] IDPW trust in not the Internet but the Internet-ish sense that represents "the freedom and joyful anarchy of the early web." IDPW adopts the flea market for describing its feature of the Internet Yami-ichi. IDPW explains "Both flea market and the Internet are fanatical and chaotic mixes of the amazing and useless." iMAL says, "the Internet Yami-ichi draws its inspiration from flea markets, these chaotic assemblages that combine hidden gems, unlikely objects, collectibles and useless trash." [12] The phrase, "these chaotic assemblages," is an accurate description of the Internet Yami-ichi. The format of flea markets unexpectedly let the Internet Yami-ichi link with the art world because Nicolas Bourriaud considers that "The flea market" is a representative format of the dominant art for the nineties.

Why has the market become the omnipresent referent for contemporary artistic practices? First, it represents a collective form, a disordered, proliferating and endlessly renewed conglomeration that does not depend on the command of a single author: a market is not designed, it is a unitary structure composed of multiple individual signs. Secondly, this form (in the case of the flea market) is the locus of a reorganization of past production. Finally, it embodies and makes material the flows and relationship that have tended toward disembodiment with the appearance of online shopping. [13] The Internet Yami-ichi is a place for the reorganization of the early web spirit, creating new meaning for

the Internet. IDPW does not think that the real is better than the uptight current Internet, but the real is more similar to the early web than the current Internet. Therefore, they have reorganized the past Internet into the Internet-ish sense in order to combine the real with early web minds. Unlike Bourriaud, who considers that its disembodiment is negative for the real space, IDPW embodies a positive face of 'disembodiment with the appearance of online shopping' on the physical space. As a result, IDPW hacks both the Internet and the physical space.

Shunya Hagiwara, a member of IDPW, states: "The Internet Yami-ichi recognizes the Internet as a character. It is like making a derivative story of the Internet." IDPW makes a new story for the Internet as a character. The Internet does a very good job in the new story, which are different times and space from now and here. Hagiwara's idea shows how making a derivative story with the Internet as the character can be one of the hacking ways. First, IDPW tries to find the blank space between the Internet and the physical; second, they hack and overwrite the blank in order to make another story of the Internet. Finally, the Internet-ish sense is summoned to the blank space with a new story; then the Internet Yami-ichi is formed.

IDPW downloads the Internet-ish sense into the physical space. The Internet Yami-ichi seems to be just nostalgia for the early Internet; however, it is not such an easy thing. IDPW neither installs Internet-ish sense into the current Internet nor remakes the early web on the Internet; instead, it downloads Internet-ish sense into the real place. This procedure cleverly avoids not only going to the nostalgia of the Internet but also being subversive to the uptight situation of current web. The Internet Yami-ichi shows the unique twisted connection between the Internet and the physical space via the Internet-ish sense. The Internet Yami-ichi sells the goods related to the Internet from various points of view. The Internet Yami-ichi does not have the art market as its opponent like *DISOWN*, therefore, the goods more directly reflect the Internet. A media art collective *exonemo*, a member of IDPW, sells "Spacer GIF;" it is a space enclosed in red tape. Of course, it is a joke; "Spacer GIF" is actually a transparent image, often used to control blank space within a web page. The Internet dude, a physical character representing the Internet, does "Real Follow" which imitates Twitter's "Follow" action on the physical space. It means that the Internet dude follows someone in the real space. He does not critically perform Vito Acconci's *Following Piece* again, but it makes Twitter's "Follow" physical and is also just a joke like *exonemo*'s "Spacer GIF." There are a lot of jokes = goods related to the Internet at the Internet Yami-ichi. And, visitors say that it's funny and buy it. Now we must remember that for the secret society since 1914; IDPW itself is a joke!

If you do not understand the jokes of the Internet, the Internet Yami-ichi is just a regretful place. Almost all downloading of the Internet into the real tends to become disappointed physical spaces like *Send me the JPEG*. However, the Internet Yami-ichi

becomes the event that enjoys this regretful situation. The Internet Yami-ichi is always very active flew market. It becomes the location for bringing out many people from the Internet and linking them positively in the physical world.

The word "regretful" explains the success of the Internet Yami-ichi. IDPW describes the Internet Yami-ichi as "regretful electronic commerce;" it means that you have to go the physical spot in order to buy something even though it is an electronic commerce. The word "regretful" implies not negative but positive meaning because IDPW and participants enjoy bothering going to the real space. In short, IDPW uses the word "regretful" in order to show a twisted value between the real and the Internet. This twisted value is similar to a feeling of "regretful" with which SAYAWAKA, a writer of the Japanese subculture, tries to describe a Japanese youth culture of 2010s.

SAYAWAKA considers that the word "regretful" appears with positive meaning on the Internet in Japan during 2006-2009 parallel to prosperous childish subculture like *Niconico*. Furthermore, this Japanese Internet situation indicates that the young, whom the older people regard as regretful, tend to enjoy their "regretfulness." The young Japanese on the Internet do not turn against the older people but reframe the meaning of regretfulness from negative to positive [14]. The Internet Yami-ichi syncs the feelings of enjoyment of the regretful situation by the young Japanese on the Internet.

IDPW says: "Turn off, log-out and drop in on the real world for a change," downloading and installing the Internet-ish into sense in the real place in order to hack and reframe both the real and the Internet. Kensuke Sembo and Yae Akaimwa, members of IDPW and *exonemo*, talked about how we can rediscover a function of the real place via the Internet:

*Akaiwa – The real place gathers many people's attentions and make connections.*

*Sembo – There is unique collective awareness.*

*Akaiwa – Although the past Internet has places like BBSs in order to get together, it is difficult to feel that there are such places due to Timelines of Twitter or Facebook. So, we realize that the real place has a function that many people physically get together. The Internet Yami-ichi makes full use of this physical place function. [15]*

IDPW attempts to make a real place, like BBS, on the Internet. At first, BBS imported the real place function and many people went there and made unique corrective awareness on the Internet. However, this place on the Internet is disappearing on WEB 2.0. Therefore, IDPW made a physical place for internet people to gather in order for the unique corrective awareness of the Internet to be reborn. The physical place is hacked and reframed by the Internet-ish sense, which is made from reorganizing the early "liberty" web and joking about the current

uptight web. This twisted procedure produces the unique feel of the Internet Yami-ichi. IDPW implements new “Face to Face” and “Hand to Hand” via the Internet into the physical place and shows the new function of the real place after the Internet. This procedure is not subversive between the real and the Internet-like art markets in America and the EU.

## CONCLUSION

*Send me the JPEG* and *DISOWN* bring the Internet into the physical place: the art world. DIS, especially, makes a diffusion line for art in order to inject the Post Internet value into the real art world. But, the real and the physical have an overwhelming power in the art world; therefore, the art world considers the place and the artwork imbued with the Internet to be inferior in quality. In short, the traditional art world has not adequately treated the Internet yet. However, DIS does not care about the traditional art world because they want make the very new art value of Post Internet, but this is “not for everyone.”

Unlike DIS and Winkleman Gallery, IDPW attempts not to be subversive of the art world but “to let some fresh air into the world of the Internet – which starting to feel a bit uptight – by downloading our Internet activities to exchange in the actual world, as a flea market.”[16] They use the format of flea market as the locus of a reorganization of Internet and tries to download and install the Internet-ish sense into the physical place; the Internet Yami-ichi. The Internet-ish sense does not belong to the dichotomy between the Internet and the physical, but comes from an outside blank space of the overlapping area between the current Internet and the real. As a result, the Internet Yami-ichi becomes the location for bringing out many people from the Internet and linking them positively with the Internet-ish sense in the physical world.

Finally, I sum up three case studies:

*Send me the JPEG* by Winkleman Gallery shows the confusion of the dichotomy between the Internet and the physical.

*DISOWN* by DIS overcomes the confusion of the dichotomy between the Internet and the physical and transforms the crossing of the two into the Post Internet value.

The Internet Yami-ichi by IDPW makes a lot of jokes about the confusion of the dichotomy between the Internet and the physical and hacks and reframes an outside blank space of the overlapping between the two. Consequently, IDPW downloads the Internet-ish sense installed in the real place.

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