

etoy

Etoy is a pseudo corporation created by an artist group. It undertakes action throughout the world commenting on corporate structures and worldwide communication and information systems. It is the artistic version of a multinational corporation. It has developed "office" modules (sometimes made out of shipping containers), maintains an active Web site, sells stock, features distinctive uniforms, and otherwise acts like a strange corporate entity. The Internet has been essential to its operations. It won the top prize in the 1996 Ars Electronica Net competition.

In one action called *Time Zone*, it declared all international operations would use its own unique time zone, synchronized to the Internet. The explanation of the project also conveys the corporate ambiance the group creates:

The etoy CREW established their own time zone. All etoy SERVERS and etoy TANKS run a virtual time system: etoy. TimeZone is oriented on UNIX seconds ... to save money and time through more efficient coordination and parallel working. To offer perfect customer service and faster R&D. It unifies the etoy *BRANCHES* around the world, and covers a minimum spare time for employees."

The etoy Web site describes some of its operating principles and its attempt to use artistic methods to study the state of our culture:

etoy operates somewhere between productions of overdrive communications and a redefinition of content and message in the electronic age.... etoy uses artistic means to demonstrate what happens when communication is stretched to its outermost limits and emits both emotional and intellectual impulses.

Why? the world is changing radically—one cannot compare digital structures and procedures with mechanical processes. etoy explores and programs search engines, global databases, EDP services, automated processes, and virtual environments, all of which are concerned exclusively and emphatically with themselves.... (etoy is a production within that supercharged zone between fake and truth, between showmanship and functionality, between outside and inside, between content and shape.

Other Artists and Projects

Krzysztof Wodiczko initiated a major effort at MIT's Center for Advanced Visual Studies called "Interrogative Design" that asks the arts and design communities to interrogate their own functions and context, taking a risk in "exploring, articulating, and responding to the questionable conditions of life." This approach is seen as especially important as a "post-military cultural force" to respond to the flow of military research and the dominance of technology. *Alex Galloway, Mark Tribe, and the Rhizome Organization* have attempted to "aestheticize corporate identities" by experimenting with new

corporate forms and visual Web interfaces. In response to international trends in global capitalism, *Gregory Green* created a new state called the *New Free State of Caroline* on an unclaimed South Pacific island from which he initiated projects such as *Gregniks, An Alternative Space Program and Manual*, which includes excerpts from military and CIA handbooks re-created in exact original style. *Stephen Soreff* has run a twenty-five-year conceptual art project that includes a fictitious university and the art-review magazine called *AGAR* (Avant Garde Art Review), which has included articles from the future on art forms such as genetically engineered art and televisual windows.

Many of the "Hactivists" described in other chapters, such as chapter 6.4, who seek to deconstruct the assumptions of technology mediated organizations create new informational and organizational structures as part of their work. Examples include [®]TMark, IRATIONAL.ORG, Reclaim the Streets, Critical Art Ensemble, and the Redundant Technology Initiative. Links can be found at the *Applied Autonomy Organization* site listed below.

Summary: Being Formed by Information

Has the information explosion made the world clearer or more obscure? Like so many of the fruits of research, there is no simple answer. Each of us potentially has access to information that would have been inconceivable a few years ago. Optimists suggest that this access could usher in higher levels of understanding about the universe and humanity. For example, Roy Ascott (see chapter 6.1) suggests that the expansion of information networks has done much more than just increase the number of factoids we can consider. Rather, it has opened up the possibility of transformed consciousness, the ability to see the big picture, including kinds of knowledge outside of the scientific and technological worldview.

Pessimists suggest that information access is an illusion. Much of the so-called information is based on faulty assumptions and categories that serve other purposes besides enlightenment. Rather than becoming enhanced subjects, many of us are being turned into data objects, reduced to data points in the master databases used for control and exploitation. Some even hold that the information is really mush—mediated signs without real referents. As information comes to be the cultural and economic heart of life, it is fitting that artists should enter into the debate.

Notes

- Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art, "SecurityLand Documentation," (<http://www.mcachicago.org/anxiety/scher.html>).
- S. Penny, "Big Father Documentation," (<http://www.art.cfa.cmu.edu/www-penny/index.html>).
- Dutch Electronic Arts Festival, "Steve Mann Description," (<http://wearcam.org/deaf98/historic.htm>).
- S. Mann, "Reflectionism and Diffusion," (<http://hi.cecg.toronto.edu/leonardo/>).
- J. Crandall, "Documenta X Statement," (<http://www.blast.otg/candall/documentaX/>).
- N. Jeremijenko, "Introduction to Information Work," (<http://www.tech90s.net/nj/index-nj.html>).
- Ars Electronica, "InfoWar Introduction," (<http://web.aec.at/infowar/eng.html>).
- Information Weapon Competition, "Statement," (<http://www.dds.nl/hypermail/p2p-list/0056.html>).
- E. Paulos, "Technology Free Zone," (<http://www.cs.berkeley.edu/~paulos>).
- K. Becker, "Cyber War," (<http://www.t0.or.at/msguide/cyberwa1.htm>).
- Leonardo, "Award for Excellence—Donna Cox," (<http://mitpress.mit.edu/e-journals/Leonardo/isast/awards.html>).
- E. Laramée, "Documentation of *Apparatus for the Distillation of Vague Intuitions*," (<http://www.artnetweb.com/laramee/>).
- E. Laramée, "Interview on *Apparatus* Installation," (<http://www.artnetweb.com/laramee/>).
- E. Laramée, "Documentation of Blast," (<http://www.artnetweb.com/laramee/>).
- Knowbotic Research, "Non-Locations as Fields of Action," (<http://www.khm.de/people/krcf>).
- Knowbotic Research, "Non-Locations/Event: Under Construction," (<http://www.khm.de/people/krcf>).
- Knowbotic Research, "Anonymous Muttering," (http://www.khm.de/people/krcf/AM_rotterdam/long.html).
- Knowbotic Research, "Interview with Andreas Broeckmann," (http://www.khm.de/people/krcf/IO/netscape/content/IO_dencies.html).
- P. Atzori, "C-theory Interview with Knowbotics," (<http://www.ctheory.com/a38-cyberantartic.html>).
- Knowbotic Research, "Membrane Description," (http://www.khm.de/~mem_hrane/Info/einfo.html).
- T. Druckrey, "Analysis of Knowbotics," (<http://www.t0.or.at/~krcf/nlonline/nonCorealities.html>).
- Makrolab, "Lecture on Documenta," (<http://makrolab.ljudmila.org/lec/>).
- C5, "Corporate Statement," (<http://c5.sjsu.edu/index.html>).
- etoy, "Corporate Operations Description," (<http://www.etoy.com>).