ETC

Ubermorgen.com's

UBERMORGEN.COM. *Media Hacking vs. Conceptual Art*, Ed. Alessandro Ludovico, Basel: Christoph Merian Verlag, 2009, ISBN: 978-3-85616-460-7, 208 pages, hardcover

Pau Waelder

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UBERMORGEN.COM'S

UBERMORGEN.COM, the artist duo formed by Hans Bernhard (Austria, 1973) and Lizvlx (Austria, 1973), playfully blends reality and fiction, using mass media as a vehicle for both distribution and legitimation. During the last decade, their projects have often stirred controversy, appeared in the news and generated public debate, but at the same time they have lacked the recognition of the mainstream art world. In order to fill this gap, UBERMORGEN.COM. Media Hacking vs. Conceptual Art was published in late 2009 as a comprehensive survey of their artistic production, but also as an effective form for contextualizing and validating their professional trajectory. The book provides extensive information about every project that the artists have developed since 1999, from simple websites to complex multidisciplinary installations, along with contributions from curators, bloggers and critics. It is therefore an essential tool for understanding the work of Bernhard and Lizvlx, yet in some sense it is also part of the fiction that the artists have created around their practice and their identities.

UBERMORGEN.COM creates compelling stories that involve not only the project itself (the "media object" being created) but also the process behind it and even the artists' personal lives. Therefore, a project such as [V]ote-Auction,[1] a fake website that offered US citizens a way to sell their vote during the presidential elections in 2000, is not just a website, but also the press releases sent to the media, the CNN report, the cease-and-desist letters, as well as the texts that have been written either taking the artwork at face value or telling the story of its making, which include recounting that, as a consequence of their hack, Bernhard and Lizvlx are (allegedly) forbidden to enter the United States. The artists elaborate a reaction in the mass media as well as a myth in the art world: swiftly moving between media hacking and conceptual art, they create a particular narration and a series of documents consciously addressed to each type of audience. As with *trompe l'oeil* paintings, UBERMORGEN.COM's projects fool the eye when seen from the right perspective. While projects such as [V]ote-Auction, Nazi~Line,[2] Wahlgeld.com,[3] Amazon Noir[4] or GWEI-Google Will Eat Itself[5] infiltrate the mass media as real business initiatives or elaborate hacks, others such as Superenhanced,[6] PsychlOS[7] or ART FID adopt formats that bring them closer to mainstream contemporary art. In general terms, UBERMORGEN.COM presents its projects in a way that draws from the tradition of conceptual art, thus becoming integrated into the art world whilst retaining the aesthetics and maverick attitude of hackers.

A core concept in the work of UBERMORGEN.COM is that of the [f]original. The artists use this term (which combines the words "forged" and "original") to define the fake documentation that surrounds their projects: legal injunctions, letters, election ballots, videos or websites, which are presented as real documents but are actually part of a fiction. These documents add realism to the story and at the same time become artistic objects in their own right. As such, they are presented in exhibitions, forming an integral part of the artwork, but on the other hand they are denied the aura of the unique: they are copies, piled up in large stacks or even offered to the viewer by means of a series of "generators" that create [f]originals on demand. It can be said that all that Hans Bernhard and Lizvlx have created, up to the public version of their private lives, is a [f]original in the sense that it is both real and false, and contributes to the plausibility of the overall story. Bernhard states that: "using psychotropic drugs (see hansbernhardblog) and having kids, being an artist and a citizen, this situation has to be staged as a gesamtkunstwerk."[8] By using the term developed by Richard Wagner in his essay "The Artwork of the Future" (1849), the co-founder of UBERMORGEN.COM emphasizes the perception of their activities as a total work of art, an artistic creation that encompasses different media, which, as he aptly puts it, "has to be staged."

The word "script" comes to mind, referring both to the text of a play and the programming language that allows control of software applications. In either sense, the work of UBERMORGEN.COM appears as "scripted art," in the form of artworks that follow a particular script or narrative and are able to impose it on others (by pretending to be real) as well as networked projects that purportedly employ elaborate scripts to control software applications or robots in order to attain their goals. Approaching the art of UBERMORGEN.COM can only be done by following the script: retelling the story as well as questioning its plausibility will only lead to the paradox of turning a fiction into reality or fictionalizing true facts. In any case, as Alessandro Ludovico puts it: "the concept of 'reality' seen through UBERMORGEN.COM's eyes is both threatening and fascinating."[9]
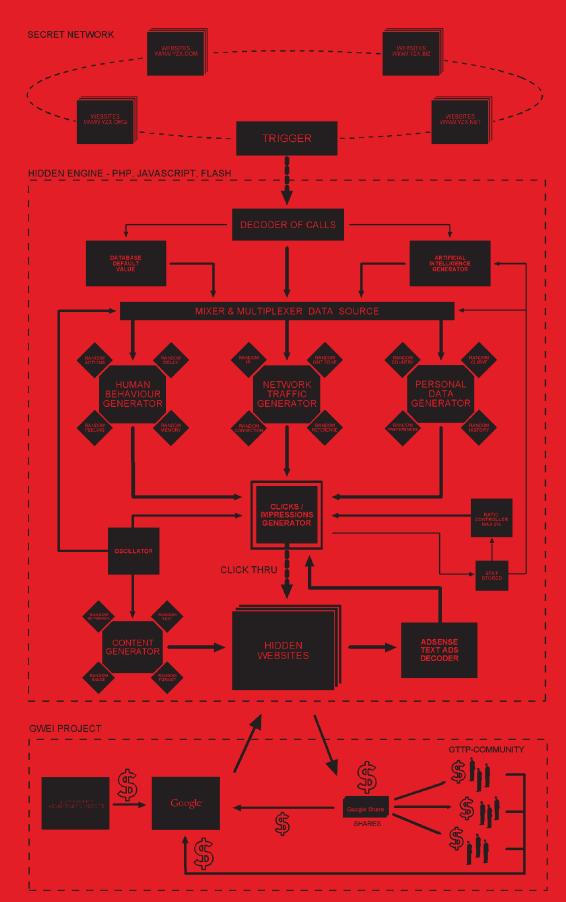
The 208-page book can therefore be considered a [f]original, in that it presents a series of projects that incorporate a fiction, which, despite the detailed documentation, is not questioned or explained. Or it can be seen as part of the script, skilfully written by the artists, to legitimate their creative output by means of a publication that responds to the expectations of the art world.

Pau Waelder

Notes

1 [V]ote-Auction. <http://www.vote-auction.net/>
2 Nazi~Line. <http://www.ubermorgen.com/NAZI~LINE/CAMPAIGN/index_segafredo.html>
3 Wahlgeld.com. <http://www.wahlgeld.com/>
4 *Amazon Noir – The Big Book Crime.* <http://www.amazon-noir.com/>
5 GWEI—Google Will Eat Itself. <http://gwei.org/index.php>
6 Superenhanced. <http://www.ipnic.org/superenhanced/>
7 Psych|OS.<http://www.hansbernhard.com/X/pages/photo/pages/psychos_hans.html>
8 UBERMORGEN.COM. *Media Hacking vs. Conceptual Art*, 6.
9 UBERMORGEN.COM. *Media Hacking vs. Conceptual Art*, 6.

SCRIPTED ART

SECRET NETWORK

WEBSITES
WWW.YZX.COM

WEBSITES
WWW.YZX.BIZ

WEBSITES
WWW.YZX.ORG

WEBSITES
WWW.YZX.NET

TRIGGER

HIDDEN ENGINE - PHP, JAVASCRIPT, FLASH

DECODER OF CALLS

DATABASE
DEFAULT
VALUE

ARTIFICIAL
INTELLIGENCE
GENERATOR

MIXER & MULTIPLEXER DATA SOURCE

RANDOM
ACTIONS

RANDOM
DELAY

RANDOM
IP

RANDOM
GMT ZONE

RANDOM
COUNTRY

RANDOM
CLIENT

HUMAN
BEHAVIOUR
GENERATOR

NETWORK
TRAFFIC
GENERATOR

PERSONAL
DATA
GENERATOR

RANDOM
FEELING

RANDOM
MEMORY

RANDOM
CONNECTION

RANDOM
REFERENCE

RANDOM
PREFERENCES

RANDOM
HISTORY

CLICKS /
IMPRESSIONS
GENERATOR

RATIO
CONTROLLER
MAX 3%

OSCILLATOR

CLICK THRU

STAT
STORED

RANDOM
KEYWORDS

RANDOM
TEXT

CONTENT
GENERATOR

HIDDEN
WEBSITES

ADSENSE
TEXT ADS
DECODER

RANDOM
IMAGE

RANDOM
FORMAT

GWEI PROJECT

GTTP-COMMUNITY

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A YAHOO! &
ADVERTISER'S WEBSITE

Google

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Google Share

SHARES

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GWEI System.