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**CURATING WEB-BASED ART EXHIBITIONS:
MAPPING THEIR MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION
WITH OFFLINE FORMATS OF PRODUCTION**

MARIALAURA GHIDINI

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requirements of the University of Sunderland for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**This research programme was carried out
in collaboration with the research unit CRUMB at the
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Abstract

This dissertation investigates the theory and praxis of curating web-based exhibitions from the perspective of a practitioner (the author Marialaura Ghidini). Specifically, it investigates how the web as a medium of production, display, distribution and critique has had an impact on the work and research of independent curators and the way in which they configure their exhibition projects.

With a focus on the last decade, curatorial work of production and commission is considered in relation to technological developments, previous theoretical work into the mapping of exhibitions online and the analysis of case studies which are paralleled with the author's own exhibition projects. What has emerged from this combination of theory, practice and comparison of approaches is the rise of a tendency in contemporary curatorial practices online: the creation of exhibitions that migrate across sites—online and offline—and integrate different components—formats of display and distribution—giving life to exhibition models which this study names as those of the 'extended' and 'expanded'. The figure of the curator as mediating 'node' is another characteristic emerging in relation to this tendency. Its features are identified through the observation of six case studies, which include *Beam Me Up*, *CuratingYouTube* and *eBayaday*, and interviews with their curators, and three projects that the author organised with the web curatorial platform or-bits-dot-com, *128kbps objects* (2012), *(On) Accordance* (2012) and *On the Upgrade WYSIWG* (2013), which experiment with modes of integrating web-based exhibition with other exhibition formats, such as the gallery show and print publishing.

Through combining contextual review and curatorial practice, this study names the tensions existing between online and offline sites of display and modes of production and commission, offering critical and practical ground work to discuss the tendency of migrating exhibitions and integrating formats within the larger context of curating contemporary art.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Starting Point of Research

A few days before officially starting my doctoral research in 2011 I attended “Rewire”, the international conference on the histories of media art in Liverpool. The conference claimed to “draw upon parallel perspectives of technological and scientific development from arts and cultural theory” (Media Art History, 2011), yet my experience of it was of its specialism and the fact that many issues debated, although also pertaining the contemporary art field, were discussed separately. A known case in point of this separation is the notion of the end of medium specificity epitomised by Rosalind Krauss’ “post-medium condition” (1999) and Lev Manovich’s notion of “postmedia” (2001), two views that while discussing the same subject adopt antipodal approaches, one concerned with the conceptual and the other with the technical ontology of the work of art. What I took back with me was the multidisciplinary of new media art research, which I rarely found in the field of art history.

The pre-doctoral starting point of this research is my curatorial work with or-bits-dot-com, which I launched in 2009 as a “production and display platform for contemporary arts” (or-bits.com, 2009). Its mission was to explore the space of the Web via organising web-based group exhibitions of commissioned artworks and running a blog for critical writing related to its display activity. Since chapter 4 (see 4.1.1) details what brought me to its foundation, here I will outline my broader background and how it relates to this study. Before the MA in *Curatorial Practice and Critical Writing* I undertook at Chelsea College of Art in 2009, curating was a discipline new to me, having previously studied arts and humanities with a focus on art history and museology. The curatorial projects I initiated prior to or-bits-dot-com were rather processed-based, often including artworks that were not discrete objects, such as the commission of the work *points of presence* by GOTO10 in 2011.¹

¹ The work was part of the AiR programme *Search Engine* I organised at Grand Union, Birmingham, from 21 March to 30 April 2011. See <http://grand-union.org.uk/gallery/search-engine/>.

A live broadcast of 32-character text strings and images distributed through Wi-Fi hotspots in the public space and in gallery one, the work generated a display context that functioned as a communicative space activated by the audience. Understanding curating more as a process of commission for specific sites and contexts, rather than selecting existing works to create a historical or thematic overview arranged in space, was also part of my approach to organising exhibitions. The fascination with the idea of systems of production which I developed during my MA studies brought me to cross paths with new media research, from the artists Raqs Media Collective and Miltos Manetas, to theorists such as Roy Ascott, Christiane Paul and Marshall McLuhan—references hardly present in the literature of curatorial studies.

The research questions of this study interrogate a subset of the domain of curating online: the curation of web-based exhibitions integrating offline formats production and sites. Key to this was my interest in investigating the possibilities of working with multifaceted curatorial contexts and sites—displays other than those of the gallery. Reesa Greenberg (1994, pp.349-351) discusses the importance of understanding the “meanings of exhibitions” in relation to “location” and “the type of exhibition space in which the exhibition is held”. She proposes bypassing the divide between “the container and the contained” often implicit in the physical “houses” of contemporary art, such as the gallery or the artist’s studio. Other critics, like Maria Lind (2005), see the exhibition space as a context within existing contexts that can be interconnected, such as public spaces or the conversation between the exhibition’s actors. My position instead focuses on the relationship between the container and the contained as shaped by the communication systems and modes of distribution of the Internet. This also led to the ‘offsite’ projects strand of or-bits-dot-com’s activities, where the aim was to circumvent the binary relationship between online and offline and to investigate how curated online environments relate to offline ones, exploring their modes of integration and the configurations arising from this.

The possibility of investigating these interests within a research environment informed by new media theory at CRUMB (Curatorial Upstart Media Bliss) at the

University of Sunderland felt unique, allowing me to undertake doctoral research studies to expand my critical understanding of a domain, curating online, within which I operated as a 'self-taught' curator.

1.2. Research Questions and their Development

When I started this research, the way in which the characteristics of curating online and its correspondences with the larger domain of curating could be articulated was not clear to me. Because of my background and pre-existing knowledge, my understanding of online practices and web-based work, as well as their historical contexts, was akin to that of an outsider. Hence it was necessary to cover this ground theoretically, rather than just practically and intuitively, by diving into new media theory and practices.

The first question of this research aimed at uncovering the backdrop of the theory and practice of curating online:

How have the commission and exhibition of artworks been affected by employing the Web as a curatorial medium of production, display, distribution and critique?

Curating on the Web has shown a close correlation with the history of its own technology, both in terms of its development and socio-economic role. The changes in the perception of curatorial functions between the time of net-art artists—the nineties—and that of so-called Post-Internet practices—to the present day—reveal this relationship and guided the research. In the nineties, curators were sometimes almost considered unnecessary in the process of producing and displaying net-art. This is because the code and computer functioned as tools of creation and distribution and were seen as capable of bypassing any third-party mediation, a position that created an almost parallel system to that of museums and galleries. In more recent times, with the dot-com crash and 'birth' of Web 2.0 (see 2.2.1), artists have started to act as curators, exemplified by no-org.net (2003), a Jerusalem-initiated platform, and

Club Internet, an online artist-run exhibition space (2006). Curators have slowly begun to enter the field by initiating projects that operate like platforms for the display and distribution of art, such as the collective Why + Wherefore, founded in 2007 to “experiment with the online dimension from a wide variety of artists and curators” (Why + Wherefore, 2007).

My own curatorial practice informed and is included in the second question guiding this research which, therefore, focused on the tendency of independent curators to ‘migrate’ exhibitions, and integrate them with formats of production offline:

How have online and offline modes of production, display and distribution been integrated in the work of independent contemporary art curators (including my own practice)?

Through discussing the specificities of curatorial work online and the tendencies arising within it, this question has brought to light new curatorial modes of production that are based on mediation and working across fields of works, and require processes of translation. The analysis of case studies combined with my curatorial projects (see 3 and 4 respectively) has generated a mapping of different approaches to gestures of mediation and translation in current curatorial work online.

The third question derived from the findings of the previous two and was aimed at locating such tendency within the curatorial domain:

How can such exhibition models be discussed in the larger context of the theory and history of curating contemporary art?

The conclusion discusses the findings related to the three research questions in separate sections (see 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4), to then combines the findings as an overall reflection on my new knowledge as a curator (see 5.5).

1.3. Methodology

This study is based on practice-based research that I have applied to my own field: curating contemporary art. My understanding of practice-based research is indebted to the doctoral research of Maria Miranda (2009) and Dominic Smith (2011) who, despite the diversity in subjects—networked media artworks and open source models of artistic practice, respectively—both unify theory and practice, via research methods including interrogating case studies and conducting interviews. Miranda and Smith similarly developed projects and artworks that were ingrained in their theoretical work—the “starting point of the research came from practice” (Smith, 2011, p.10)—and emphasised the synergy between process and theory, conceptualising it as a “combination” (Smith, 2011, p.11), or as “a movement that shifts back and forth” (Miranda, 2009, p.10). My approach differs from Miranda and Smith in the way in which it understands process. This is because my practice is that of a curator, not an artist, and the object of my work and research—the exhibition—is different from the production of artworks. As curator I mediate between the production of commissioned artworks and their representation in ‘space’, between an artwork and the audience’s experience of it—its communication. This research is also indebted to the doctoral research of Sarah Cook (2004) who combines the observation of case studies with her own curatorial work, emphasising the way she approaches her field of research: as “a curator (an active participant in the field) not an artist, not as an observing art historian; my own practice was a part of my research approach” (2004, p.26). Cook’s dissertation, even if not technically practice-based, is revealing of the strong interplay between theory and practice in the field of curatorial studies. Hence, this study considers curating as “thinking through practice” (Duxbury, Grierson and Waite, 2008), as conducting research through the form of a curated project—be it an exhibition, a publication or a one-off event. To cite Cook again, producing content and context in curatorial practice “share equal footing” (2004, p.28), where context is “creating a space for debate around the artwork”, that is, also, organising an exhibition. My curatorial projects not only served to test my hypothesis but to develop assumptions and evaluate them, including their successes and failures.

Smith (2011, p.11) describes his mode of research as that of “inquiry cycles”, attributing it to Heron and Carter who stated that this type of procedure entails “moving several times between reflection and action” (2011, p.144). This mode of research was also adopted for conducting my own study.

In this research, three main components have worked in synergy, feeding into each other asynchronously: theoretical research, the selection, observation and analysis of six case studies and the realisation, and consequent observation, of curatorial projects. Each component has been aided by interviews with the curators of the case studies and the collaborators who have taken part in my projects, and by the online discussion on the New-Media-Curating list (see A.3.4) and workshops around the issues raised by this research that were organised in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK, and Delhi, India, in 2012 and 2013 respectively. My curatorial projects were conceived as a three-part exploration into modes and models of integrating web display and production with offline strategies: the gallery exhibition, print publishing and radio broadcast. It was the working process that, with factors determined by, for example, the type of collaborations, the site and budget, provided fruitful research material. The case studies were selected to propose a variety of approaches to integrating exhibition formats online and offline. Similarly to my own projects, they were grounded in the theory written about curating, curating new media art, media and art theory, and analysed according to a process of deconstruction and reconstruction (see 3.1). This analysis was based on the merging of methods proposed by other curators/researchers such as Cook and Graham (2010, p.56) who considered the exhibition as a “space of art’s dissemination” and the artwork as “behaving”, and Goriunova (2012, p.18) who argues that the web-based platform can be understood according to its “organisational aesthetics”, along with methods I devised through the very observation of the configuration of the exhibition projects.

Last, but not least in terms of its importance was the contextual review, which includes a brief historical examination of the development and mapping of exhibition models and curatorial modes online with the aim of finding a context and terminology to discuss curating web-based exhibitions (see 2.2). Curatorial

research in the context of new media art, such as that conducted by Cook and Graham (2010), Dietz (1998) and Lichtly (2002), has been combined with that more embedded in art history, such as O'Neill (2012) and Alberro (2003). Other researchers who examined the linguistic specificities of these research territories were also included: from Berry (2001), who examined how computer networks impacted the uniqueness and aura of an artwork and its relationship with the site of exhibition, to Carpenter (2008), who differentiated the tactical from the strategic in politicised, socially-engaged art and new media art, and Krysa (2008), who examined the politics of curating immateriality in the context of software art. Because of the relative newness of this territory (see 2.1.1 and 2.1.2) the contextual review includes a variety of online research material, such as reviews, blogs and websites.

The semi-structured interviews were used as a research tool to obtain first-hand responses from both artists and curators about curatorial projects that were often not comprehensively documented after their realisation (see 3.3). They were key to developing a 'new' terminology for describing the tensions existing between online and offline sites of display and modes of work that have arisen since the inception of Web 2.0. They also aided the creation of definitions and informed the analysis of case studies and my own practice, facilitating the clarification of modes of integration and migration, as well as the notion of the distributed exhibition.

1.4. Scope

The context of this research is the theory and practice of curating in relation to the history of technology. Even though many of the references adopted come from art history, the thinking and methods of new media practitioners and scholars are an integral part of this study because curating online has been primarily discussed in this research context. Curating is not examined in relation to adopting web-based tools but adapting them to the organisation of contemporary art exhibitions, hence notions such as networked and software curating (Krysa, 2006) are not discussed in this study.

This research predominantly covers curating online after the rise of Web 2.0 circa 2004, concentrating on practical examples of curatorial projects organised over the last decade (see 3.1) and following a trajectory of independent curatorial work outlined by Lichty (2002, see also 2.3.1). The intent was to propose an initial mapping of contemporary curatorial practices online that are often scarcely documented. Although this study provides examples of international curatorial practices and exhibition projects, they are predominantly located in Europe and the USA.

This study is based on understanding curatorial work of commission rather than selection, hence the each of projects analysed entailed the production of new work or artworks reformatted for a specific site and/or context. Moreover, the web-based exhibition is the main component of the case studies' projects, thus exhibitions about 'curating the web', such as curating hyperlinks or already existing websites and their content, have not been discussed. Similarly, virtual galleries and exhibitions displaying the documentation of existing artworks have not been interrogated. This is because the integration of formats of production—online and offline—is the core of this study and these examples would have broadened the scope of my discussion of the distributed exhibition beyond the capacity of this project.

1.5. Definitions

A concise lexicon of the key terms recurring in this dissertation is proposed below to guide the reader into the way in which they have been adopted and understood by this research.

Online/Offline

This study uses the terms online/offline to describe both the sites for commissioning and exhibiting contemporary art and the modes of curatorial production, that is, the adoption of different exhibition mediums, from the web-based display (online) to the gallery exhibition, print publishing, and the time-based event (offline), for example. This research considers online and offline as

distinct yet connected entities: they are distinct because they have different characteristics and thus they require different artistic and curatorial approaches (see 2.3.2); they are connected not only because of how web technology is increasingly embedded in the everyday (see 2.1), but also because curators have started to bridge the two in their exhibition projects (see 2.4.2, 3.8 and interviews in A.2). This bridging, which depends on the type of curatorial mediation, might entail to work with: “the disconnect between online space and gallery space” (Flannery, A.2.3); “the transitioning of practices” (Mondrak, A.2.2) or the “conversation between digital and physical” (Nichole, A.2.4); different “sensorial experiences” for engaging with an artwork (Jacobs, A.2.5) or “embodiments of art” (Storz, A.2.6).

Web-based

Andreas Brøgger (2000) distinguished between web art and net art by saying that although they are often used “without much distinction” they in fact differ from each other since the net and the Web refer to “specific concepts”:

The World Wide Web is a specific kind of net, namely what we see when we use the browsers Netscape and Explorer. The web makes use of a specific protocol for interpreting data, namely http (hyper text transfer protocol). By comparison we could speak of “telnet art”, telnet being the previously used protocol, alongside “http art” or, as we usually say: web art. Net art would then be the umbrella term of these two protocol specific kinds of net art.

Similarly, this study distinguishes between curating web-based exhibitions and online exhibitions—the latter seen as the equivalent of Brøgger’s net. It holds that curating on the Web has specific characteristics that can be understood as a subset of the interconnected Internet (see 2.2.1, 2.3.2, and 4.1.2 in relation to my own practice).

Distributed

The notion of the distributed is adopted by this study to describe a specific type of exhibition project: an exhibition that migrates across sites (from the online to the offline in the context of this research), behaving like a system-like structure of display and distribution in which online and offline formats of display are complementary, according to three characteristics (see 2.4.2 for a detailed description). This definition has developed from previous writing about the

distributed, which is important when discussing curatorial work online because, as Berry (2001) argues, the medium used—the Web—combines together the functions of “production, publication, distribution, promotion, dialogue, consumption and critique” to generate a “space of art’s dissemination” (Cook and Graham, 2010, p.56). The attribute distributed has often been used in computational contexts, yet with the advent of the Web as a mass medium it has increasingly been applied to contemporary art production, not only to define that which is displayed on the Internet but also its behaviour, emphasising circulation. Although a detailed description of the uses of the notion distributed is proposed in 3.8, because of its wide-ranging applications, it is worthwhile to briefly define how it has come to be used in this project. This research uses Paul Baran’s (1964, see also Institute of Network Cultures, n.d.) concept of moving away from a centralised network of computer server nodes, and Sarah Cook’s (2004 and 2010) understanding of curators as nodes networked with others in order to create alternative distribution platforms for contemporary art. In this dissertation however, the nodes are the sites of display and production and are characterised by the processes of translation and transformation of the artworks on display which, in turn, are determined by the type of mediation operated by their curators (see case studies in chapter 3, especially 3.8).

1.6. Structure

Chapter 2 identifies the context and domain of curating online, proposing to investigate it in connection to technological developments and mass media communications. After discussing some of the research problems pertaining to this domain, such as its partial mapping (see 2.2) and the lack of clear terminology, the web-based exhibition is discussed in relation to the characteristics of the medium and the changing role of the curator, drawing upon earlier research and categorisations (see 2.3). Lastly, the chapter proposes a brief history of exhibitions moving across sites to then introduce the current tendency of web-based exhibitions that migrate and are integrated with offline formats of production (see 2.4.2).

This is further discussed in Chapter 3, where six exhibitions projects are contextualised, observed and described. Opening with a section dedicated to the criteria of selection and the specificities of the projects, each of the case studies provides both a general overview of its characteristics and a detailed discussion about its structure, patterns of migration and function. To be read in conjunction with the analysis tables in A.1, this chapter closes with a reflection on the process of the migration of exhibitions, identifying the types of integration and the exhibition models emerging from it.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to three projects I curated as part of the activity of or-bits-dot-com. Each project is analysed according to the structure adopted for the case studies and preceded by an introduction about the inception of or-bits-com, emphasising the curatorial challenges and the specificity of the online space. A reflection on the projects, as well as a detailed description of the changes in my role in relation to the integration of offline formats—the gallery exhibition, the book and the radio broadcast—close the chapter.

The conclusion (chapter 5) returns to the initial questions of this research study, examining online and offline curatorial practices in combination to my own work and highlighting the findings in relation to each question. The chapter also elaborates on the notion of the distributed, describing the distributed exhibition in relation to the larger field of curating contemporary art.

Chapter 2: Contextual Review

2.1. Introduction and Structure

The interrogation of exhibitions that migrate across online and offline sites of display, the discerning of types of integration of web-based exhibitions with offline formats of production and the changes in curatorial and artistic production emerging through such migrations and integrations have been the core of the analytical work of this study. These are features that I have identified as part of a tendency arising in contemporary practices of exhibition making. I am using the term tendency since the exhibition models put forward by the projects observed in this dissertation have rapidly evolved within a domain (the curating of exhibitions online) which has yet to be thoroughly mapped. In *Speculative Scenarios*, Annet Dekker (2013, p.4) touches upon the recent evolution of curatorial work online:

A common denominator among these curators is their experience with online curating and presenting online artworks in physical spaces. These curators take the digital and physical realm as a given and move fluidly between the two, leaving traces in each.

Dekker's observation reveals how the migration from the web space to the offline one of the gallery has become commonplace in the practice of curators aware of the Web as an exhibition medium. She goes on to indicate how such practices take place outside the institutionalised art world:

Although curating digital artworks in physical spaces and online exhibitions is becoming more widespread, such exhibitions are mostly taking place outside of the world of traditional art. Currently a new generation of curators [...] use existing curatorial formats for these presentations, adapting them if necessary, or even creating new ones. (Dekker, 2013, p.4)

Yet, what Dekker's description does not discuss is the specificity of working online, in favour of focusing on what happens offline. The interviews with curators presented in this dissertation (see A.2) show that an understanding of the web medium and the processes of display and commission arising from it determine the way in which web-based exhibitions migrate to different sites by integrating offline formats and sites. This activity is not only carried out by 'online curators'—or the 'digital curators' now appearing in the staff list of many

UK-based institutions—but by also those who are not specialists in this field of practice. All this said, what Dekker's point shares with this study is that the ubiquity and simplification of web-technology have generated a situation in which the migration across the web space and offline sites is becoming more common, hinting at a historical shift.

This chapter identifies the historical background of curating online and the specificities of curating web-based exhibitions by referring to earlier research and mapping by practicing curators and academics such as Sarah Cook, Steve Dietz and Olga Goriunova. This is followed by a closer analysis of the characteristics related to the process of the integration of formats, putting an emphasis on the notion of the distributed exhibition and its precedents in the larger field of curating contemporary art (see 2.4). Such precedents stress the relationship between the development of curatorial practice and the history of technology and mass media, regardless of whether the exhibition is web-based or networked in a computational sense. Chapters 3 and 4 will examine the configurations and processes of the integration of exhibitions by interrogating the models devised by a number of different independent curators who have also been interviewed with the aim of revealing the processes behind the 'visible' exhibition. Chapter 3 will end with a discussion of two exhibition models that have been identified as arising from migration, models deriving from the analysis of the case studies and my practice. The interviews, along with my own practical work, bring to light the behind-the-scenes aspect of exhibition processes, such as the curatorial modes of commissioning, the understanding of the web space and its relationship with the offline. All this has been carried out via a practice-based approach to researching the field of curatorial studies, addressing curatorial work as the process of "thinking through practice" (Duxbury, Grierson and Waite, 2008).

2.2. The Context and Field of Curating Web-Based Exhibitions

2.2.1. Expanding the Context Beyond Curatorial Studies

Working curatorially on the Web has a confused and fragmented history because of the critical hiatus that occurred between the end of nineties and the second decade of the twenty-first century. This discontinuity is characterised by the weakening of institutional interest and the focusing of criticism predominantly on artistic production online rather than curatorial work. Moreover, the field of curatorial studies has struggled to acknowledge and discuss the extent to which the Internet and web technology have changed the modes of production, display and distribution of art, and facilitated opportunities for the creation of new frameworks of knowledge. The research questions of this study (see 1.2) arose from an interest in locating this scattered history and embedding it into the domain of curatorial studies. Given that the so-called divide between new media theory and art history is the probable cause of such an oversight (see 2.2.2 and also Lichty, 2013), it was crucial for this research to discuss curating web-based exhibitions holistically, within a context larger than 'traditional' curatorial study and art history.

The writings of Gere (2002) on the relationship between histories of technology and production of culture provide a significant starting point for finding a context for such a discussion. Gere states that in our "media-saturated world" (2002) the digital landscape merges with the everyday mostly through the mass media of communication and according to the—primarily corporate—notion of the convergence of content across platforms, channels and devices. The idea of market-driven convergence, contrary to what this study holds, promotes the idea of the seamless movement of content from one platform to the other. Therefore, according to Gere, it requires critical engagement with the array of web-tools we adopt to produce and consume culture, demanding a reflection on their 'given' functions and implications. "The way in which we use and think about computers, as media and communication devices rather than simply complex calculators, is a result of these Cold War developments" writes Gere

(2002, p.59), highlighting how digital culture is not just related to the technologies we adopt as mediums but is part of a larger socio-cultural and economic framework in which various interests and perspectives come together. Following from this, this study proposes that curatorial studies should include curating online and the layered connections between technological developments and mass media to enrich the history of exhibition models and curatorial work. It advocates the discussion of the domain of curating online in relation to digital culture, and understanding the former as the evolution of modes of mediating between new tools of production and communication and the artwork and its audiences. This would allow the questioning of medium-specific discourses pertaining to both the artwork and the curatorial tool par excellence: the exhibition.

This study narrows down the domain of curating online to that of the web-based exhibition. Because of the distinction between the internet and the web, and because all of the case studies relate to the changes it brought about, a brief outline of the rise of Web 2.0 is useful at this juncture. According to Tim O'Reilly "the bursting of the dot-com bubble in the fall of 2001 marked a turning point for the web" (2005), a new phase that he and Dale Dougherty called Web 2.0 which launched with the 2004 conference of the same name in San Francisco (USA). One of the main features of that new phase was that companies started to invest in providing services rather than software. These services adopted 'lightweight' interfaces (O'Reilly, 2005) and facilitated content production by their users. This progressive simplification and wider spread of web services and tools at everyone's disposal facilitated the rise of the figure of the "prosumer", for whom consumption and production are strictly interwoven (Cloninger, 2009). Creating and publishing content 'independently' increased dramatically, especially via the popularisation of social media (Facebook, Tumblr and Twitter) and ready-to-use platforms (Wikipedia and YouTube) in late 2000. These are key socio-cultural changes for this research: Web 2.0 brought about a decisive move from experimenting with the language of the web—HTML protocols, hypertext and the structure of the network (similar to structuralist artistic practices)—to experimenting with networked content which

can be easily exchanged, re-used, enhanced (and degraded), and re-contextualised. These transformations are also ‘responsible’ for the rise of discourses about the popularisation of curation, which is an interesting occurrence in the context of a study that is explicitly focused on analysing its specificity. “In the age of social media, everyone is a curator (or at least they think they are)” (South By Southwest, 2014) has become a widespread statement in the 2010s² but it very often only refers to the activity of selection with a disregard of theory, and the work of mediation.

Recapitulating the above observations, the context of this research is not that of the nineties “counterculture” (Turner, 2008) when specialised skills were still required to produce and publish content, but that of the ‘massification’ (mass-adoption) of the Web, where everyone can be a producer and a publisher with a click or a ‘swipe’. Not offering standards to work with—such as the multimedia HTML pages of the nineties—the Web adopted by the curators of the case studies of this research offers services in the form of platforms for production, self-publishing and also sharing artistic content. Their web, as Olia Lialina put it, is that of “the search engines, the blogs, the social media that provide an already scripted space for users to play around with and have a good time” (Campanelli, 2010, p.117). It is not the Web ‘made of’ layers of code used and manipulated by artists such as JODI or Heath Bunting to play with the way in which their content would be visually displayed as art for their works’ passers-by, for example. This socio-technological context is also the one within which the curating of web-based exhibitions will be discussed in relation to the integration of offline exhibition formats, an integration that breaks with both the “scripted” (Campanelli, 2010) space of the Web and the ‘organised physical arrangements’ of the gallery exhibition (see 2.4.2 and chapter 3). This research will take a different perspective on the relationship between online and offline spaces than that of currently ubiquitous Post-Internet discourses. Although the Post-Internet perspective is aligned to Gere’s merging of the digital landscape into the everyday, the way it asks for the divide between disciplines to be

² Seemingly the competition *Curate Award* co-organised by Fondazione Prada and Qatar Museum in 2014 emphasised the figure of the non-professional curator, opening the call with the following statement: “the competition recognises that we are all curators”.

overcome does not discuss the specificity of the online site and modes of work. Curator Quaranta (2014, p.28) writes that Post-Internet proposes a shift from

the opposition 'online vs offline' to a more mature understanding of the contemporary world as an inextricable unit of real and virtual, a unit in which the mediation—in any form—becomes a critical step in our understanding of reality.

Similarly to Dekker's position (2013), what seems to be missing is that in order to achieve a unity of online and offline sites a process of integration between modes of production has to occur. According to this study, such integration sees different components coming together not to highlight oppositions between the Web and the embodied space but to facilitate their working in conjunction via proposing different configurations of exhibitions that migrate (see 2.4.2).

The techno-social changes identified in this section are the features that curating online has been responding to, generating a variety of new approaches to exhibition-making, especially during the critical hiatus that occurred between the end of the nineties and the second decade of the twenty-first century.

2.2.2. A Domain in Search of a Language and a Method of Analysis

In addition to the historical fragmentation, the domain of curating online has also had to deal with the scarcity of clear terminology capable of discussing its layered nature (see 2.2.1). This scarcity becomes inadequacy when discussing web-based exhibitions that integrate offline formats through migration to different sites, which is the core of this research. The messiness of definitions pertaining to artistic production online—from net-dot-art and Internet art, to the more recent web-aware and Post-Internet art—often used interchangeably, required combining research from across different fields of practice, from new media to visual arts and museology. Below is an outline of the terminology, methods and frameworks that have been adopted by this study, the aim being to develop a critical position that follows the trajectory suggested by one of the first theorists of curatorial work online, Steve Dietz (1999):

More importantly, rather than trying to assimilate net art into our existing understanding of art history, is there a way that it can be understood to problematise many of the very assumptions we take to be normal, if not natural?

Curating online has been primarily discussed within the field of new media theory by researchers—also often practitioners—who have worked towards surpassing the ‘digital divide’ by combining art history, visual culture, media studies and a thorough understanding of technology: Inke Arns, Sarah Cook and Beryl Graham, Annet Dekker and Olga Goriunova are the main reference points for this study. Amongst a series of publications in print and online,³ Cook and Graham (2010) have attempted to reinvigorate the field of curatorial studies from the perspective of new media theory, maintaining that the latter is not incompatible with the contemporary art world. Three concepts emerging from their research have been significant for this research, even though they were originally intended in the context of new media artworks:

- “Once you have curated new media art you are unlikely to curate anything else in the same way again” (CRUMB, 2014). Such statement emphasises that the practice of curating evolves in relation to the object of its research, thus to the characteristics of the artwork and its ‘engagement’ with the present moment and socio-cultural discourses.
- “Curators need an adaptable framework in which to investigate and exhibit new media art [...] and allow for the behaviours of new media art to be evident” (Cook and Graham, 2010, p.154). This consideration proposes to understand the “behaviour” of the artwork rather than the specificity of its medium or conglomeration of mediums. The focus shifts from a final and fixed display of the art object to the process via which the exhibition has become the “space of art’s dissemination” (2010, p.56).
- “For Internet art, the system that is used in the production of the art—the Web—is the same as that used for its distribution” (2010, p.230). This highlights the distributive properties of the medium and, consequently, the web-based exhibition itself, paving the way for what this study holds: that the web-based exhibition often operates as a platform, as a system-like structure.

³ See the prolific *New-Media-Discussion List*, accessible at <http://www.crumbweb.org>

In relation to the latter, Goriunova (2012) proposes a critical framework for discussing the art platform, theoretically and technically, providing a method for analysing a website as a space employed for artistic production, presentation and distribution. Although this research does not focus on the notion of the art platform as intended by Goriunova—she writes that “art platforms focus on a certain kind of cultural practice, as an open-ended and grass-roots process rather than a set of objects” (2012, p.9)—it adopts her notion of “organisational aesthetics” to analyse the case studies presented in chapters 3 and 4.

Organisational aesthetics is a method of research stressing the organising principle of a website, such as its “arrangement” and the “structural devices” employed within it, “whether a taxonomy (list of categories), or associational classifications (keywords), [...] files, [...] constellation of contributions, [...]” (Goriunova, 2012, p.12). This approach is used in this study to investigate the web-based exhibition—and the curatorial process behind it— and its relationship to other sites of display as a series of structural tensions within a given spatio-temporal environment. These tensions generate different configurations of material within an exhibition project that is characterised by the reciprocal relationship between the artwork on display and the display environment, as well as the between the user—the viewer—and the interface.

Josephine Bosma’s research (2011) on net-dot-art artists operating in the nineties has offered valuable examples for observing and describing web-based artistic production. The reading she proposes looks at the behaviour of the artwork, such as its interaction with the support (i.e. the computer and the interface) and the browsing experience of the viewer resulting from the navigation patterns proposed by such interaction. Bosma’s emphasis on the relationship that the artwork and user have with the interface, and her attention to embedding this relationship in the wider socio-cultural context, have been adopted in this study as a method for understanding the processes of integrating offline formats into web-based exhibitions. Her contextualisation of Olia Lialina's work, *Agata Appears* (1997), is an example of connecting the technicism of the medium with the wider socio-cultural context it refers to, creating a historicisation that accounts for technological developments:

It is a protest against the use of a [web] feature that was added in 1998 [...] which allowed web designers to embed content from other sites into frames that did not reveal the original source of location. (Bosma, 2011, p.97)

This study's discussion of the space of the exhibition online as both a site in itself, and as part of a configuration that encompasses both the web space and offline space, makes references to the research of Berry (2001) and Miranda (2009 and 2013), the former in relation to web site-specificity, and the latter in relation to understanding a site that is actuated in the migration between the online space and the embodied one. The combination of these two seemingly oppositional perspectives is important for this study, which aims to discuss the curation of contemporary art by bringing together the specificity of the web-based exhibition with another specificity that is the integration of online and offline formats of production, display and distribution. Berry's research into site-specificity online (2001) functions as a point of departure for understanding the features of the site of the web-based exhibition. Although Berry discusses the aesthetic potentials of the Web as a "non-place", and in this her work differs from this study, she also brings forth the notions of malleability and the loss of fixity inherent in digital representation, along with a reading of the web space as a tactical mode of operation enabled by the mutability of the digital information. Berry's highlighting of tactical operations draws upon the definition of space by de Certeau, which is significant in relation to the bringing together of perspectives mentioned above. For de Certeau (1984) a space is composed of an intersection of mobile elements and is actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it, making it a "practiced place" (1984, p.117) whose relation to the world is determined through operations. An example of this could be the written text: a place constituted by a system of signs that is actualised by one's practice of it: the act of reading. Following from this, the space of the web-based exhibition can be understood as a practiced place determined by the acts of browsing and clicking to access and experience an artwork—acts that, because of the networked characteristics of the web space, facilitate movement. In this study, movement is not only relegated to the online space but is also located in the embodied space of the everyday—hence the use of the word migration (see 2.41 and 3.8). The work of Miranda (2009) becomes key in that it proposes a reading of the web space that surpasses the

opposition between online and offline sites of production and display, while maintaining their specific status. Miranda's research focuses on the practices of media artists whose work "exist[s] across sites and across media and is networked and connected" (2009, p.9), making use of online technology and space in combination with the public space. By proposing the notion of the "unsitely", Miranda talks about practices that are "unsituated", that "move away from the centre" (2009, p.10) and are actuated in the movement across sites of production and display. What Miranda also describes is how these practices and uses of sites put forward a renegotiation of "the radical practices and aspirations of the 1960s generation" of breaking with the fixed configurations proposed by the art system of the gallery and the museum. The latter resonates with the exhibition models devised by the curators of the case studies analysed in this research, and, combined with Berry's perspective, bring forth an understanding of the 'distributed exhibition' (see 2.4.2 and 3.8). Such an exhibition simultaneously responds to the specificity of the contexts it appropriates and is actualised through migrating across sites, creating tensions between them, negotiating different modes of curatorial work and mediating the experience of the artwork to the audience.

As mentioned in the Methodology (see 1.3), the interviews with the curators of the case studies (see A.2) provided first-hand responses to key issues pertaining to this study, sustaining my search for a clearer terminology and the work of in-filling the historical fragmentation of the domain of curating online.

2.3. Curating Exhibitions Online and the Web-Based Exhibition

2.3.1. A Brief History

This section proposes an overview of the development of curatorial work on the web, with no intention of providing a comprehensive historical account. The aim is to highlight how the last two decades' swift evolution of the practice of curating web-based exhibitions has been interwoven with the developments of web technology and its entering the everyday as the mass media of communication of the twenty-first century (see 2.2.1). The emphasis is on how the web space has been employed in exhibition projects over the past twenty

years and how that is shaped by the curator's understanding of the web as a medium, service and space. A more detailed analysis of the role of the curator in relation to the conditions of the web-based exhibition—the type of work required and the site of production, display and distribution, as well as engagement—will follow in the next section, preparing the terrain for a discussion of the tendency of integrating formats of production in the migration (see 2.4).

In less than twenty years, curatorial modes of work online have rapidly developed. Three projects have been identified by this study as cornerstones of the multifaceted independent curatorial work online that are emblematic of the tension between curatorial uses of the web space and the socio-cultural function of web technology. äda'web, the digital foundry co-founded by Benjamin Weil in 1994, the online repository, Runme, dedicated to software art and co-initiated by Goriunova in 2003, and #0000FF, a gallery space entirely hosted on Facebook founded by an anonymous group of artists in 2012, significantly show these tensions. The way in which the web space was understood and used in devising these projects paralleled the technical and cultural 'status' of web technology: from being a technical tool for a few and removed from day-to-day activities, to being a networked space adopted by many and facilitating the integration of modes and formats of production, display and distribution, also offline (see 2.4). Artist and researcher Olia Lialina (2007) aptly described such progression through the lens of artistic uses of web technology, outlining characteristics also applicable to curatorial work. Although Lialina's categorisation is generational, it is still reflective of an evolution in time, especially when paired to Tim O'Reilly's (2005) definition of Web 2.0 (see 2.2.1). According to Lialina there are: the first generation, constituted by "artists working with the internet as a new medium [...] because their previous experiences are different"; those that "were trained to pay attention to the internet and understand the concept of media specificity", who comprise the second generation; artists operating between the 2000 and 2005, thus "active in between dot-com crash and web 2.0 rise", who she calls the "Last" generation and artists "working with the WWW as a mass medium, not a new medium",

who are the third generation. Drawing on Lialina's categorisation, äda 'web can be seen as belonging to the first generation of artists and curators, Runme to the second one, and #0000FF to the third generation. These three projects, although very different from each other, all pertain to a specific strand of curating exhibitions online, that of devising exhibitions or commissioning artistic works specifically created for the Web, and not online displays of museum collections or documentation of already existing object-based artworks.

äda 'web (1994-1998) was born as a "digital foundry" (Dietz, 2005), part of the Digital City, Inc. enterprise, and was highly innovative for its time. It proposed a series of web commissions along with other discursive and commercial activities—an online forum and e-store for example—with the aim of creating a bridge between net-dot-art practices and the contemporary art world by commissioning artists often not already engaged with the Web and Internet. Resulting from the curatorial vision and activity of Benjamin Weil, äda 'web was also an organisation dedicated to supporting artists and facilitating multidisciplinary collaborations spanning various fields, from music to writing. It also included a section dedicated to works that took place both online and offline, such as Antoni Muntadas' *On Translation* (1997), which had a web-based reiteration titled *The Internet Project* and was accessible on the website. In 1998 the activity of äda 'web ended because of lack of funding, signifying the end of this visionary model.

Differently, Runme operated as a repository for software art which, rather than being commissioned, was submitted by the artists themselves for upload, along with their suggested way of categorising them. Goriunova (2012, p.71) comments that the platform was "created to test a format that would be something in between an out-of-scale festival, a distributed salon, an infinite exhibition, an open collection, sets of samizdat books, and sets of relationships—all in all an art platform in the making". What distinguishes Runme from äda 'web is not only the specificity of the artistic content on show—which reflects upon the software medium and its 'problematism'—but also the collaborative structure of the project, which was open and collective and

made use of panels of practitioners and researchers selected yearly to judge the submitted works.

Moving onto what Lialina (2007) defines as the "third generation", thus entering the Web 2.0 era, curatorial modes and projects increased in number and became more diversified. Curators—even if greatly outnumbered by artists—started to operate online, building their own production and display platforms, often relying on ready-to-use technology, such as blogs, video platforms, bookmarking and social networking sites. Their work became, as artist and writer Brad Troemel (2011, p.82) observes, capable of producing a variety of "productive systems" not requiring specific computational skills because they were supported by "the massification and further internationalization of the Internet" (Lovink, 2008, p.5). #0000FF epitomises this new socio-technical condition by being a "Facebook Art Gallery" (#0000FF, 2014) whose goal is "to enhance facebook users' visual experience and challenge the network's limitations by addressing aesthetic, social and political issues". This type of curatorial work relies heavily on the infrastructure and architecture of the adopted platform, requiring modes of commissioning and production that conform to the given structure—in the case of #0000FF, the page feed or the Albums section.

Before moving onto how curatorial work online has been mapped, it is useful to introduce some of the thinking about the interface. Because it fixes an organisational structure and the type of interaction between the computer and the user, the interface is one of the primary elements curators have to deal with, directly or indirectly, when organising a web-based exhibition. The interface impacts upon the curators' use of the web as a space for display and engagement, as well as upon their mode of work. In the context of computer and web-based production, the interface is the space of the encounter between the machine and the human, the space where 'invisible' data are translated for the user who views and interacts with it. Hence the interface "mediates" (Andersen and Pold, 2011) a relationship that paradoxically has already been foreseen in that an interface is always designed by 'predicting' users'

behaviours. Pold (2005) discusses the workings of the interface from a “realistic perspective” suggesting that it should be looked at not as a concept but as a cultural and an aesthetic form that mediates the relationship between reality and representation and that is constantly changing and developing new languages in relation to technological developments and the way in which its users (and designers) experiment with its limits. Dividing his realistic lenses into three categories—illusionistic, media and functional—Pold emphasizes the interrelation between interface, reality and the representation which is created; a relationship that can be located by looking at how the interface “changes what and how we see, how we experience reality and how this reality is configured through the computer” (2005, p.3). Since its inception the graphical user interface (GUI) had to deal with a dichotomy: on the one hand it had to show (data), and on the other hand it had to remain as hidden as possible (so that the user could concentrate on the task rather than the interface). Firstly using icons then stressing user-friendliness and transparency, in the Eighties and Nineties the way the interface was understood moved towards ideas of the virtuality, creating worlds that would simulate reality in 3D. Currently the thinking about the interface has moved towards the idea of an all-encompassing reality that lies in pervasive computing such as smart and networked devices which blur the boundaries between the computational, the digital and the tangible reality. In terms of curatorial discourses, the development of the thinking about the interface is interesting in relation to what will be discussed in the next section, that is how curators and artists respond to the specificities of the web-medium and the fact that the mediating curatorial role of commission is in turn effected by the mediating properties of the interface and the organisational structures it creates. Moreover, following on the thinking of Pold as well as that of other contemporary practitioners and researchers in the field of curatorial studies and the web, such as Joasia Krysa (2011) and Magda Tyzlik-Carver (2011), dealing with interfaces has many direct implications with the ‘real’ not just in terms of its representation but in terms of reconfiguring the socio-technical systems that are already in place beyond the computational and phenomenological relationship between the machine and the human. Some of the changes at stake when curatorial work is mediated by the interface, are highlighted by examples in this

thesis, for example: facilitating collaborative labour and semi-automated organisation (such as the above mentioned Runme and #000FF platforms); creating interactive viewership and usability (as in the instance of some of the case studies discussed in chapter 3, such as *CuratingYouTube* and *eBayaday*); and the moving away from the dependence from the art market and the systems of museums and gallery (see 2.3.2).

Going back to previous attempts at defining curatorial work online, it is Dietz (1998) who firstly proposes a series of models and ways of curating online with the aim of disclosing the “relevant possibilities of a new medium in a changing society” (see 3.8 and 5.3). Right in the middle of the dot-com boom, Dietz identifies four uses of the web interface by museums, and their functions:

- To create “tours of a [gallery] exhibition” in the form of videos and interviews with curators or to “augment a show with richer information”.
- To give life to an “immersive interface, a virtual environment” to better communicate with the viewer.
- To create an “extended exhibition” by “re-presenting” a gallery exhibition and, moreover, “reformatting it for the best possible experience in the medium—in front of a computer screen, transmitted via the Internet”.
- To create an “exhibition designed to be online” where the “integrated online component is planned” since its “earliest conception”.

Dietz’ categorisation is based on evaluating the site-specificity of the exhibition and its function in relation to the museum’s activities, yet it does not consider the artwork’s relationship with the site of display, proposing no distinction between a web-based work and a representation of an object belonging to a museum’s collection. In fact, the Smithsonian’s *Revealing Things* project (1998), although presenting documentation of the museum’s collection, was described by Dietz as “one of the most radical exhibitions online” because it was “the first virtual exhibition without a physical counterpart” and “developed as an entity in its own right”. The critic’s position is indicative of the shift that occurred in curators’ understanding of the Web and their work of commission: from little interest in site-specific commissions and more in the role of the Web

in relation to gallery exhibitions, to an attentiveness to the relationship between the artwork and the interface achieved through devising bespoke display environments to which the artworks responded, such as *Turbulence* (1996-2014). From this, another more recent shift can be identified: the understanding of the Web as a site of artistic production in a reciprocal relationship with offline formats of production, as in the examples proposed by the already mentioned #0000FF, *Why+Wherefore* (2007-2011) and some of the case studies proposed by this research (see chapter 3).

There are many more modes of work and approaches to curating online after Web 2.0 not discussed in this dissertation, such as those generated by the appropriation of already existing web-based platforms and working with their inherent properties: the Surf Clubs of the late 2000s (see Ramocki, 2008) and the Tumblr-based exhibition projects of the 2010s are examples of this.

2.3.2. The Curatorial Role: Responding to the Specificities of the Web-Based Exhibition

In their book *Rethinking Curating* (2010), Cook and Graham discuss “metaphors of the curatorial role” that expand on the classic functions of selecting, displaying and conserving; the “curator as...” (2010, p.156): filter, interpreter, context and service provider, to name a few. According to the researchers, such metaphors arise from the way in which curators have adapted to the object of their research—new media art—and the new contexts of production and display they have devised to display it, from the lab to the online exhibition. Many other practitioners, from Dietz to Krysa and Paul, have identified new curatorial functions in connection with the employment of web tools and interfaces: the “filter feeder” (Paul, 2006), for example, who distils and edits the array of content available at everyone’s fingertips and the “cultural context provider” (Sholz, 2006) who “sets up contexts for artists to provide contexts”. Alongside this, new definitions qualifying curatorial work have arisen, such that of “immaterial and generative” curating (Cox and Krysa, 2000), in connection to working with code and networks, such as the project *Artefact* by MODEL for the V&A Museum in London, 2002. However different, these new functions share

two characteristics: they have developed in response to the intermedia properties of the Web, because it levels the differences between various media and it facilitates appropriating modes of work pertaining other fields of work; and that they break with institutional hierarchy, going out of the legitimating spaces of museums and galleries to propose “alternative exhibition configurations” (Lichty, 2002).

Curating web-based exhibitions involves a set of specificities affecting curatorial work that are different from those that impact upon organising gallery exhibitions. It entails creating an operational framework and structure from the bottom up: the web-based platform. And because the Web is a tool which functions simultaneously as medium of production, display and distribution (Cook and Graham, 2010), building a curatorial platform requires the curator to respond to the “interactive”, “modular”, “variable” (Paul, 2006, p.87) and distributive properties of the medium. Hence the curator becomes a provider of a platform, a service and a context who has to generate an interface for display; design and programme the exhibition space (or choose and customise an existing one); implement an organisational structure (that is, the mode in which the content is produced and arranged in response to the workings of the interface) and devise a model of distribution in accordance to the adopted interface. In this process, the curatorial intent and approach to artistic practices, the site and its structure, the artworks and artistic production, as well as the type of audience engagement and patterns of navigation, are correlated and work in synergy. For, the work of researching, selecting, organising, exhibiting and preserving that are typical tasks of curating offline are re-calibrated according to the requirements of the online interface, and its being part of the networked environment of the Internet.

A historical trajectory of the changes pertaining curatorial practice online is outlined by Patrick Lichty (2002) in *Reconfiguring the Museum*, in which he discusses the shift from a centralised to a decentralised mode of curating. For the critic, “traditional” centralised curatorial approaches to organising gallery and museum exhibitions became more “democratic” with the use of web

technology, superseding the mode of the production of culture proposed by the museum, a mode “determined by oligarchic hegemony issuing forth from centres of capitalist, academic, and political power”, that is, wherein the museum functions as a “materialist cathedral” which enforces a “top-down’ approach to culture” (2002, p.1). Lichty emphasises the possibilities offered by the Web, such as collaboration, networked communication and democratisation, and the fact that it facilitates a more flexible approach to exhibition-making, also evident in the activity of forward-looking institutions such as the Walker Art Center with the exhibition *Shock of the View* in 1998.⁴ This decentralised mode of curating has further evolved into discussions around the democratisation of the practice of curating. Cox and Krysa (2000) discuss it in relation to the loss of curatorial control, Arns and Lillemose (2005) in connection to the idea of distributed curating, and more recently democratisation has been introduced in museological discourses by Dewdney, Dibosa and Walsh (2012), with the conceptualisation of the “distributed museum”, and Gielen (ed. 2013), with the “flattened and horizontal” culture in networked society. However, too often democratisation has been mistaken for the lack of curatorial expertise, in a process of underestimation that sees curatorial work as a set of functions that can be performed by everyone, levelling the role of the curator with that of the artist and the web user—the “prosumer” (Cloninger, 2009). Although this study will hopefully prove this perspective inaccurate (see chapters 3 and 4), it is worth stressing that the idea that ‘everyone can be a curator’ has developed in parallel with the simplification of web technology—exemplary is the symposium “me you and everyone we know is a curator”, organised by Sophie Krier and Mieke Gerritzen in 1999—and specifically with the possibility of ‘appropriating’ ready-to-use tools of production and distribution.

The decentralisation and democratisation of curating are then related to the modes in which a web interface has been built and employed curatorially, and the type of work carried out by its curator. It is again Dietz (1998) who first

⁴ Lichty also discusses Steve Dietz's *Art Entertainment Network* exhibition at the Walker Art Center as an example of “a major online exhibition which encouraged a form of collaborative curation” giving life to an exhibition project with a “dynamic nature” (2002, p.2).

proposed a categorisation of curatorial modes of work: “curating the Web” and “curating web art”. The former includes activities such as mapping and creating hyperlinked essays on museum websites, such as the Guggenheim Museum’s “CyberAtlas” (1996-1998), “a concerted effort to chart this terra incognita [of cyberspace]” with the aim to “commission and collect a series of maps of cyberspace”. The latter, besides including activities such as “annotating links, mapping territory, navigating a route”—habitual curatorial activities—also encompasses working experimentally with site-specificity. An instance of curating web art given by Dietz is that of the work of Lynne Cooke and Sarah Tucker, who commissioned site-specific artworks by artists not necessarily engaged with the Internet and web technology, such as Tony Oursler and Stephen Vitiello, for the DIA Art Foundation in 1995. Outside Dietz’s models, the landscape of independent curatorial work presents more differentiated modes of building and employing interfaces, often entailing the appropriation of existing web services, when moving closer to the first decade of the twenty-first century. There are, following the trajectory of “curating the Web”: the curator’s travelogue of the project *Stir Fry* (1997), by Barbara London with a purposefully built interface; the exhibition compendium of *My Own Private Reality* (2007), curated by Sarah Cook and Sabine Himmelsbach who used a blog to “re-post interesting things” they found “around the web and the world” (Cook and Himmelsbach, 2007) during the exhibition display and the “experimental online exhibition room” (Hochrieser, Kargl, Thalmer, 2007), *TAGGallery* (2007), by cont3xt-dot-net who adopted the platform del.icio.us to create a system of curatorial cooperation. Other modes emerge with curated projects of commissioned web-based art, from time-based group exhibitions to solo projects in the form of downloadable desktop screen-savers, such as those of the *Desktop Residency* project initiated in 2013, and broadcast performances, such as those of *Field Broadcast* which began its activity in 2011; modes that will be discussed in relation to curators’ understanding of the web space and site-specificity in chapter 3.

The development of web technology has impacted the uses of the web space as a site of exhibition, firstly with Net-art artists and then with ‘just’

contemporary artists and curators. For the likes of Miltos Manetas (2002), organiser of the *whitneybiennial.com* in 2003 and the *Internet Pavilion* at the Venice Biennale in 2009, a website is an exhibition venue offering carte blanche to artistic production:

Real Space, has lost its emptiness. But in the Internet, where the space is created by software and random imagination, an empty webpage is really empty. People, can still produce unpredictable objects to put there.

For the likes of researcher Berry (2001, p.22) a website is an “unstable non-place” providing an environment in which web-based artworks exist as “communicative art without space”. Although in stark contrast, both views qualify the web space in relation to artistic production: for the former it allows more space for experimental artistic creation, whereas for the latter it generates more opportunities for distribution. A balance between these two perspectives—key to discussing migration on the Web (see 2.4 and 5.3)—is offered by Miranda (2009). According to Miranda, the Internet is “a site of production and reception” that has unique distributive properties which allow artworks to “also exist in other sites at the same time” (2009, p.10). Besides site-specific production and distribution, she puts forward the idea of sites and connected contexts, in which the act of reception of the artwork occurs between the website and offline, a view that resonates with recent curatorial and artistic approaches to the web space (see chapters 3 and 4).

In terms of artistic creation online, the artworks respond to the workings of the interface devised by curators; and this requires the rethinking of site-specificity. Artist Artie Vierkant (2010) states that “the second aspect of art after the Internet deals with not the nature of the art object but the nature of its reception and social presence”. Hence, what he discusses is not a dematerialised or ephemeral artwork, but an artwork that exists beyond medium specificity, that is distributed and enters in conversation with the contexts, and platforms, where it is experienced. Such conversation is often achieved by morphing and re-iterating according to the artwork’s migration and its relationship with the medium of distribution, which, online, is also that of production. The tensions the interface holds with other sites and contexts impact the production and

reception of the artwork. According to Jon Ippolito (2002, p.485) successful online works offer diverse paths of navigation, modes of recombining images from different servers on the same web page, or ways of creating international communities. Similarly Lev Manovich (2001) stresses the fact that they hold properties of connectivity, stating that the “new media object is variable”, and “is not something fixed once and for all but can exist in different, potentially infinite, versions” (2001, p.36). Hence, and following on Joselit’s (2013) discussion of *After Art*, it is important to think of the artwork not as a “discrete” or medium-specific object tied to a specific site of display. According to Joselit, the emphasis should be put on circulation as it originated from Walter Benjamin’s idea of site-specificity, which is based on movement, on “dislocation” and “changes of format” (2013, p.14)—characteristics that are in opposition to “neoliberal and fundamentalist modes of circulation” which privilege the “collection and conservation of works of art in museums” (2013, p.23). This reconnects us to the decentralised mode of curating brought forth by web technology.

All this said, context and distribution become important notions when discussing the space of the Web as an exhibition site and how it is approached by curators. As Paul (2009) suggests:

The internet is a contextual network where a different context is always only one click away, and everyone is engaged in a continuous process of creating context and re-contextualising.

Context is also discussed by Cook (2004, p.91), who states that, when working with new media art and thus web-based art, curators not only are “engaged in producing the content of the work” but also in the “production of the work’s context (its interface, or exhibition)”, so that content and context creation “are often inseparable elements” (2004, p.84). Both Paul and Cook stress the procedural nature of organising exhibitions online. Such procedurality also demands a reflection upon audience consumption of content online: engagement happens in the form of navigation patterns and thus in response to the organisational structure of a website, and its connection to other contexts online. Again, this puts forward a scenario inherently different to that of

experiencing artworks in a gallery space—a scenario that Andreas Broeckmann (1998) defines as characterised by “face-to-face rituals of participation that makes it difficult for outsiders to understand”. Stallabrass (2003, p.135) instead stressed how the online viewer is notoriously inattentive, highlighting the necessity of addressing different viewing habits (see also 4.1.3). Both positions stress the importance of performing mediation between the artwork and its audience taking into consideration the workings of the built or adopted interface. Such mediation, as will be clarified in the next section (see 2.4, and also 5.4), has given life to exhibitions that migrate to different sites to promote different modes of experiencing web-based content and communicating to an audience.

2.4. Curatorial Production and Mediation during the Migration from Online to Offline Sites

2.4.1. Migrating Exhibitions: a Brief History

In *Six Years*, curator and critic Lucy Lippard (1973, p.viii) states that conceptual art “means works in which the idea is paramount and the material form is secondary, lightweight, ephemeral, cheap, unpretentious and or ‘dematerialised’”. For Lippard, a conceptual artwork comes into existence through the way it is communicated and through the formats of representation it adopts. This suggests that its actualisation depends on the support used in producing the idea and mediating it for an audience—be it a piece of instruction sent by phone or a diagram in a catalogue. Although Lippard discusses the artwork as a dematerialised object—while this study considers it as not-discrete—the critic’s proposition of moving away from medium-specificity, in favour of a type of site-specificity for which the artwork is actualised in relation to the contexts it enters and its modes of distribution, resonates with web-based practices (see 2.3) and exhibitions that migrate (see also 3.8). The critic proposes a shift which makes obsolete not only the idea of the object as a fixed and definable entity but also its presentation in the confined space of a gallery. By putting forward the possibility of experiencing an artwork in relation to a site of display that is contextual and procedural, Lippard paves the way for a discussion of the notion of the ‘distributed exhibition’ where artworks are “re-

located and dislocated” (Joselit, 2013), forerunning discourses around artistic practices engaging with web technology and its infiltration in the everyday.

The *Musée d'Art Modern, Department des Aigles* by Marcel Broodthaers (1968-1972) is an example of an artwork that was actualised by entering contexts and combining formats of presentation, generating different types of mediation to an audience. Also an exhibition model, the *Musée* began in Broodthaers' home as a series of projections of nineteenth-century paintings on empty crates. It then went through many iterations, always 'being held together' by the symbolic narrative of the “eagle principle” (Krauss, 2000, p.20), until 'landing' at the Stadtische Kunsthalle in Dusseldorf in 1971 (where it showcased three hundred objects and images related to the eagle figure) and at *Documenta V* in 1972. The latter entailed the gallery display, *Section Publicité*, and a full-page advertisement in the catalogue of the quinquennial exhibition, becoming an explicit example of the artist's reflection on the mass communication of his time: publicity. As an open critique of the advertising industry, its spread into the private and public sphere and the celebration of the symbolic object, Broodthaers' work pointed at the impact that the field was having on artistic and cultural production by “internalising” it (Krauss, 2000, p.11), that is, by adopting its forms of production and distribution. The *Musée* is significant to this study because it is an early example of understanding a site of display as procedural, incorporating a variety of modality of presentation and formats of production—a characteristic also seen in the case studies in this dissertation (see 3). The *Musée*, along with works by other artists of the same time (such as Dan Graham's works for magazine pages) and curators (such as Lucy Lippard and Seth Siegelaub), investigated artistic production as a phenomenon related to mass media—mostly print publishing— through developing new models of representation and mediation between the artwork and its audience. These models are precursor of the tendency identified by this study; they entail a migration, and most of all they see context and content creation as inseparable elements, opening the way to new metaphors of the curatorial role (see 2.3.2 and Cook and Graham, 2010).

The above-mentioned practices of Lippard and Siegelau have been described by theorists such as Alberro (2003, p.19) as responding to

novel modes of communication and distribution of information, new types of consumption, an ever-more-rapid rhythm of fashion and style changes, and the proliferation of advertising and the media to an unprecedented degree.

This context resonates closely with the socio-cultural and economic environment of digital culture (see 2.2.1). Siegelau's exhibitions originate from the desire of the curator to create new contexts for presenting and engaging with art outside the institution, the gallery and the museum—beside the fact that he has often been criticised for packaging art for commercial purposes and adopting strategies of promotion “similar to the operation of advertising” (Alberro, 2003, p.32). The poster he created for Lawrence Weiner's *One Hole in the Ground Approximately One Foot by One Foot. One Gallon Water-Based White Paint Poured into This Hole* (1969) is an example of “wanting to make the work palpable” (O'Neill, 2013, p.20) to an audience using the form of magazine advertisement, a form of exhibition as active archive that can also be found in current curatorial work online (see chapter 3). He also first adopted the catalogue as an exhibition site, as a new mode of distributing art, in the form of the *Xeroxed Book*, co-organised with Jack Wendler in 1968. According to the curator, the magazines, catalogues and books function as “containers of information, as neutral sites in which to exhibit work” (Alberro, 2003, p.74) with the potential to reach a wider and diversified audience—a position which resonates with that of Manetas about websites as exhibition sites (see 2.3.2) but also with the work of some of the curators presented in this study (see 3.3 and 4.3). The *Xeroxed Book* is also an example of responding to the technology of the time, the photocopy machine. It is a reflection upon the democratisation of publishing that favours the distribution of the artwork and its communication over its uniqueness as an object of display. The *Simon Fraser Exhibition* (1969) instead exploited telephone communication to enhance the mediation of the artwork to the audience. For it, the artists Kosuth, Barry, LeWitt, Weiner, Huebler (based in New York) communicated with the audience (based in Ottawa) via telephone, talking about the print works they produced for the show. The notion of the gallery exhibition was surpassed to incorporate that of an

auditorium, the SFU Theatre, where the audience, rather than being viewers, participated to a discussion with the artists (Alberro, 2003, p.173). Similarly, Lippard with her renowned *Numbers* exhibition series (1969-1973) uses the catalogue as an extension of her shows to work outside the frame of the gallery, namely as an exhibition site in itself. Lippard exploits the form of communication of her time in accordance with the communicative properties inherent in conceptual and 'dematerialised' art. Her unbound exhibition catalogues, made of print artworks in the form of drawings, notes, instructions, and diagrams, such as *557,087* (1969), "were related to transmitting information and data stripped from emotional reactions" and "force the reader to make up his or her own mind when confronted with such curious mass of information" (Lippard, 1973, p.6).

These earlier exhibition projects aimed at generating multifaceted structures of display and distribution for not-discrete objects whose embodiment would be shaped by the different contexts they were shown within, stressing their migration. Paraphrasing de Certeau (1984), the curatorial narratives they propose are similar to novels; they appropriate and use different genres, languages and references, they become plurilinguistic, and the outside becomes the inside. This echoes the case studies of this dissertation, because the procedural and distributed nature of these exhibitions responds to the technological conditions of their times and the nature of the artworks they mediate to an audience.

2.4.2. Integrating Online and Offline Formats: the Distributed Exhibition

This study has located a common trait in the practice of contemporary curators operating on the Web (see 2.2): the integration of online and offline exhibition formats of production in exhibition projects that develop through migrating across sites. This scenario hints at a historical change in the practice of exhibition making which is partly due to the different understanding that curators have of the online space, specifically when employed as exhibition venues for contemporary art. From the uses outlined by Dietz (1998) to those proposed by independent curatorial projects taking place solely on the Web (see 2.3.1), the interface has acquired different functions in curatorial work over time. If its

adoption aimed to bring the activities of museums online to a wider audience and diversify production (Dietz) in early days, it then evolved into a space for experimenting with the properties of the Web and modes of display (see 2.3.1, chapters 3 and 4). Another and more current function is that of generating complementary displays that encompass online and offline formats of production and sites in order to organise exhibitions that function as system-like structures of display and distribution. In this instance, the curatorial mode of work gives predominance to the distributed, to processes of production and mediation of the artwork that take place during the migration of the exhibition to different sites of display.

Such predominance occurs in parallel to the increasingly fluid understanding of the relationship between online and offline sites and modes of production, a change in perspective that can be traced back to independent exhibition projects occurring in the early 2000s. *Through the Looking Glass*, organised by Patrick Lichty and Jerry Domokur for the Beachwood Centre for the Arts in Cleveland (US) in 2000, is an example of this. The project centred on the simultaneous commission of artworks for both online and offline displays, starting from the very space of the gallery. It had three components—the Physical, Virtual and Textual—addressing three types of works, exhibition formats and sites at once: print works on show in the gallery space, net art works commissioned through an open call, and critical writing on art and technology. Their curatorial statement (Lichty and Domokur, 2000) is indicative of the early stages of the shift in understanding mentioned above:

When TTLG was first proposed, it was merely a two-man show of digital print. In discussing the possibilities with the art center's staff, [...] it seemed fitting that as the Internet has expanded at near-geometric rates, the criteria for the show should expand as well. An exhibition of diverse works, a tour of the world's static, electronic, and critical work on the digital medium; TTLG is a trip through the digital domain.

Through the Looking Glass is an example of integration of formats with the aim to create complementary sites of production, where processes of commission and display online and offline run in parallel. Yet the curators' understanding of integration was still somewhat compartmental, especially if compared to more recent curatorial projects (see chapter 3 and 4). The show's three components

were conceived as separated entities and the web-based commissions were not shown in the gallery. The curators wanted to leave net-dot-art to its 'natural' environment, keeping the "scripted" (Campanelli, 2010) space of the Web and the organised physical arrangements of the gallery exhibition apart. They saw the display of web-based art "at odds with exhibition conventions" (Tofts, 2005), and such decisions generated less complementary display, putting less emphasis on the distributed. As mentioned above, this view has evolved; many contemporary curators see the migration from online to offline as "a progression in the practice of contemporary artists" (Quaranta, 2013).

The movement of artistic content across sites determines the patterns of migration of an exhibition, which in turn is shaped by the intents and approaches of the commissioning curators. With the migration, the exhibition is not to be intended as the moment of display—as in the instance of the gallery exhibition—rather as a process resulting from a movement across sites and in the types of integration between online and offline formats of production. Different exhibition components come together, so that the artistic production incorporates different modes of work pertaining different fields, such as broadcasting, publishing and live events. When the components complement each other, sustaining artistic production and enhancing the artwork's mediation to an audience (see 3.8 and 5.3), this exhibition is distributed.

Paul Baran's text, *On Distributed Communication Networks* (1964), is a significant starting point to discuss the notion of the distributed in relation to the decentralisation of curatorial and artistic practices (see also definition in 1.5). Baran's network is made of a series of nodes that are interconnected according to three organisational structures, one of which is that of the distributed, for which the nodes are connected to each other without having a fixed centre. Similarly, the distributed exhibition discussed in this dissertation puts in place a networked structure constituted by different steps—the components—in which the 'pre' and 'post' display are equal moments to that of the representation and move away from a centralised organisation. Differently to Baran's network, the 'distributed exhibition' entails changes in the exhibition components—the sites

and artistic and curatorial production. They undergo processes of transformation in the migration from one site to the other, transformations that originate from appropriating modes of production pertaining other fields of work. When theorising some early models of exhibitions of new media art, Cook (2004, p.149) introduces the “distributed model”, whose origins she attributes to net-dot-art practices and the work of independent curators “creating their own infrastructure—agencies—or squat[ing] existing platforms to support their practice of circulating and distributing art, whether into museums, galleries or any kind of space”. Cook’s notion emphasises circulation in relation to the outcomes that such independently created structures of display generate, giving as an example Rob Labossiere’s *Blogumenta* project (2007) that was conceived to take place on the social networking site, Facebook. Even without taking into consideration the integration of formats and migration, Cook’s understanding of the ‘distributed’ entails another transformation, that of curatorial modes of production and their uses of sites. Cook introduced the idea of the curator as a “node” (2004, p.56) who adopts modes of operation that are procedural. This study combines these two understandings of the distributed—Baran’s and Cook’s—by proposing a model of exhibition that is actualised through migration across sites and integration of formats of production. In this scenario the curatorial task of mediating artworks to an audience undergoes an evolution (see 3.8, 4.5 and 5.4).

Because the artwork of the distributed exhibition is to be understood as an idea-based entity in circulation that takes up different forms and thus meanings according to the contexts it enters (see 2.4.1), the curator is no longer mediating it in relation to its position—its location within an architectural or spatial framing. Joselit (2013, p.47) describes this as the tension between the artwork and its contextualisation into a framework that is beyond spatial dimensions, naming four different strategies: reframing, capturing, reiterating and documenting. This study sees all of these strategies combined together in the ‘distributed exhibition’, both in the act of artistic production and curation: the works incorporate new material according to the formats of production (reframing); they reflect their ‘being’ in time (capturing); they change their state through

entering different contexts and sites (reiterating) and they become research documentation (documenting). In an online discussion on the New-Media-Discussion list, Susan Collins (2012) writes about the dilemmas of thinking of an artwork existing simultaneously as a performance in the gallery space and a live broadcast in the street, asking the question: “Where is the work?—is it on the street, on the net or in the gallery [...]. Who (and where) is the viewer?” (see full transcript in A.3.4)

Mutability, migration and integration become attributes of the ‘distributed exhibition’ and its artworks. The migratory patterns and types of integration of the exhibition (see 3.8) propose not only new configurations, but most of all new understanding of curatorial mediation, which happens across sites. In *Post-Critical Museology*, Dewdney, Dibosa and Walsh (2012, p. 202) propose to define mediation according to the “public in the networks” (2012, p.8) in an attempt to redefine the role of the museum beyond the modernist perspective of linearity and the postmodernist idea of heterogeneous temporalities described by Baudrillard. They defined mediation expanding upon the concept of “transmediation” defined by Siegal (1995), that is, “taking understandings from one system and moving them onto another sign system”. Such view allows us to better understand the renewed curatorial role in the ‘distributed exhibition’: the curator is a mediator of “knowledge between sign systems”, responding to the art and media of communication of her/his time. Indebted to the variable and networked characteristics of the Web and its infrastructure—the Internet—this approach to curating bypasses the forms of control enforced by mainstream curating that often understand the exhibition as just the moment of display.

Web technology changes not only curatorial modes of work online, but also the curators’ understanding of the relationship it has with offline modes of production, that is, sites of display and engagement and channels of distribution and communication with an audience. Curatorial work become procedural, the exhibition takes place across sites (integrating formats and migrating), giving predominance to the distributed and mediation across sites.

This chapter has put forward the necessity to understand the practice of organising web-based exhibitions and working online as connected to technological developments and the mass media of communication (see 2.2). The brief history of curating online presented in 2.3 has disclosed certain characteristics of curatorial work and its changes, as well as models of exhibition that have emerged in conjunction with different uses and understandings of the online space, including the mediating function of the interface. This has allowed a discussion of the 'distributed exhibition' as a result of an approach to curating that more fluidly understands the relationship between online and offline, all the while bearing in mind its historical precedents that see the appropriation of formats of production often pertaining to the field of mass media. These findings are reflected in the following chapters (3 and 4), which will focus on the analysis of case studies and curatorial practice and will emphasise the processes of integrating the different components of an exhibition that migrate in order to propose renewed modes and models of work.

Chapter 3: Case Studies: Six Web-Based Exhibitions Integrating Offline Formats of Production and Sites

3.1. Criteria of Selection, Method of Analysis and their Presentation

This chapter interrogates the behaviours of six exhibition projects that, in line with the research questions, show how the curatorial work of commission and exhibition of artworks has been affected by employing the Web as a curatorial medium of production, display, distribution and critique. As well as proposing different types of display and modes of work online, these projects also present the varying strategies that curators have adopted to integrate web-based exhibitions with offline formats of production, highlighting different approaches to production, working with sites of display and dealing with audience engagement across the online and offline components that constitute each of the projects. Because the manifestation of each exhibition project occurs at different points in time and sites, the purpose of interrogating them is also to analyse their overall configuration—that is to examine the type of integration of their various components.

The case studies were chosen from an array of independently curated projects organised over the last decade not only to exemplify the tendency identified by this study within the larger landscape of the praxis of curating online, but also to resonate with my own curatorial practice online (see chapter 4), such as being an independent curator or having to choose specific offline formats to be integrated with the web-based exhibition—from the gallery show to the radio broadcast and print publishing. The criteria of selection detailed below reflect this, and also determined the exclusion of many projects that, even if showing

important facets of curatorial work online⁵, were left out to allow a more cohesive comparison and locate differences and similarities:

- The curatorial background: Occurring at the time of the Web as a mass media of communication (see 2.2.1), the six projects were organised by curators already operating, or critically engaged, with web production and technology. Despite this homogeneity, the curators cover various generations and disciplinary backgrounds: new media history, nineties net activism and underground music (Robert Sakrowski of *CYT*; see 3.2); academic research in the fields of art history and economy (curators of *eBayaday*; see 3.3); media-user experience strategies in the corporate world (Kelani Nichole of *>get>put*; see 3.5) and contemporary art and curatorial work (curators of *Accidentally on Purpose* and *bubblebyte*; see 3.6 and 3.4). In terms of geography, they operated mostly in Europe, from Berlin to London and Derby, and the US, a geographical area which is greater if the location of the participating artists is considered—such as Bangalore and Delhi in India. Ensuring this variety was intentional to allow a discussion of curating web-based exhibitions from distinctive critical positions and approaches to work (see 5.2 and 5.3), not necessarily generated from within the contemporary art world or the new media one.
- Web-based specificities: While some exhibitions, like my own curatorial work, branched out from the activity of already existing online platforms (*Beam Me Up*; see 3.7), others were one-off projects related to the research interests of their curators (*Accidentally on Purpose*). The common denominator is that the online component was primary in all projects and entailed the commission—or submission—of artists' works rather than documentation of gallery works or a “digitized display of an object” (Cook and Graham, 2010). Hence, curators employed a website as an exhibition venue, or a tool for curation and service for distribution (such as *CYT* and *>get>put*), and used

⁵ Some projects are: the live broadcasts of *Field Broadcast*, 2011, “a project connecting artists, audiences and obscure locations through the portal of the computer desktop”; the online curatorial project *Temporary Stedelijk*, 2011-2012; the online magazine *Triple Canopy*, 2007-ongoing; as well as artist projects such as the mobile exhibitions of Aram Bartholl, the series *Dead Drops* and the *Speed Show*; and the Wikipedia project of David Horvitz, *Public Access*, 2011-ongoing.

- the offline format of display in direct connection to it, to 'extend' or 'complement' it (see 3.8). This is because the position maintained by this study is that curating web-based exhibitions holds a set of specificities (see 2.2.2 and 4.1.3 for details about their characteristics) even when the exhibition migrates integrating other formats of production offline (see 3.8).
- Formats of production: Each of the case studies adopts different formats of display and distribution online, and types of integration of online and offline components. They range from the database magazine of site-specific commissions (*Beam Me Up*) to the visual algorithmic compendium of submitted artworks (*Accidentally on Purpose*) online; they integrate a live time-based exhibition online with an archival mail catalogue (*eBayaday*) or the HTML collection of appropriated videos on a blog with a monthly radio broadcast (*CYT*). Such variety is to ensure that this research interrogates a body of projects that is heterogeneous in scope and functions, proposing different exhibition configurations and patterns of migration, whilst highlighting other aspects such as the different life-span (from the two years of *Beam Me Up* to the one month of *eBayaday*) and resilience (still browsable exhibitions and projects partially archived online [*Beam Me Up* and *Accidentally on Purpose*] or 'gone' because dispossessed of their own URL [*eBayaday*]).
 - Independence: The projects were all curated independently, mostly outside the programme of museums and galleries—in only one instance was the project organised in response to an institution's invitation to freelance curators (*Accidentally on Purpose*). Favouring independently curated exhibitions mirrored the nature of my own practice, but moreover put an emphasis on the fact that independent projects are often a reaction—direct or not—to an ongoing phenomenon: the scarcity of experimentation by institutions with exhibition models and modes of work engaged in web technology. As already mentioned in the previous chapter (see 2.3.2), Lichy (2002) discussed the 'power' of independent curatorial endeavours over a decade ago; the 'power' in creating "alternative configurations of the gallery space" through adopting the Web medium in contrast to museums. Lichy's observation still resonates with the current scenario in which museums are

still primarily adopting the Web as a tool for expanding their activities in the form of documentation. Groys (2013) recently stated that the twenty-first century museum largely uses the Web as a blog, and in doing so, it “does not present universal art history, but rather its own history—as a chain of events staged by the museum itself.” Groys’ observation is shared by researchers in the field who state that, “the museum tends not to support the emergence of new art forms as much as to consolidate a history” (Cook and Graham, 2010), and is also encountered in the practice of contemporary curators. The *Temporary Stedelijk* project (2011-2012) was organised by Amber van den Eeden and Mattsson Kallew in response to their frustration at the lack of interest that the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam showed in using the web space as an exhibition venue during its refurbishment. They proposed an alternative to housing exhibitions in a physical space.

The question of how to analyse the case studies required assimilating these similarities and differences and understanding them as the sum of different components in a system of display in which the web exhibition—or tool and service—was the nucleus. Hence, the **method of analysis** combined a process of deconstruction, via which the online and offline components were analysed as two almost separate entities (see Analysis tables in A.1), with one of reconstruction, which focused on the migration of content and the tensions existing between different sites of display and modes of production. Seemingly a contradiction in terms, the choice of working with the binary and rather abstract division between online and offline aided the process of qualitative comparison. The analysis was polarised around four topics, chosen because they are seen as the main concerns inherent in the praxis of curating exhibitions,⁶ which assess the following:

- Curatorial, that is, the intents and approaches of the curators in creating a narrative and commissioning works.

⁶ According to experts in the field, and to paraphrase Paul O’Neill (2012, p.7), the act of curating is based on processes of “researching, selecting, planning, organizing, structuring, framing, and curating group exhibitions” acts that determine “how art is mediated to an audience” and thus “construct ideas about art”.

- Organisational Structure that, indebted to Goriunova's research (2012), focused on the structure of the exhibition, technically and aesthetically, as elements informed by the site and medium adopted.
- Artistic Content, that is the type of artistic production in relation to the context of display and the curator's intent, also proposing some exemplary artworks to visualise this.
- Engagement, which evaluated how the work was mediated for audience's consumption and experience.

The Analysis tables (see A.1) accompanying each project are based on the interviews with their curators (see A.2). They provide details such as a comprehensive list of the included artists, giving a sense of the type of art supported and promoted by their curators, and the workings of the website, proposing a 'structural' overview of the "interaction of the artwork with its support" (Bosma, 2011).

The presentation of the case studies has inherited the structure of the method of analysis, paralleling the deconstruction and reconstruction processes. Divided into two sections, the first, Context and Main Characteristics, describes the overall project, concentrating on the curatorial whys and hows and the online component with its workings and functions. The second one, Migration: Structure, Patterns and Function, focuses on the migration and integration, highlighting the tensions existing between the online and offline components in relation to the curatorial intents, the process of commission and the engagement with the artwork. The latter closes with a proposed trajectory of analysis within the larger domain of curating online, mentioning analogous projects or tendencies arising in similar fields of work. A three-column Summary table introduces each project, proposing the keywords used to evaluate them in the first column; the curators' understanding of the online space, its relationship with offline sites, and the migration in the second column; and the naming of the curatorial roles arising as a consequence of creating new exhibition models in the third column, which builds upon the "curator as..." of Cook and Graham's (2010) discussion of the changing figure of the curator in relation to new media.

The comparison between the case studies (see 3.8) evaluates the tensions between the online and offline components of the projects and the way they are experienced in relation to the curatorial intents and processes of exhibition production. Through this, renewed curatorial roles and approaches to commission emerge, along with the identification of the exhibition models generated by the migration and also as a direct consequence of the types of integration created by their curators. While also expanding on the notion of the 'distributed exhibition' presented in 2.4.2, this section highlights how such findings have informed my own curatorial work.

3.2. *Curating Youtube: An Acoustic Journey through YouTube*

KEYWORDS	CURATOR'S VIEW	AS...
RESEARCH PROJECT APPROPRIATION OF WEB-BASED PLATFORM FOUR SITES OF DISPLAY GALLERY EXHIBITION RADIO BROADCAST ARTISTS' COMMISSIONS ACROSS SITES EXTENDED EXHIBITION	ONLINE > The Internet produces changes in artistic production / YouTube is a new field of artistic creation where anyone can make art / Gridr is a comparative tool for curation. ONLINE/OFFLINE > The online and offline displays are different aspects of the same thing / They provide different experiences of the content. MIGRATION > The transition between online and offline relies on understanding the contexts of display: it requires mediation of digital content and it highlights new aspects of a web-based work.	"CURATOR AS" > PLATFORM BUILDER, SERVICE PROVIDER, DJ, EDITOR. ONLINE PLATFORM AS > LIVE A/V DATABASE CURATING.

Figure 1: *CTY: An Acoustic Journey through YouTube*, 2011. Summary table. (Further details, including analysis table and interview with the curator, in Appendixes A.1.1 and A.2.1)

3.2.1. Context and Main Characteristics

The *Curating Youtube (CYT)* project explores how the mainstream video production and distribution enabled by YouTube has impacted professional and amateur artistic creation. To do so, Robert Sakrowski—the *CYT* founder—devised a software-based tool for curation, Gridr, which enables users to aggregate YouTube content in visual grids, giving life to what he named the “[*CYT*] HTML soundbank” (Sakrowski, A.2.1). The *CYT* soundbank functions as

a matrix for assemblages of audio-visual material taken from YouTube:⁷ it can be experienced as an artwork and an exhibition, especially when it combines more than one video assemblage (see fig.2).

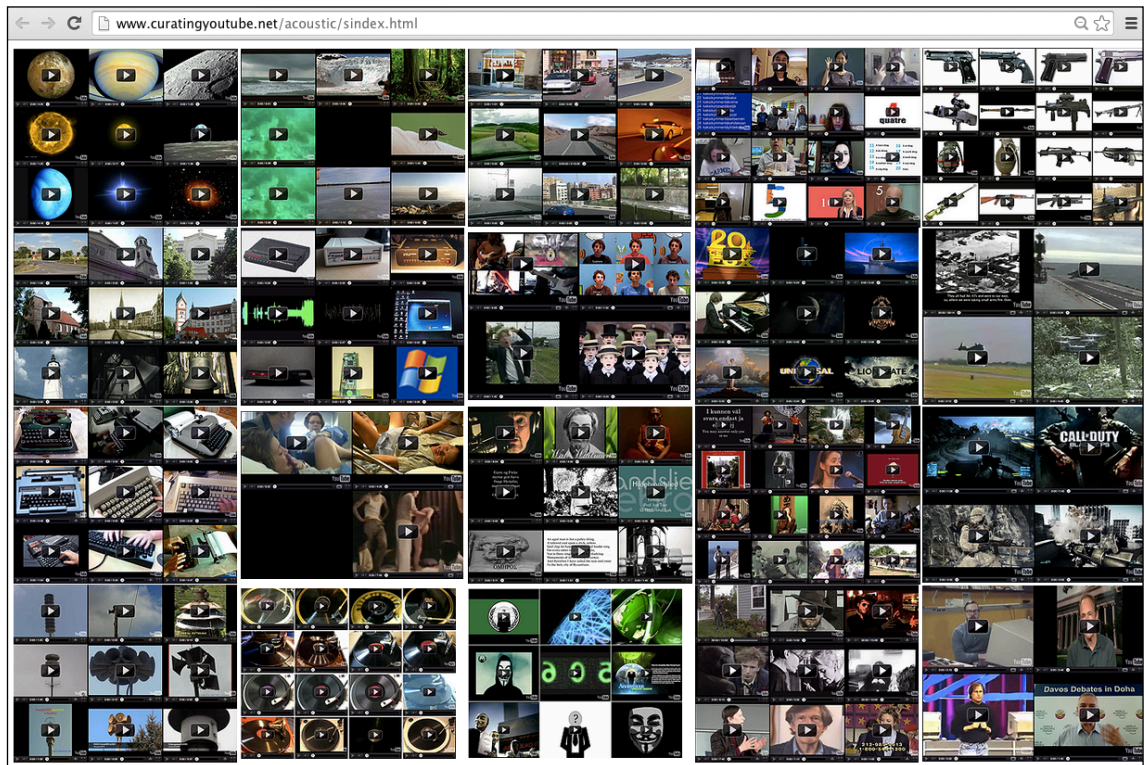


Figure 2: *CYT: An Acoustic Journey through YouTube*, 2011. Screenshot of HTML soundbank. © curatingYoutube, 2015.

An Acoustic Journey through YouTube functions as an exhibition in response to an invitation to participate in the project *Radio as an Art Space* at ŠKUC Gallery in Ljubljana (Slovenia). Initially conceived to be the result of an open call for submissions that failed, *An Acoustic Journey* became an exhibition project organised by Sakrowski to be encountered by its viewers across four formats of display and sites, over the course of a year and a half. Consisting of forty-eight grids of appropriated YouTube videos it proposed the author's personal journey through the commercial platform. Each grid showcases themed assemblages ranging from press news of the time, such as information leaked by Wikileaks,

⁷ "CuratingYoutube works on the infrastructure of YouTube as a database management system as it is plugged into many other structures, and its characteristics as an art project lie in its operating in those material structures" (Goriunova, 2014, p.513).

to public announcements by the Anonymous group, with the intent to highlight the sonicscapes at anyone's disposal on the platform.

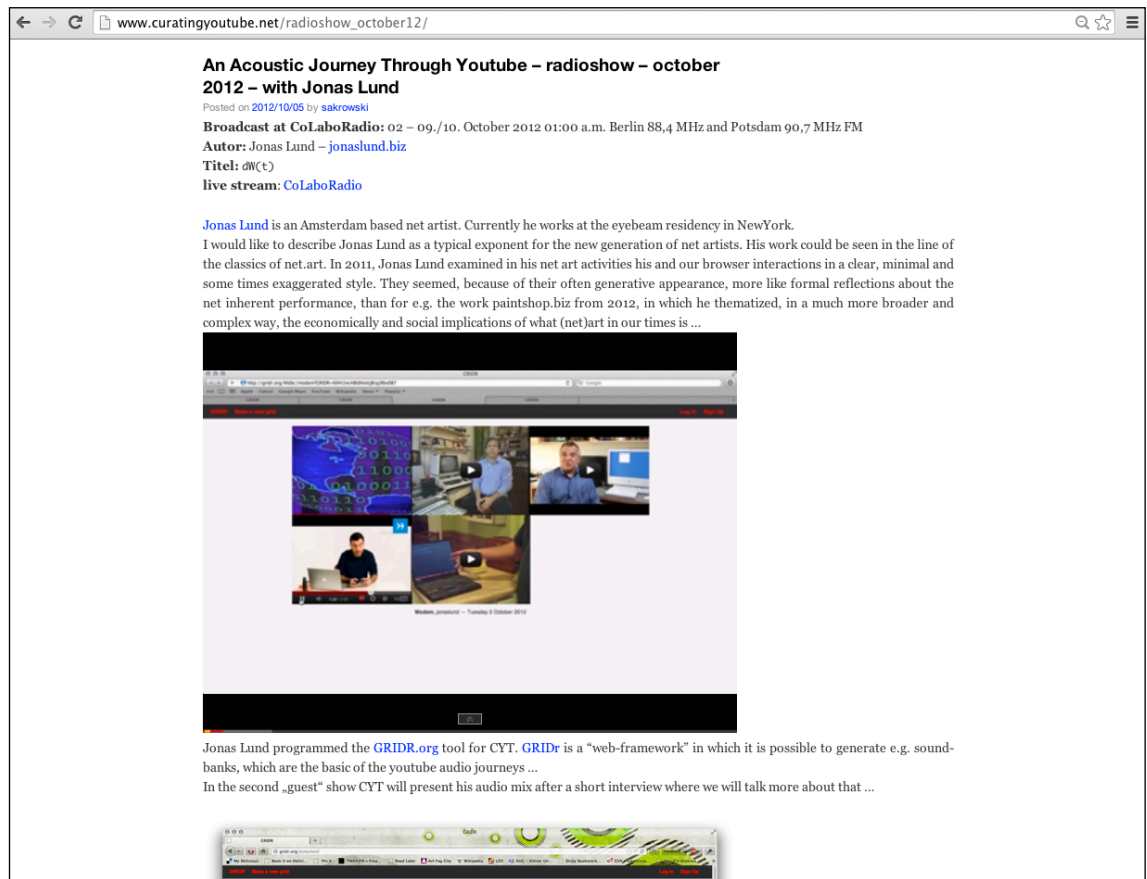


Figure 3: Jonas Lund, Radioshow on CoLaboRadio, 2012. In *CYT: An Acoustic Journey through YouTube*, 2011. Screenshot of *CYT* blog entry. © the artist and curatingYoutube, 2015.

The Gridr database is the primary site of display of *An Acoustic Journey*, as well as its tool of production that can be accessed via login to create HTML soundbanks. Alongside, there is the *CYT* blog where *An Acoustic Journey* and all the other HTML soundbanks are contextualised for display and audience engagement. Not a bespoke gallery, the blog is a research environment showing different activities originating from Sakrowski's "different perspectives on YouTube phenomena" (Sakrowski, A.2.1). *An Acoustic Journey* is housed in the section Exhibitions and presented as a blog post: a screen recording of the playing of the soundbank by the author is displayed with contextual information, the relative sound files and a link to Gridr database, where the original live

HTML soundbank is hosted (see fig.3). The Gridr database is a separate neutral environment where the HTML soundbanks, hosted unindexed, are experienced as standalone artworks with enhanced sonic properties, proposing a way of engaging with the artwork in a different way to the blog. The workings and content of YouTube drive the curatorial and artistic production, and the Gridr tool determines the formal and aesthetic qualities of the HTML soundbank. “The grid always dictates the choices of material and then the conditions in which one plays them” (Sakrowski, A.2.1). Inherently “comparative” (see A.2.1), it radicalises some of the YouTube features by making them part of the artistic production: the related videos, the share and embed features, facilitating—as will be discussed below—the movement between online and offline sites that Sakrowski sees as capable of revealing “new aspects” of the artworks (see A.2.1).

3.2.2. Migration: Structure, Patterns and Function



Figure 4: *CYT: An Acoustic Journey through YouTube for Radio as an Art Space*, 2011. Installation shot at ŠKUC Gallery © curatingYoutube and ŠKUC gallery, 2015.

The *An Acoustic Journey* soundbank migrated through iteration in the format of an interactive installation at ŠKUC Gallery, and as a further development in the form of ten new commissions—“mixes for radio broadcast” (Sakrowski, A.2.1)—on the Berlin-based community radio station CoLaboRadio. Presented on a networked laptop that also projected onto one of the gallery walls, the display at ŠKUC gallery created formal reminders of the online component, especially with the choice to hang a series of CD cases as a grid on an adjacent wall (see fig.4). By bearing the titles of the videos included in the soundbanks and credits of the original authors, the cases exposed the process of production, highlighting the procedures constitutive of YouTube. For the radio broadcast, *An Acoustic Journey* became a serial that brought forth the sonic component of the HTML soundbanks.

This double migration—from the online sites of database and blog to the gallery and the radio—conforms to the workings of *CYT* and the mode of curation enabled by the Gridr. It facilitates new ways of engaging with the HTML soundbank which is inherently a meta-work, prone to being reiterated for display in different contexts and being distributed as reformatted and packaged audio-visual material—be it proposed as an exhibition of many video assemblages (at ŠKUC gallery) or as a standalone sound work (on CoLaboRadio). By being based on a matrix, the *CYT* HTML soundbank/exhibition is both an aggregator and a storytelling device, operating within the parameters given by the curatorial tool and the—seemingly infinite—content uploaded on YouTube. The strong interconnection between the Gridr tool, YouTube and the *CYT* blog, technically and conceptually, allows the creation of a fluid structure of migration in terms of curatorial narrative and artistic production, with the online and offline components being “different aspects of the same thing” (Sakrowski, A.2.1). Conceived to counter the mainstreaming of net-dot-art and its consequent developments, the HTML soundbank has allowed Sakrowski to create “its own distribution system” (A.2.1) by also making use of channels of circulation outside the art system—the YouTube platform.

As an example of platform-based curating, *An Acoustic Journey* is a “method of action” (A.2.1) deriving from new employments of ready-to-use web-based platforms, as well as a method of reflection on the mass production and consumption facilitated by Web 2.0 technology. This newness lies in facilitating manifold ways of experiencing an artwork across different sites and exhibition mediums, highlighting the relationship between online production and the mass media of communication, such as the radio broadcast. Following on this idea of heterogeneity, another example of working curatorially with a ready-to-use web-based platform is the live auction exhibition *eBayaday*, which exploits the workings and wider modes of distribution of another proprietary web service, eBay.

3.3. *eBayaday*

KEYWORDS	CURATOR'S VIEW	AS...
RESEARCH PROJECT	Online > New environment with no physical barriers / eBay as a venue and new context to explore / Democratic space that everyone can join.	“ CURATOR AS ” > CONTEXT PROVIDER, EDITOR, INTERPRETER, ARCHIVIST, EDUCATOR.
APPROPRIATION OF WEB-BASED PLATFORM		
THREE SITES OF DISPLAY	Online/Offline > The online and offline are contexts adopting different languages.	ONLINE PLATFORM AS > LIVE AUCTION-EXHIBITION.
GALLEY EXHIBITION		
PRINT PUBLICATION	Migration > The transition between online and offline aid fixing the ephemerality of the time-based exhibition.	
ARTISTS COMMISSION ONLINE		
EXTENDED EXHIBITION		

Figure 5: *eBayaday*, 2006. Summary table.

(Further details, including Analysis table and Interview with the curator, in Appendixes A.1.2 and A.2.2)

3.3.1 Context and Main Characteristics

eBayaday explores the domain of online commerce: how the language and modes of exchange of eBay impact artistic production and artworks' symbolic value and reception.⁸ Originated from a professional practice course on art and commerce organised by Rebekah Modrak (see A.2.2), *eBayaday* was a month long auction-exhibition hosted on eBay. The curators, including Modrak, commissioned twenty-six artists—amongst whom a local amateur artist—to

⁸ eBay.com is an ecommerce company, an online auction and shopping website in which people and businesses buy and sell goods and services worldwide via listings. The listings of eBay are structured around thirty-four categories that range from Antiques to Property and Everything Else.

produce an artwork to be auctioned on eBay. The platform format (a database organised around categories), the type of engagement (one-to-one commercial exchanges) and the mode of distribution (international shipments) were some of specificities the artists were invited to reflect upon.



Figure 6: Chris Webber, *A Chris Webber Pardon*, 2006. In *eBayaday*, 2006. Screenshot of eBay listing © the artist and eBayaday, 2015.

The twenty-six artwork-listings were displayed in succession for a week each on the appropriated online venue, giving form to a live process-based exhibition. The display arrangement was determined by the categories offered by eBay—Antiquities, Business and Home—that “provided a site-specific context” (Modrak, A.2.2) and location for the works, operating as the conceptual framework(s) (see fig.6). The artworks were on show as documentation of themselves, adhering to the format of the listing and including: a representative image, a description, details of the auction, as well as a comments and messages section to communicate with the viewer/prospective buyer. Wide-ranging in form and scope, the artworks spanned from sculptural objects and

printed material to sound pieces, yet they shared a strong performative element. Abishek Harza's *Own my voice you can use it for anything* was a time-based sound piece listed under the Musical Instruments > Other Instruments eBay category. It offered time-based ownership of Harza's recorded voice, which could be used "for any purpose" (Modrak, 2006) up to five hours.



Figure 7: Abishek Hazra, *Own my voice and use it for anything*, 2006. In *eBayaday*, 2006. Screenshot of *eBayaday* entry. © the artist and *eBayaday*, 2015.

Because they were scattered around eBay, the artwork-listings were brought together as an exhibition on another website (see fig.7), *eBayaday*, created to function as an aggregator. Its format was that of a customised blog, a

placeholder for the exhibition and an archive of the auctions, which were updated live at the time of the project. This site, which does not exist anymore because the use of URL was banned by eBay, was simply organised in two main sections: the Navigation, which included information about the project, artists and artwork-listings and the The Live Auction, which visualised the month-long auction calendar. Managed by the curators, *eBayaday* sustained the audience's engagement in that it was the most comprehensive entry point to the project. The curators had a key role in mapping the exhibition process through archiving its transactions and the communication between the artists and buyers/viewers. Because of its procedurality, *eBayaday* was 'recorded' in print. Conceived at the project's inception, the catalogue, *eBayaday: World Travel of Complete Artists Listings*, underscored the exchanges that occurred throughout the project.

3.3.2. Migration: Structure, Patterns and Function

The migration of *eBayaday* to the catalogue not only documented the exhibition process; it also laid out the exchanges and connections established between artists/sellers and visitors/buyers—the commercial and symbolic negotiations. Mirroring the layout of eBay, the catalogue conformed to the “ephemeral nature” (Modrak, A.2.2) of the project. An A5 postal box contained: twenty-six unbound cards reproducing the listings; a booklet with essays; a calendar for the auctions and a poster visualising the artworks' shipment, also including the conversations between artists and visitors (see fig.8). As an extension of the live exhibition, *eBayaday: World Travel* “articulated the display of the artwork” (Cook and Graham, 2010) emphasising the processed-based nature of the project. A gallery exhibition, *Documents*, was organised as a “celebratory moment” (Modrak, A.2.2) to fulfil the agreements with the project funders rather than facilitate further moments of invention. However, the choice of displaying blown-up versions of the material included in the catalogue provided another mode of engaging with the auction-exhibition, emphasising the chronology and the geographical movement of the artworks and conversations.



Figure 8: *eBayaday: World Travel*, 2006. Image of catalogue cards. © Rebekah Modrak and eBayaday, 2015.

Only the artists and buyers experienced the artworks first-hand throughout the migration. Artistic production only occurred for the online exhibition; it was the curators themselves who decided how to re-present the works for the other exhibition components—the catalogue and exhibition. In the migration, the active role of the audience/buyers online became that of browsers and readers of documentation material offline. The online audience was mostly driven by the purpose of searching for items to buy rather than the intention of viewing an artwork. This allowed the curators to evaluate the premises of *eBayaday*: investigating artistic production and audience engagement in connection to the workings of a commercial platform where “buyers learn to quickly scan the flow of images, grammar and syntax presented by a particular seller” (Modrak and Denfeld, 2006).

The overall project functioned as a curatorial research tool into e-commerce, its language and type of mediated communication, using eBay as “as a miniature model of the universe with encyclopaedic opportunities for context” and as an experiment with “transitioning practices” (Modrak, A.2.2).



Figure 9: *eBayaday: Documents*, 2005. Installation shot at Work gallery. © Rebekah Mondrak and eBayaday, 2015.

eBayaday occurred at a time where the Web was not widely used to auction or directly sell artworks, an area that has been increasingly explored in very recent years, such as with the *Philips/Tumblr Paddle ON! Auction* held in New York, 2013, and London, 2014, or platform such as *s[edition]*. What emerges through comparing the independent model proposed by *eBayaday* and recent commercial initiatives is the difference in understanding artistic production: the latter promotes an objectification of digital works, while the former gives prominence to the fact they are in transition. Another example of appropriating an already existing web-based platform is the project *bubblebyte*, for which the website of a commercial gallery was used as a venue for an exhibition functioning as a live web installation.

3.4. bubblebyte: *Secondo Anniversario / Casa del divertimento*

KEYWORDS	CURATOR'S VIEW	AS...
<p>CURATORIAL/ARTISTIC EXPERIMENTATION</p> <p>APPROPRIATION OF WEBSITE</p> <p>THREE SITES OF DISPLAY</p> <p>GALLERY EXHIBITION</p> <p>WEB INSTALLATION</p> <p>ARTISTS COMMISSION ACROSS SITES / ONLINE AND OFFLINE</p> <p>COMPLEMENTARY EXHIBITION</p>	<p>Online > Similar to a screen with an extra dimension behind the stage / Websites as architectural spaces that can be manipulated.</p> <p>Online/Offline > Increasingly meaningless distinction / Artistic practices slipping in an out the web / Spaces where instructions are interpreted differently.</p> <p>Migration > The transition between online and offline allowed to: communicate with a different audience, bridge the disconnection between gallery space and web site and formalise a context that gives web-based artworks uniqueness and volume.</p>	<p>"CURATOR AS" > CONTEXT PROVIDER, ARTIST, FORMATTER.</p> <p>ONLINE PLATFORM AS > (GALLERY) / LIVE WEB-INSTALLATION.</p>

Figure 10: *Secondo Anniversario / Casa del Divertimento*, 2013. Summary table.

(Further details, including analysis table and interview with the curator, in Appendixes A.1.3 and A.2.3)

3.4.1. Context and Main Characteristics

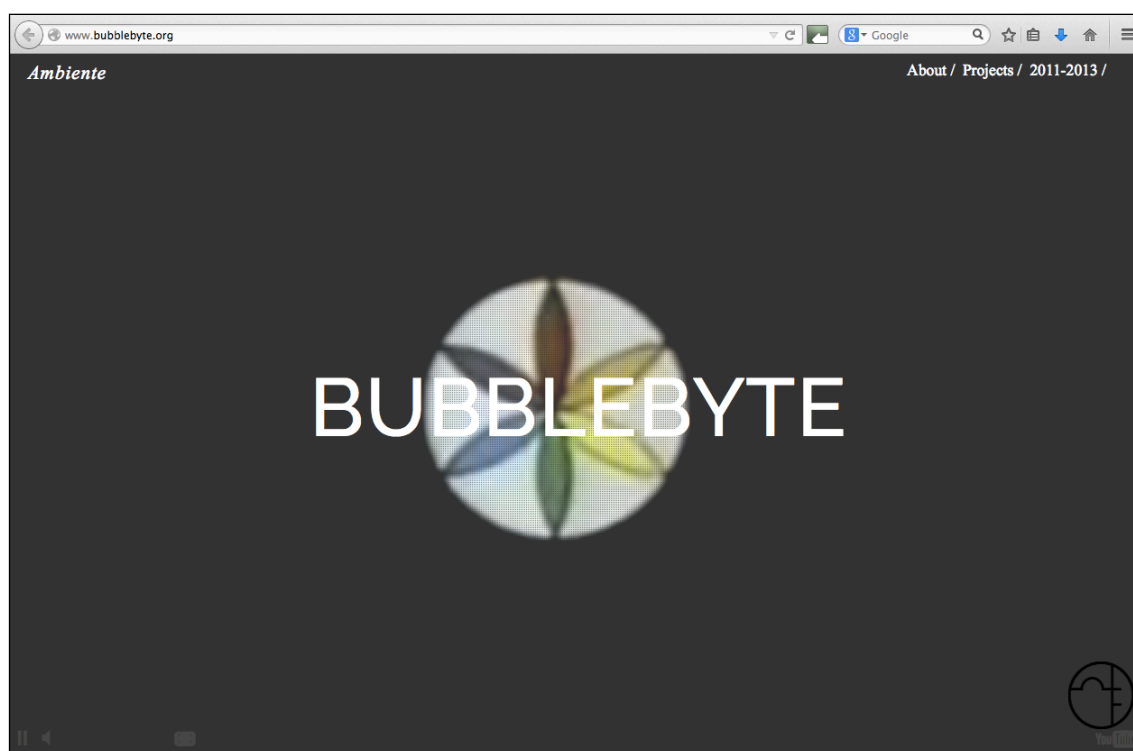


Figure 11: bubblebyte, 2015. Screenshot of index page. © bubblebyte, 2015.

As one of the projects of the online gallery bubblebyte⁹ (see fig.11), *Secondo Anniversario* explored ways of exhibiting web-based art through appropriating architectural and conceptual frameworks—online, using an already existing website, and offline, using a gallery space. *Secondo Anniversario* was conceived by its initiators, curator Attilia Fattori Franchini and artists Rhys Coren and Paul Flannery, as a celebratory event to mark the second year of activity of their online gallery bubblebyte and to seek a face-to-face encounter with their audience. Nine artists who had previously had a solo show on the website were invited to present their web-based work or a version of it at Seventeen Gallery in London.

⁹ From 2011 to 2013 bubblebyte functioned as “an online gallery showcasing works engaging with the digital space and stressing the multiple possibilities of the media. bubblebyte.org is container, artist and gallery” to then become a project that “specialises in integrating artwork within the fabric of already functioning websites through commissions and curated take-overs” (bubblebyte, 2014).

Aiming to promote the idea that “a website is an exhibition venue with the same weight as a physical gallery space” (Flannery, A.2.6), Coren and Flannery decided to also appropriate the online space of the gallery and organise “the website take-over”, *Casa del Divertimento*. This included works submitted by five artists and the very same organisers that were engrained into the coded “fabric” (Flannery, A.2.6) of the still-functioning gallery website. If *Secondo Anniversario* took place in the basement of the gallery and adopted the format of a regular group exhibition of predominantly digital artworks, *Casa del Divertimento* resulted from a curatorial approach that much resembled an artistic intervention (see fig.12). The former included works such as Flannery’s *Untitled*, 2012, a video-version of the GIF work produced for bubblebyte that was displayed on monitor, and Hannah Perry’s *Kicking*, a sculpture referring to her use of “the Internet as source material” (Flannery, A.2.6). The latter saw Coren and Flannery acting as hijackers of an existing architecture, giving artists parameters to work with. Having to work with the structure and code of an existing website, Coren and Flannery ‘formatted’ the works so that they could be used as a background image, a favicon or a sound piece, for example. Hence, the artworks became built-in functional components of the website rather than standalone pieces. *Casa del Divertimento* was conceived to “take the audience by surprise” (Flannery, A.2.6). It was not openly announced on the website and the audience had to “chase things around” (Flannery, A.2.6), looking for content within an animated environment bustling with image-objects, colours and sonic elements. The browsing experience clashed with the straightforwardness of the original website, making difficult to recognise the artworks on display. The curators defined *Casa del Divertimento* as the “tenth piece of *Secondo Anniversario*” (Flannery, A.2.6), a web-installation aimed at blurring the roles of the artists and curators, as well as the function of commercial and artistic online spaces. The ironic approach of the organisers exposed the value system of the contemporary art world for which artworks are evaluated according to the gallery brand that, paraphrasing the curators, should now be extended to their online spaces, given by the uniqueness of their own URL.

3.4.2. Migration: Structure, Patterns and Function

Secondo Anniversario implies a two-step migration and three exhibition sites: one for which web-based artworks' transition from an online to a physical display, and one that expands the curatorial vision through appropriating another online space—from the bubblebyte website to the gallery Seventeen along with the web space of the very same gallery, appropriated as a “conceptual gesture” (Flannery, A.2.6). The curatorial approaches adopted in the migration vary greatly. For the group exhibition in the gallery the curators acted as organisers, whereas for the online display they worked creatively with a coded architectural structure, in which the works had to behave according to the built interface. This exhibition project marked a change in the curatorial direction of bubblebyte, which began to focus on organising exhibition projects on other organisations' websites.

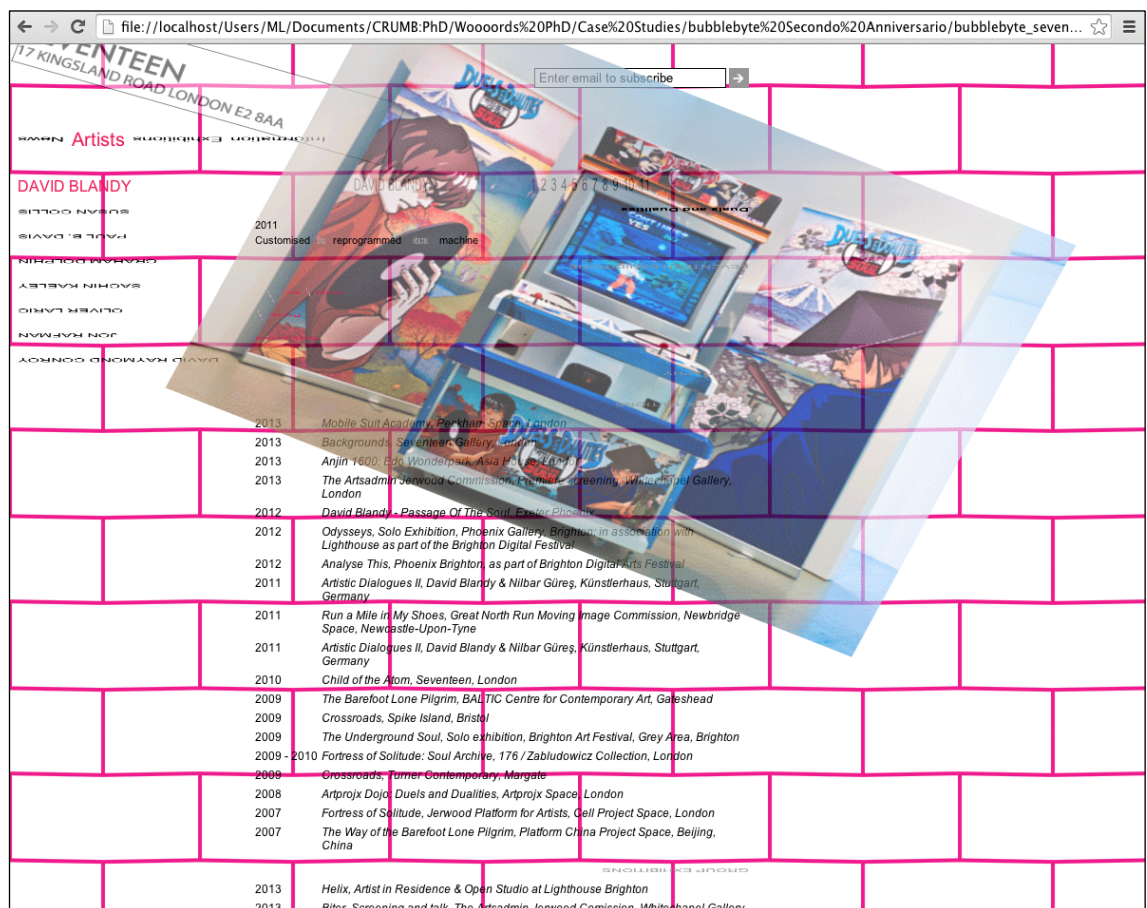


Figure 12: bubblebyte: *Casa del Divertimento*, 2013. Screenshot of HTML file. © bubblebyte and Seventeen Gallery, 2015.



Figure 13: bubblebyte: *Secondo Anniversario*, 2013. Installation shot at Seventeen gallery. © bubblebyte and Seventeen Gallery, 2015.

The artists' responses to inhabiting a physical space were different. Some artworks only referred to the Web as source material, such as Constant Dullaart's *DVD screensaver performances, Constant Dullaart 2009-2011*, an already existing work shown on video monitor cubes. Others were versions of

what was displayed on bubblebyte or kept their web-based nature, such as Angelo Plessas. Because there was a “disconnect between the online space and the physical space” (Flannery, A.2.6), *Casa del divertimento* functioned as a conceptual ‘bridge’, putting emphasis on the value of the gallery website as an exhibition venue. It is worth noting that *Casa del divertimento*, after being live for a week on the gallery website, was shown as a video on a computer in the gallery space. *Secondo Anniversario* acted as a statement, as a recognition of the value of the exhibition activity of bubblebyte, which by being housed in an existing gallery space demonstrated that the website and the gallery space had ‘an equal playing field’ within the ecology of the contemporary art world.

The overall project functioned as a strategy to stress that the “distinction [between online and offline] is becoming more and more meaningless” (Flannery, A.2.6), that the transition is organic and fluid. However, in the instance of *Casa del divertimento*, the artists’ works were almost shaped by the intents of the curators, making the project more reminiscent of contemporary artistic gestures online, such as the ‘website as artwork’ of Jon Rafman. Aimed at stressing the importance of the Web as a space of artistic production, such gestures focused on overcoming the understanding of a web-based artwork as an immaterial and unstable object, an artistic approach encapsulated by Milton Manetas’ statement that “websites are today’s most radical and important art objects” (2002), a vision mirrored in Flannery’s understanding of the online display as “just a way of presenting, just a view of an object” (A.2.6).

A different approach to adopting an already existing web-based platform in parallel to a gallery display is that of *>get >put* project, for which artists were commissioned to produce artworks that would be displayed both online and offline simultaneously.

3.5. >get >put

KEYWORDS	CURATOR'S VIEW	AS...
<p>CURATORIAL/ARTISTIC EXPERIMENTATION</p> <p>APPROPRIATION OF WEB-BASED PLATFORM</p> <p>TWO SITES OF DISPLAY</p> <p>GALLERY EXHIBITION</p> <p>HTML EXHIBITION</p> <p>COMMISSION ACROSS SITES</p> <p>COMPLEMENTARY EXHIBITION: DISTRIBUTED</p>	<p>Online > It is a mediated space / <i>The Download</i> is a node for distributing the exhibition package; it is a distributed mediation.</p> <p>Online/Offline > There is a friction between online and offline spaces / There is a movement between spaces.</p> <p>Migration > The transition between online and offline happens through mediation between the physical space (rigid) and the online space (mediated) / Their combination made the tensions between digital practices and the physical space evident.</p>	<p>“CURATOR AS” > CONTEXT-PROVIDER, MEDIATOR, PRODUCER, INTERPRETER.</p> <p>ONLINE PLATFORM AS > PACKAGED DOWNLOADABLE EXHIBITION.</p>

Figure 14: >get >put, 2012. Summary table.

(Further details, including analysis table and interview with the curator, in Appendixes A.1.4 and A.2.4)

3.5.1. Context and Main Characteristics

>get >put explores the conversation between physical and digital material through combining a gallery group show with a downloadable HTML exhibition. The curator, Kelani Nichole, commissioned six artists “already working digitally” (Nichole A.2.4) to produce an artwork for the gallery Little Berlin in Philadelphia

(US) with the intent to give life to an “exhibition of downloaders and uploaders” in the physical space. The book *The sound of downloading makes me want to upload* (2010) was used as a starting point to reflect on the social dimension of the acts of uploading and downloading and their impact on artistic production. Although the gallery exhibition was conceived first, the HTML exhibition became a “crucial part of the show” soon after, ending up being developed in parallel to the physical exhibition and launched two days prior the gallery opening. The works at Little Berlin ranged from interactive installations, such as the mechanical sculptural piece *The Internet* by Giselle Zatonyl which included a video animation shown on a screen hanging from the ceiling, to wall pieces, such as A. Bill Miller’s vinyl *gridworks_walldrawing2*, which originated from the artist’s animation work. Because all the works were produced using digital applications or web-based tools during the development process, Kelani asked the artists to re-compile the material for an HTML exhibition that would be distributed through *The Download* on the *Rhizome* website.¹⁰

The presentation of the HTML exhibition was similar to that of file sharing websites, adopting technical vocabulary to present it—“198 MB, package variable media files in 6 folders” (Salditch, 2012)—and how-to-download instructions. Once downloaded, it was accessible by opening an index.html file in the computer browser where it appeared as a very simply organised environment facilitating the act of “flipping-through artefacts” (Nichole, A.2.4). Adopting a black background with text in the MS DOS command green colour, the index page presented the conceptual framework of the show and a list of the artist and their works, that were accessible upon clicking, similarly to an exhibition hosted on a website (see fig.15 and 16). The straightforwardness of this display format encouraged the acts of sharing and re-using the artworks, as in the instance of Benjamin Farahmand's work *lo and behold, i am become as a god* (2012), a work composed of three parts: rendering, parsed text and statement

¹⁰ *The Download* was a programme developed by Zoë Salditch for *Rhizome* in 2011. “Part curatorial platform, part incentive to budding digital art collectors” (Rhizome, 2014), *The Download* shared for free one artwork every month, “providing a different way to experience art that you typically don’t get when in public spaces” (Salditch, A.3.4).



Figure 15: *>get >put*, 2012. Screenshot of HTML file. © Kelani Nichole, 2015.

A placeholder website was used in a similar way to an e-flyer to promote the show, as a conversational environment between the digital and the physical. This conversation was facilitated by aligning the curatorial intents and work to the process of artistic production, a process which was subtly exposed through creating parallel displays and adopting a web-based platform in line with the thematics of the project.

3.5.2. Migration: Structure, Patterns and Function

The migration of *>get >put* entails two sites that are in reciprocal relationship, giving form to a project in which the mode of production and form of distribution are highly dependent upon each other, and not just given by the conceptual framework of the exhibition project.

The curator described the two exhibition sites as “components” (Nichole, A.2.4) to stress the conversation between digital and physical and the “layering” of the

online and offline sites of production and display. This layering was sustained by the events organised during the show, such as the closing round-table discussion, which included talks and performances that were Skyped into the gallery space. The way in which Nichole understands her current work as gallerist¹¹ is revealing of the curatorial approach adopted for *>get >put*: “[m]ost of my efforts are on the other side of the screen, in the physical space (...) to help them [the artists practices] to come to the other side of the screen (A.2.4)”.

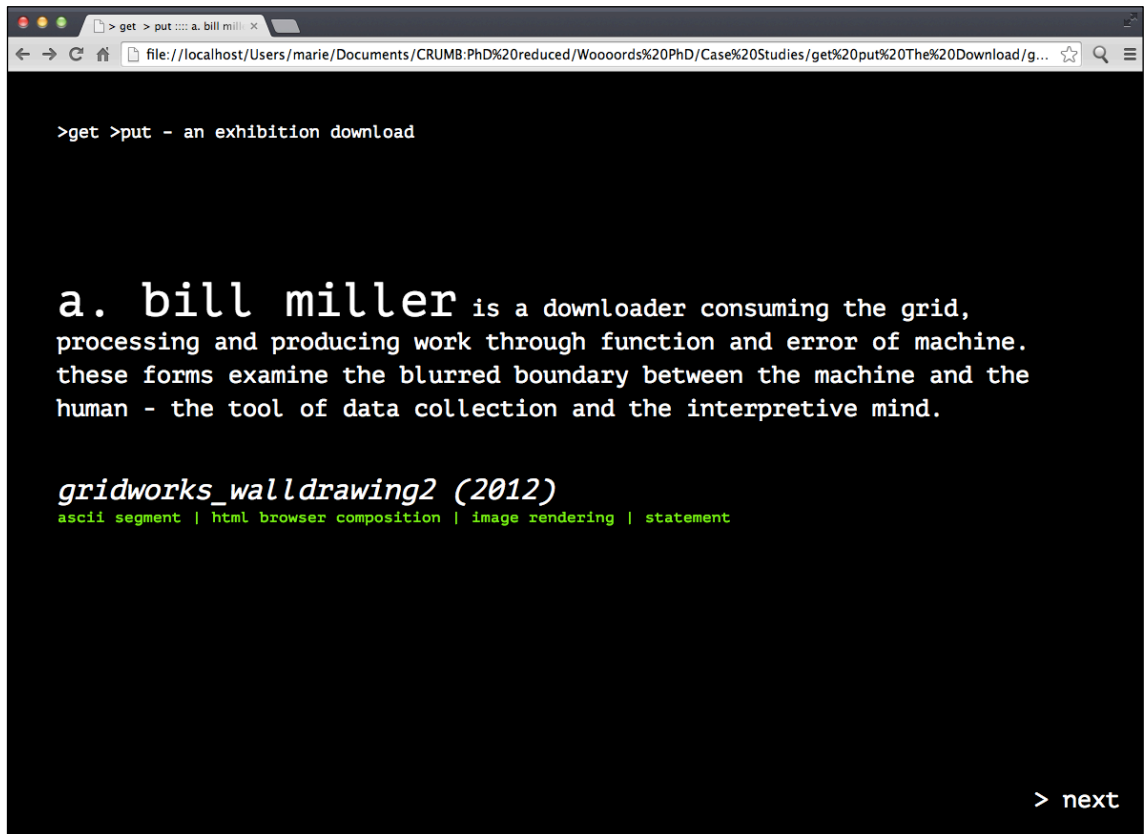


Figure 16: A. Bill Miller, *gridworks—walldrawing2*, 2012. In *>get >put*, 2012. Screenshot of HTML file © Kelani Nichole, 2015.

The artworks complement each other across sites, and the adoption of *The Download* facilitated their existence between digital and physical spaces. Although the curator described them as having two natures, distinguishing

¹¹ “TRANSFER supports artists working with digital practices that are embedded in the networked culture of our contemporary moment. [...] The focus of our efforts happens in the gallery. We invite artists we encounter through the network to conceive solo exhibitions and collaborative projects at TRANSFER, offering them the possibility of openly addressing our walls” (TRANSFER, 2014).

between those in the gallery, the “artefacts that felt like the primary”, and in the HTML exhibition, the “compositions that felt like representations of the work”, the possibility of the viewer experiencing them in the gallery show and as part of the HTML exhibition emphasised the transient and adaptable nature of artworks reflecting upon contemporary technology and the work of mediation inherent in this type of work. The artworks could either be ‘browsed’ as more discrete objects in the gallery space or in their digital form, privately, offering parallels to the audience.

The adoption of *The Download* and the creation of an HTML exhibition can be inserted into the evolution of the relationship between curatorial work and web distribution.



Figure 17: *>get >put*, 2012. Installation shot at Little Berlin gallery. © Kelani Nichole and Little Berlin, 2015.

Late nineties and early 2000s artists and curatorial practices online, especially in non-western countries with reduced access to internet broadband, relied on

the HTML interface as a way of distributing artworks, which could either be viewed online or be available through CD-ROM (Ghidini, 2013). An example of this is the work of the Sarai Media Lab which adopted the HTML framework for many projects in the public space,¹² such as *The Ectropy Index* (2005), which was a “user defined sequences leading to texts, photographs and videos, in order to explore forms of categorisation and control in the urban realm” (Hirsh and Sarda, 2012). The project following in the next section, *Accidentally on Purpose*, deals with similar concerns: the parallel presentation of exhibitions in the gallery space and online, yet not as a reflection on the nature of artistic production but from a reflection on the act of curatorial content framing.

¹²*Sarai Media Labs* was a programme established at Sarai-CSDS (Delhi, India) and running at the beginning of 2000. It included the Raqs Media Collective, Mrityunjay Chatterjee, Iram Ghufraan and a number of other collaborators.

3.6. *Accidentally on Purpose / Accidental Purpose*

KEYWORDS	CURATOR'S VIEW	AS...
<p>CURATORIAL/ARTISTIC EXPERIMENTATION</p> <p>CONSTRUCTION OF WEBSITE</p> <p>TWO SITES OF DISPLAY</p> <p>GALLERY EXHIBITION</p> <p>ARTISTS COMMISSION ONLINE AND OFFLINE</p> <p>COMPLEMENTARY EXHIBITION</p>	<p>Online > The internet is an environment creating a collective voice where leisure merges with work / The online space offers different sensorial experiences.</p> <p>Online/Offline > They provide different modes of engagement with artworks / They are contexts.</p> <p>Migration > The transition between online and offline allowed to combine exhibition strategies and platforms and to disrupt viewing patterns of the exhibition visitors.</p>	<p>“CURATOR AS” > CONTEXT PROVIDER, SERVICE PROVIDER, FORMATTER.</p> <p>ONLINE PLATFORM AS > VISUAL ALGORITHMIC COMPENDIUM.</p>

Figure 18: *Accidentally on Purpose / Accidental Purpose*. Summary table. (Further details, including analysis table and interview with the curator, in Appendixes A.1.5 and A.2.5)

3.6.1. Context and Main Characteristics

By focusing on exhibition strategies, *Accidentally on Purpose* explores the relationship between the notions of success and failure and the critical frameworks conventionally adopted to evaluate them. The curators, Candice Jacobs and Fay Nicholson, who also have artistic practices of their own, organised two parallel exhibitions, online and offline, with the intent to disrupt the reading and viewing patterns of audiences engaging with artistic content in a gallery space and on a website. Fourteen artworks—most of which already

existed—were chosen for inclusion in the group exhibition at QUAD Gallery in Derby (UK). Alongside this, the curators commissioned four of the participating artists to create a series of soundtracks available on headphones in the gallery space with the aim to influence the viewers' experience of the content on display, offering multiple paths of interpretation. The artworks ranged from photography to sculptural installation, including Edit Oderbolz's *Untitled*, a curtain-like fabric installation that, positioned in centre of the room, partly divided the space into two sections affecting audience circulation, and a floor-to-ceiling wall installation of photographic images by Clunie Reid, *Your Higher Plane Awaits*.

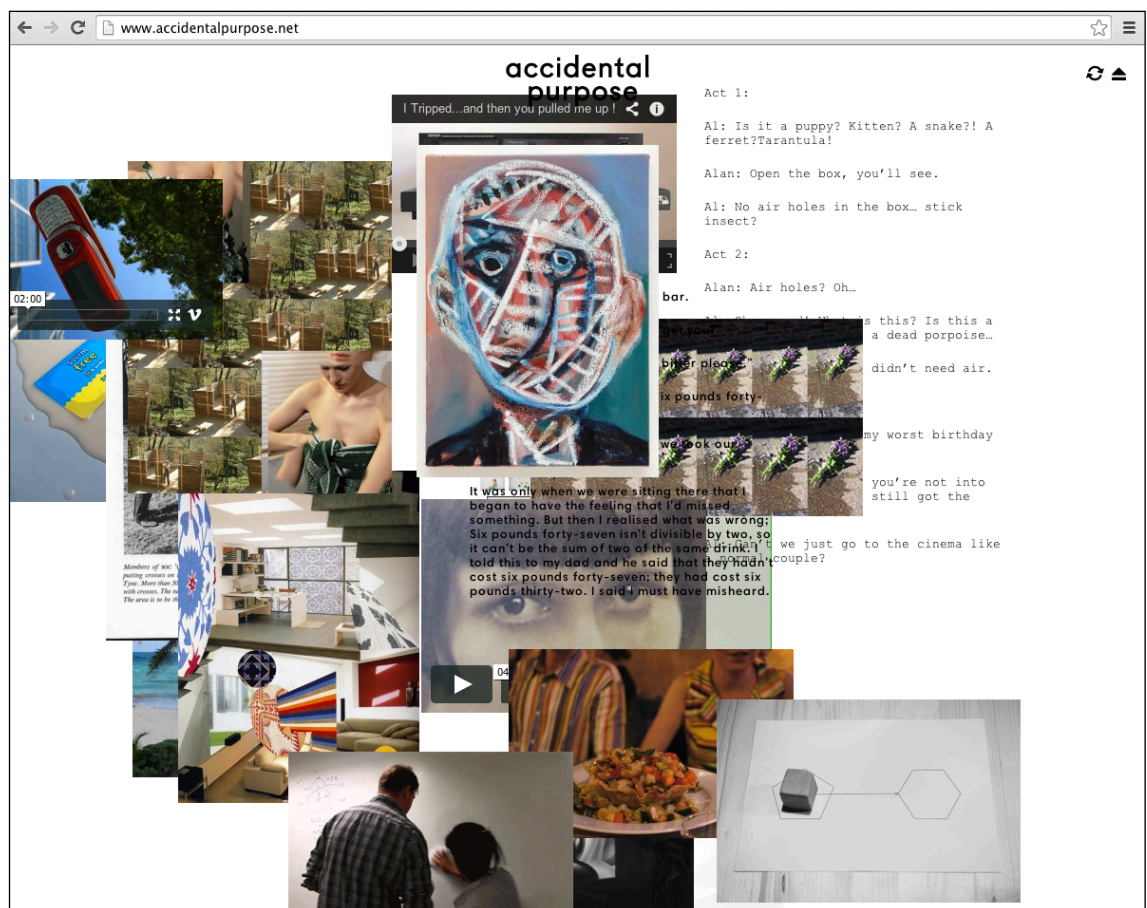


Figure 19: *Accidental Purpose*, 2012. Screenshot of index page. © Candice Jacobs, 2015.

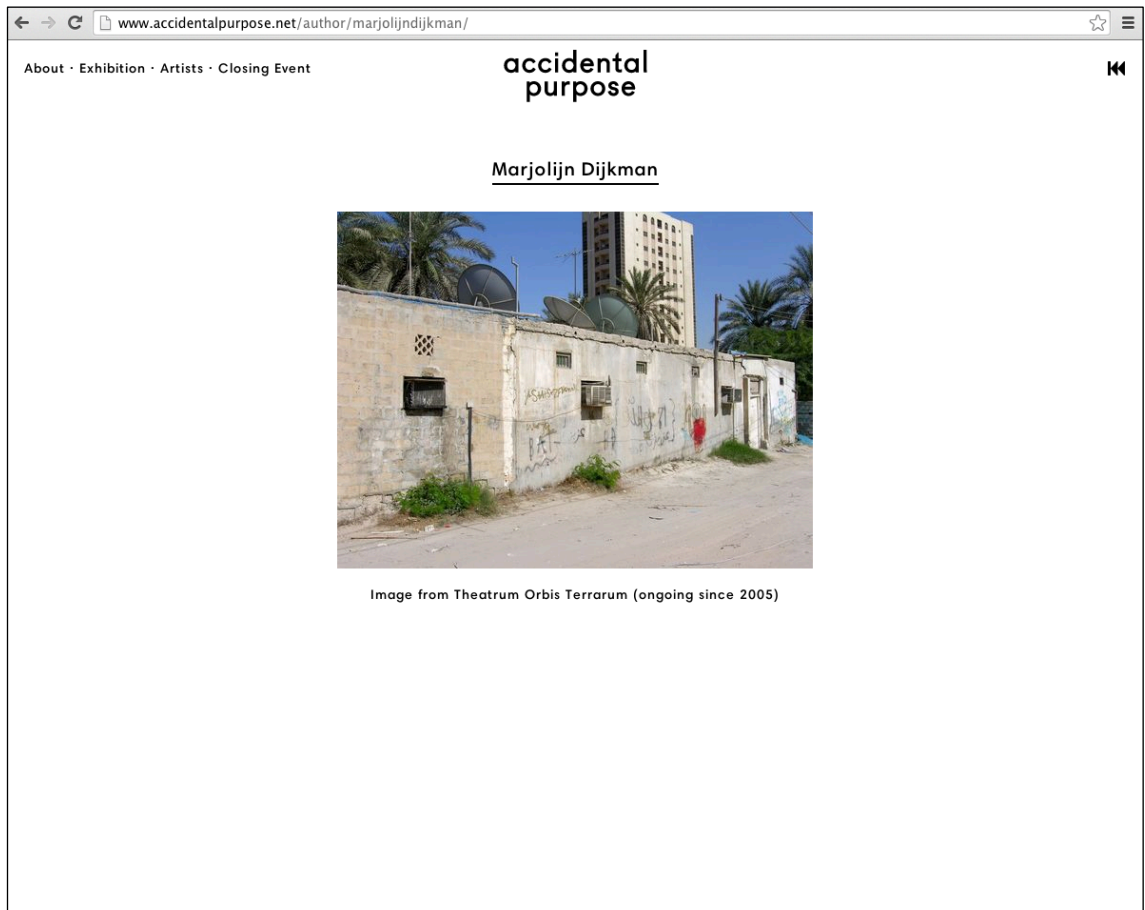


Figure 20: Marjolijn Dijkman, *Image from Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, 2005-ongoing. In *Accidental Purpose*, 2012. Website screenshot. © the artist and Candice Jacobs, 2015.

Parallel to this display there was an ‘online project’ of hundred artworks, *Accidental Purpose*—still live online. Presented on a dedicated website—a customised Tumblr—*Accidental Purpose* is technically straightforward. By clicking a refresh symbol, the viewer is exposed to different combinations of visual content—much of which consists of images related to already existing artworks—that is, a randomised display determined by an algorithm (see fig.19). Displayed in a neutrally designed environment, each artwork is shown singularly along with its title and author’s name on a white background, contrasting with the montage-like display of the index page. The artists responded to the submission parameters given by the curators, who invited them to “submit an image, video, or GIF animation, or a few words each” (Jacobs, A.2.5) in response to the exhibition theme and according to technical specifications, such as the size of the images and video files (see fig.20). These parameters, which

limited the form and format of the material submitted, produced a somewhat standardised landscape of artworks which, rather than responding to the characteristics of the Web, resembled artistic blogging gestures—looking like content-images. This standardisation of the artwork, which was formatted to fit the organisational structure of the platform, generated a unified type of audience engagement with the content on display. The audience of *Accidental Purpose* can perform curatorial tasks and create visual narratives through content arrangement; all images are positioned unlocked on the index page thus can be moved around. Because no description accompanies the artworks, which are liberated from a conceptual framework, the viewer becomes a “stylistic editor” (Cook and Graham 2010, 232) and interpreter of her/his own journey (see fig.19 and 20).

Relinquishing the acts of selecting artistic content for display to an algorithm, of arranging to the audience and of uploading artworks to the artists aligns *Accidental Purpose* to a publishing platform that displays visual compilations of digital artworks rather than commissioned web-based works. The website functions as a semi-public game of open curating: it is a Tumblr-like display based on chance encounter, an online Wunderkammer arranged by the viewer.

3.6.2. Migration: Structure, Patterns and Function

The migration of *Accidentally on Purpose* is based on creating parallels between curatorial themes and strategies across two sites of display and was presented to the viewer as “an exhibition, an online project, a series of soundtracks and a closing event.” (Jacobs, A.2.5).

Even if QUAD commissioned the curators to organise a group show for their gallery space, the online project *Accidental Purpose* was integral to the curatorial strategy since its inception: it complemented the commission of the exhibition soundtracks, the scripted conversations between the curators and the closing symposium to sustain the curatorial intent of creating multiple frameworks. It also offered something that would have been hardly achievable in the gallery space: the algorithmic “incidental display” (Jacobs, A.2.5).



Figure 21: *Accidentally on Purpose*, 2012. Installation shot at QUAD gallery. © Candice Jacobs and QUAD Gallery, 2015.



Figure 22: *Accidentally on Purpose*, 2012. Installation shot at QUAD gallery. © Candice Jacobs and QUAD Gallery, 2015.

The artworks displayed on the website have a different quality to those in the gallery; they function as a “collection” (Jacobs, A.2.5), as responses to a curatorial ‘provocation’ and are better experienced as a whole rather than as singular pieces. This, along with the fact that none of the artists included in the gallery exhibition produced a work for *Accidental Purpose*, and vice versa, created a disconnection in the way the exhibition was consumed. What connected the two sites was the curatorial narrative and in some instances the possibility given to the viewer to interact with the display of artistic content. The work by Michael Dean, *Analogue Series (Head)*, invited the gallery audience to engage with the piece by tearing the pages of the screenplay written by the artist, an action that has some resemblance with the invitation to rearrange content online. Most of the viewers engaged with the entire project via accessing the website, so that *Accidental Purpose* also became a marketing strategy, a way of circulating the project internationally and to large audiences without the necessity of much press-related activity.

Accidentally on Purpose integrated different curatorial formats and strategies via creating parallels in the curatorial strategy, expanding the reach and scope of traditional exhibition making. This resembles the integration of services that characterises the rise of Web 2.0, where platforms, tools and semi-open collaboration are combined together to tell a story. The project furthers the modes of publishing that have arisen with blogging and builds on the visuality of services like Tumblr, where contextualisation via writing has assumed a secondary role.

One project that explores publishing strategies on the Web is *Beam Me Up*, an exhibition developed over the course of one year through commissioning projects to guest curators, responding to the theme of the project and working with the framework set up by its initiator, Reinhard Storz.

3.7. Xcult: *Beam Me Up*

KEYWORDS	CURATOR'S VIEW	AS...
<p>CURATORIAL EXPERIMENTATION</p> <p>CONSTRUCTION OF WEBSITE</p> <p>TWO SITES OF DISPLAY</p> <p>GALLERY EXHIBITION</p> <p>MULTIMEDIA MAGAZINE ONLINE</p> <p>ARTISTS COMMISSION ONLINE</p> <p>EXTENDED EXHIBITION</p>	<p>Online > A publishing medium that allows multimediality, interactivity and independence / It is not an actual space, [the space] is already there, it is part of the medium (Gitanjani Dang) / It has different conditions (Sarah Cook).</p> <p>Online/Offline > They are different contexts and embodiments of art / There is the virtual space of the screen and the space of the real body / Play with how they can spill into each other (Gitanjani Dang).</p> <p>Migration > The transition between online and offline allows to mix exhibition forms / It creates an alternation between virtual and physical worlds / It requires to create suitable installation of online content.</p>	<p>“CURATOR AS” > PLATFORM BUILDER, PLATFORM PROVIDER, PRODUCER, EDITOR, TRANSLATOR.</p> <p>ONLINE PLATFORM AS > DATABASE WEB PUBLISHING.</p>

Figure 23: Xcult: *Beam Me Up*. Summary table.

(Further details, including Analysis table and interview with the curator, in Appendixes A.1.6 and A.2.6)

3.7.1. Context and Main Characteristics

Branching out from the activity of Xcult,¹³ *Beam Me Up* explored ways of creating an “interactive multimedia Internet magazine” (Storz, A.2.6) dedicated to the intermingling of art, science and writing online and based on the functions of self-publishing and semi-public content aggregation. Interested in the relationship between physical and virtual spaces, the initiator Reinhard Storz invited five international guest-curators to commission three artworks and pieces of text each in response to the project’s themes: investigating the meaning of mythological, philosophical and scientific space in contemporary culture. Storz’s intention was to see *Beam Me Up* growing through guest-curated interventions over the course of a year.

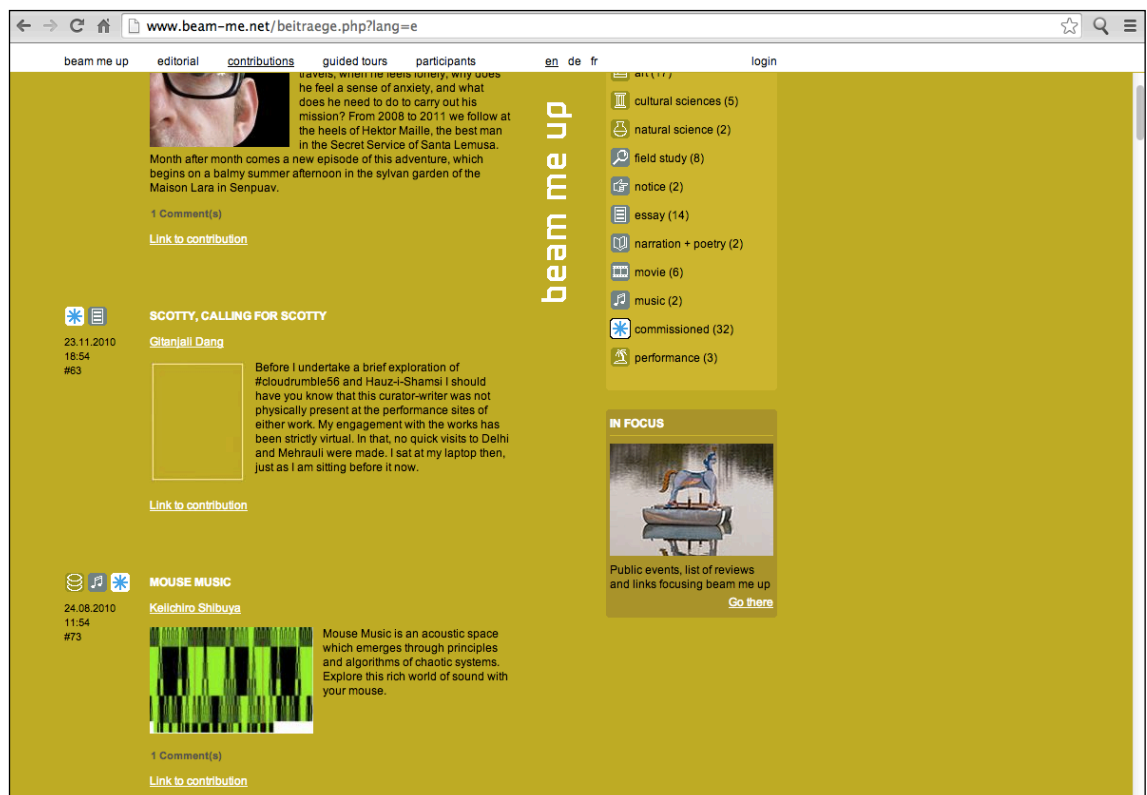


Figure 24: *Beam Me Up*, 2009. Screenshot of contributors’ page © Reinhard Storz and Beam Me Up, 2015.

¹³ Xcult.org was founded in 1995 and since its inception “it has organized and curated Internet based art and text projects which deal with questions of our understanding of reality and our use of the media.” (Storz, 1995)

The *Beam Me Up* website functions both as an exhibition site and a content management system allowing editing, publishing, commenting and content aggregation (see fig.24). Its structure is similar to that of a database that includes a filtering function where the content is organised, and thus browsable, around keywords determined by the project initiator. Their use not only enabled the creation an index of the content featured on the website but also multiple paths for reading it. The curators, participants and/or the viewers were invited to aggregate the artworks published on the website using the keywords to generate pathways, the so-called Guided Tours. However, only guest curators Sarah Cook and Gitanjani Dang used this feature, mainly to aggregate their own commissions that otherwise would have appeared as single entities, denying the artworks and written contributions the possibility of being read as part of an exhibition within the *Beam Me Up* project.

Due to the openness of Storz's invitation, the curatorial approaches of the guest curators differed greatly from each other, especially in the instance of Cook and Dang's projects. The approach of the former was focused on multidisciplinary—an astrophysicist was also included in the exhibition—and site-specificity online which was achieved by “bringing [the artists and writers contributions] to the conditions of the web” (Cook, A.2.3b).¹⁴ The approach of the latter was diametrical: Dang devised a “decentralised [exhibition] project”¹⁵ (Dang, A.2.3c) for which two artists produced durational art pieces that took place in specific locations outside the space of the website and were only accessible at the time of the performance. If Cook explored what it means to commission work for a web space and sustain a narrative within a given framework, Dang focused on working offsite to explore the relationship between the online network and the physical space.

¹⁴ Cook's project was introduced by the curatorial essay “representing/re-enacting/simulating outer space” and included contributions by Jamie O'Shea, Alec Finlay, Guillaume Belanger, Joe Winter, Jayanne English. See also A.1.6.

¹⁵ Dang's project was introduced by the curatorial essay “Scotty's Back” and included two commissions by Abhishek Harza and Vishal Rawley, along with two written contributions related to the commissioned artworks. See also A.1.6.

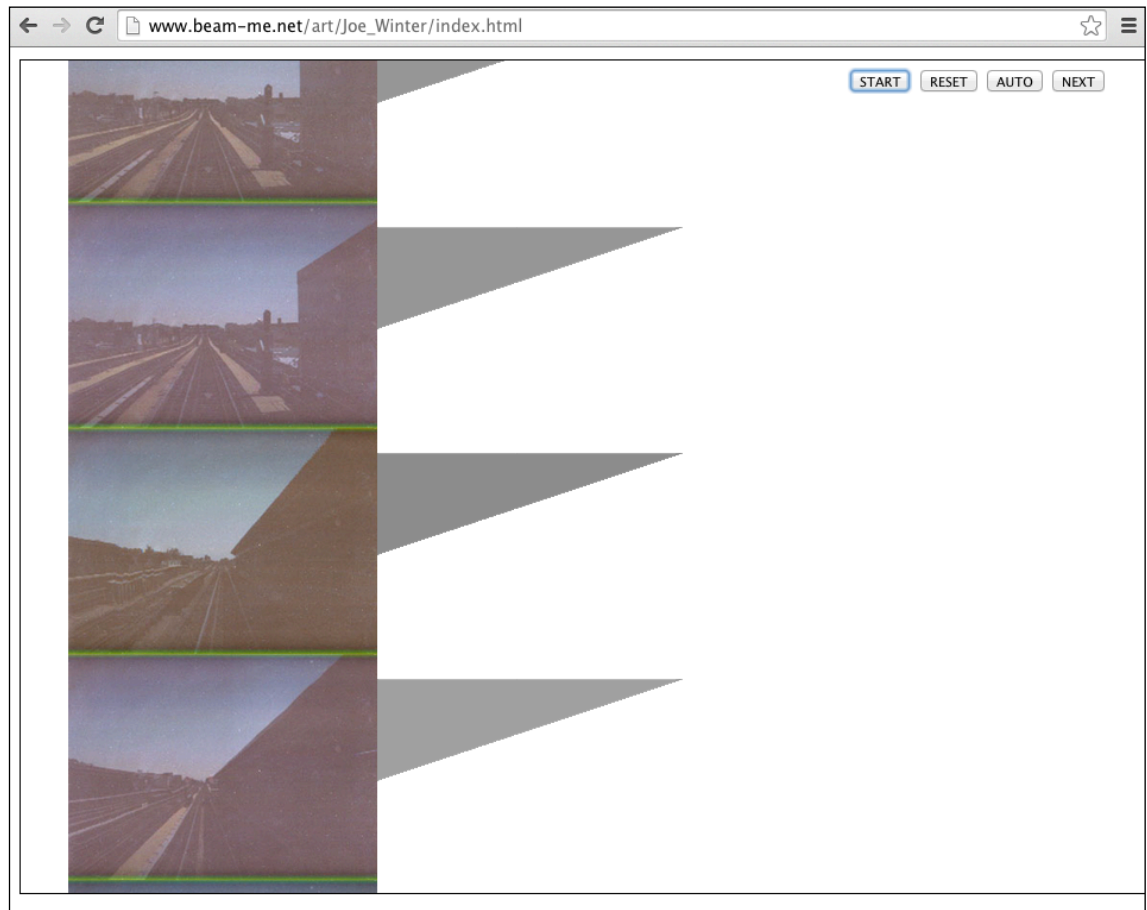


Figure 25: Joe Winter, *Xerox Astronomy and the Nebulous Object-Image*, 2009. In *Beam Me Up*, 2009. Website screenshot. © the artist and Beam Me Up, 2015.

Beam Me Up includes three other curatorial interventions and many more artworks which often embraced performativity, playing with the possibilities offered by the network—such as live streaming and broadcasting— and showcasing an impressive variety of interpretations of Storz’s overall brief. The contributions ranged from performative works such as *Mission Kaki* by HOIO, which took the form of a daily travelogue, to the online performance in Second Life by Alan Sondheim, to *Macghillie—just a void* by Knowbotic Research (see fig.26). Such variety was in line with Storz’s intent of using the website as multifunctional space: “a virtual art exhibition, a TV channel or an electronic magazine depending on the contribution” (Storz, A.2.6). *Beam Me Up* provides the audience with a multimodal type of navigation that requires time for

familiarisation.¹⁶ The lack of a main visual focal point in the design generates dispersion of the artistic and curatorial content despite the filter function, yet the variety of the content on display generates a multidisciplinary environment conceptually, formally and technically.

3.7.2. Migration: Structure, Patterns and Function

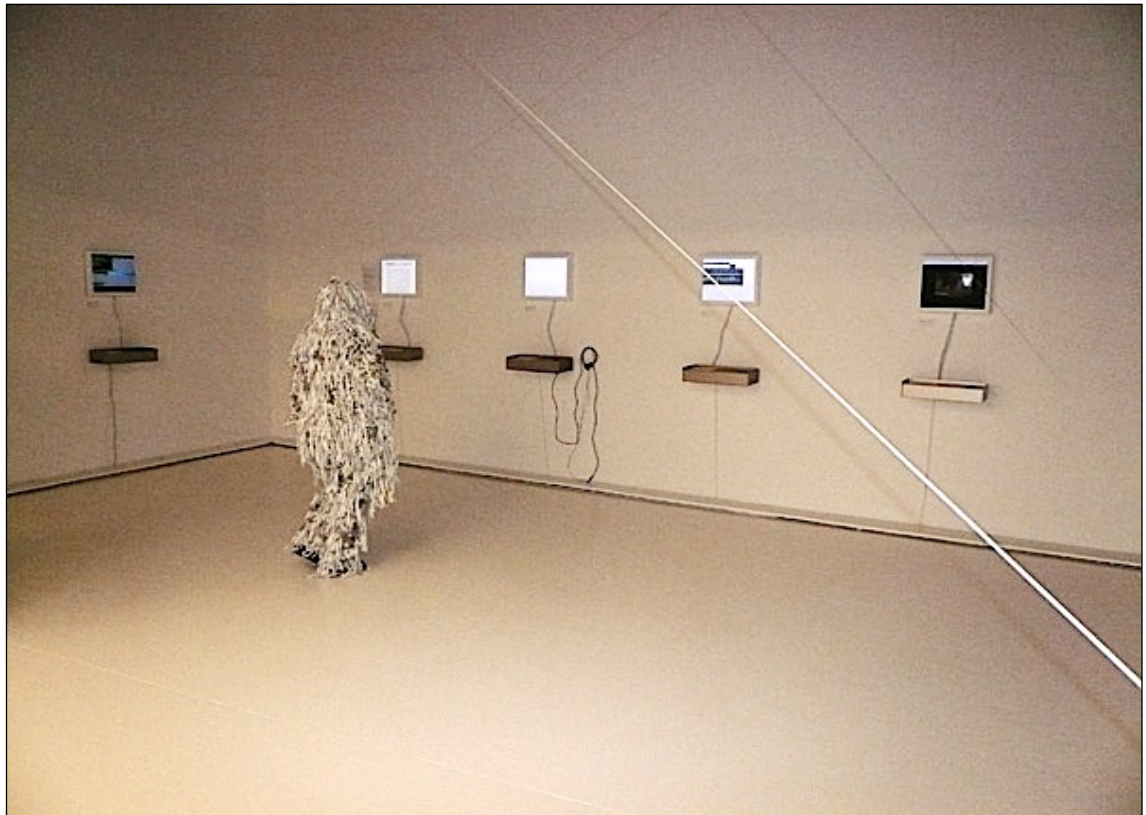


Figure 26: Knowbotic Research, *Macghillie—just a void*, 2010. Live performance at Plug.in Gallery. © Beam Me Up and Plug.in, 2015.

The migration of *Beam Me Up* to the spaces of Plug.in Gallery aimed to “make online content more accessible”, emphasising the “different embodiments” (Storz, A.2.6) of the artworks in an online and offline site. Working in conjunction with the gallery director, Annette Schindler, Storz presented thirteen web commissions stressing their interactivity and physicality through the installation set-up. The criteria around which the migration took place were

¹⁶ A review published on *Rhizome* stated the following: “despite the exhibition’s labyrinthine navigation and the fumbling translation of many of the essays, [it] compellingly runs the gamut of potential angles on the notion of space” (Evans, 2009).

based on developing “a suitable [gallery] installation around the computer screen display” (Storz, A.2.6), aimed at providing the audience with an offline equivalent of the act of browsing a website and experiencing a web-based work.

The guest-curated interventions were not highlighted in the gallery exhibition, failing to translate the database nature of the exhibition project. The works were presented in a variety of ways that stressed their networked properties and need for active engagement (see fig.26 and 27). The display included a series of devices (see fig.26) that facilitated the offline presentation of the artworks and the “alternation between virtual and physical worlds” (Storz, A.2.6). The devices ranged from purposefully built networked stations in the form of a wall-mounted computer screen to an interactive projection of the *PIC-ME.COM* search engine by Marc Lee, which functioned as the visual focus of the exhibition. To create metaphors of the online network environment, the curators commissioned the architects Morger and Dettli to intervene in the space: numerous strings ran across the rooms, generating an interconnected system of lines for example. The whole display acted as a thoughtful offline “representation” (Storz, A.2.6) of the online display. A printed publication available in the space, the *Beam Me Up Reader*, which contained essays and documentations of art contributions, served as an index of the whole exhibition project with the sole function of outlining the featured artworks and writing rather than as another exhibition site. For, some of the text pieces lost their “multimedia character” (Cook A.2.6b), such as the contribution of Jayanne English.

The careful curatorial choices about the format of presentation of web-based works offline, allowed the visitors to have different experiences of the pieces, while facing the behavioural differences in browsing content online in a private space versus that of the gallery, surrounded by other audiences. The pairing of the show with events such as artists presentations and talks created opportunities to engage with the project discursively, following Storz belief that new ways of operating online can be devised “by trying out mixed forms of exhibitions, performances, lectures, concerts, etc.” (Storz, A.2.6).

The multimodal navigation online was extended to the gallery exhibition generating a series of reminders between the online and offline sites of display facilitating behavioural comparison.



Figure 27: *Beam Me Up*, 2010. Installation shot at Plug.in Gallery. © Beam Me Up and Plug.in, 2015.

Beam Me Up resembles the model of the art agency; the project gave life to an organisational structure and architectural template for curation online via creating a database exhibition. Looking at it in connection to more recent experiments into the “alternation between virtual and physical worlds” (Storz, A.2.6) it draws on a history of extending web-based exhibition offline via adopting networked devices; a more recent instance of which is the exhibition *RUN COMPUTER, RUN*,¹⁷ which investigated the transition of digital artistic practices in the gallery space.

¹⁷ The exhibition, curated by Nora O' Murchú at Rua Red Gallery (Dublin) from May 25 to July 13, 2013, “discussed and explored how the practice of the digital artist is transitioning, not only with the growth of digital technologies, but as it is increasingly being informed by offline factors” (O' Murchú, 2013).

3.8. Reflection on Case Studies: Changes in Curatorial Work and Exhibition Models Emerging in the Migration

This reflection examines the way in which types of production and combination of sites—online/offline (see also definition in 1.5)—have been approached and configured by the curators of the case studies. The exhibition projects are here compared according to how the curators have dealt critically, practically and technically, with the integration of different formats of production, the commission of artworks across sites and the type of the engagement the audience would have with the exhibitions and artworks on display. Such comparison, also conducted in the light of my own experience of curating online and integrating formats of production, has brought to light a series of changes in curatorial work: from the predominance of their role of mediators in the exhibition process, to their approach towards creating exhibition configurations for producing, displaying and commissioning artistic content across online and offline sites. The investigation of types of integration of the projects' components has also brought to light two exhibition models emerging from curatorial processes of migration and integration of formats, the 'extended' and the 'complementary' exhibition.

The type of work of the case study curators is "other" (Cook and Graham, 2010) in that it can hardly be associated with the traditional tasks of selecting, organising, framing and promoting a group exhibition, either online or offline. Because these projects integrate different formats of production and sites, their curators have to acquire expertise coming from different fields of work. They deal at once with different architectural environments, mediums of production, forms of interactivity between the artwork and its context and modes of audience engagement with the artist's work. Hence, these curators perform a combination of different functions (see 2.2.2): they are platform builders, service providers, DJs and editors as in the instance of Sakrowski and *An Acoustic Journey*, or they are also platform providers and producers in the case of Storz and *Beam Me Up* (see the "AS..." in the Summary tables). The emerging figure

is that of the curator as a “node” to adopt a definition suggested by Cook and Graham (2010, p.156), a mediator of processes of artistic production and display in the migration of the exhibition from site to site. For it emerges that “what is distributed is not just the art, but the process of curating itself” (Cook and Graham 2010, p.158).

Within this, and through analysing how the curators have worked with the online interface, it is possible to locate two **overarching approaches to the site of production**: ‘appropriation’ and ‘construction’. The production and delivery of *eBayaday*, *>get >put* and *Casa del Divertimento* relied on appropriating an existing website: the commercial platform, the not-for-profit distribution channel, and the gallery website, respectively. Whereas *Accidentally on Purpose*, *An Acoustic Journey* and *Beam Me Up* were based on newly-built exhibition environments: the algorithmic compendium, the tool for software-based curation and blog, and the database exhibition, respectively. This distinction is not as neat as the binary division suggests, in fact, some projects show simultaneous acts of curatorial ‘appropriation’ and ‘construction’ of environments. The project *An Acoustic Journey* would not exist without adopting the video sharing platform YouTube as source material, as much as *eBayaday* could have not been experienced in its entirety if a bespoke placeholder website had not been built. However, making such a distinction aids the discussion of the evolution of curatorial practices online in relation to the development of web technology; many web-based exhibitions that occurred after 2000 rely on adopting existing web technology and tools.¹⁸ The act of appropriation impacts not only curatorial modes of work but also the structure of the exhibition projects in the present and their legacy—exemplary are the disappearance of *eBayaday* website and the inaccessibility of some of the video content of *CTY*’s HTML soundbanks (3.3 and 3.2, respectively).

¹⁸ During the course of this study I analysed a series of artistic and curatorial practices appropriating already existing web services in a paper titled *Appropriating Web Interfaces: From the Artist As DJ to the artist As Externalizer* (Ghidini, 2012) which paved the way from this distinction between construction and appropriation.

The **modes of commissioning artworks** emerging through comparing the case studies shows two tendencies, especially with regards to the online component of the exhibition projects: the ‘overriding’ and ‘facilitating’ approach. The curators of *Accidentally on Purpose*, *Secondo Anniversario* and, to some extent, *An Acoustic Journey* overrode artistic production, they often manipulated or limited the production of artworks to have them fit the organisational structure of the exhibition and its architectural framework. The approaches of the curators of *Beam Me Up*, *eBayaday* and *>get >put* instead facilitated the formulation of artists’ ideas aware of the nature of their practices. The curators’ approaches to the commission of artworks are influenced by their background and expertise, not just by the type of display appropriated or constructed for the exhibition. The first group of curators are mainly artists-curators, although Franchini of *Secondo Anniversario* and Sakrowski of *CYT* are a curator and a new media historian, respectively, whereas the second group includes primarily exhibition organisers and producers, such as Storz who continued the activity of the platform Xcult and Nichole of *>get > put* who set up her own commercial gallery link afterwards (see A.1.1. and A.4.1). All this said, it is worth stressing that the tendency of ‘overriding’ artistic content often happened in correlation to the appropriation of an existing website. This is because curators and artists had to respond to the characteristics and limitations imposed by the existing architectural environment and its structure.

As already mentioned above, the comparison of the case studies has located **two models of web-based exhibitions** emerging from integrating online and offline formats of production and display: the ‘extended’ and the ‘complementary’ exhibitions, which are generated by the type of mediation operated by their curators. The ‘extended’ exhibition is a web-based show that is integrated with offline formats of production and sites of display to *re-present* the online component for a different exhibition context, be it the gallery space or the print publication. Such re-presentation is aimed at proposing diverse manifestations of web-based content, primarily without entailing further artists’ commissions but rather a curatorially-driven re-contextualisation. The term “extension” was firstly used by curator and critic Dietz (1998) as part of his

observations on the online exhibition activities of museums in the nineties. Dietz used the term to qualify an exhibition that migrated from the gallery space to a website, that is, an online version of an offline exhibition “reformatted for the best possible experience in the medium” (Dietz, 1998). In this study the extended exhibition migrates in reverse—from the online to the offline site (see also 5.3)—and it can be located in the models proposed by the *An Acoustic Journey*, *eBayaday* and *Beam Me Up* projects. This is because their curators stretch the online component to the offline site while maintaining that the web-based exhibition is the real core of the project. The function of the migration differs from project to project, according to the curatorial intents and approaches to commission, production and mediation. In *An Acoustic Journey* it “tells more about the works and highlights new aspects of them” (Sakrowski, A.2.1); in *eBayaday* it documented the process-based auction-exhibition, its artworks and the transactions between the artists and buyers, because they could only emerge in the aftermath of the very-same auction and in the case of *Beam Me Up* it was conceived as “a second stage” to facilitate “different embodiments” of web-based content. The model of the extended exhibition allows for a deeper understanding of the workings of web-based exhibitions and artworks, facilitating comparison and different types of engagement with the same content, as well as reaching different audiences. It is worth noting that *An Acoustic Journey* and *eBayaday* necessitated this migration in order to clarify the curatorial narrative; both projects required a placeholder website to contextualise the artworks and mediate them for the audience. The ‘complementary’ exhibition instead reaches completeness in the migration, in the integration of the online component with offline formats of production and sites of display. This exhibition model often sees the curators working with the same artists across sites of display, online and offline, and the curatorial narrative is actualised in the tensions created between modes of production and presentation. The concept of complementarity was developed from the research carried out by the artist and academic Maria Miranda (2009). When discussing the relationship between online and offline sites in contemporary artists’ networked practices, Miranda puts forward the concept of the “unsitely work” occurring in an “expanded site”, that is, a site that exists across the online and

the offline and “disrupts our common notions of place and being in one place at one time” (2009, p.12). In this study, the term “expanded” has been replaced with that of ‘complementary’ to put an emphasis on the strategies and processes of bridging online and offline components, rather than on the network. *Accidentally on Purpose*, *>get >put* and *Secondo Anniversario* are models of the complementary exhibition in which the migration, as outlined for the above group of projects, had different functions. In the case of *Accidentally on Purpose* it aided the curatorial strategy of creating a disruptive exhibition framework by “combining exhibition platforms and strategies” of incidental display (Jacobs, A.2.5). In *>get >put* it placed the artworks’ digital and physical forms “in conversation” (Nichole, A.2.4) according to the nature of the artists’ practices. Lastly, in *Secondo Anniversario* the migration validated the curators’ statement that a website is the same as an exhibition site with the same value as that of a gallery. Another characteristic of the complementary exhibition is the fact that their curators understand the website as an “equal playing field” (Flannery, A.2.3) to that of the gallery space while being aware of the differing modes of production and engagement online and offline. Nichole of *>get >put* aptly describes this difference when introducing the idea of a “friction between online and offline spaces” and discussing her work as a negotiation between “the digital space which is mediated” and the physical one which is “rigid” (Nichole, A.2.4).

The ‘complementary’ (web-based) exhibition shows three key characteristics: the curatorial intent and artistic production take place through the integration of formats of production; the sites of display are combined to build reciprocally upon each other and the engagement with the artwork is achieved thanks to the tensions created by the curator, for whom neither the web-based exhibition nor the offline format of display are experienced as redundant. The complementary exhibition becomes ‘distributed’ when it achieves the status of a “space of art’s dissemination” (Cook and Graham, 2010, p.56), that is, when it functions as system-like structures of display and distribution, where the artistic and curatorial production undergo processes of transformation in the migration from one site to the other (see 2.4.2 for a detailed definition). The *>get >put* project is

exemplary of this: the formats of production and modes of work of the HTML display and gallery components are integrated according to the curator's deep understanding of the web and physical mediums and sites, a curatorial approach highly engaged with the artistic practices of the participating artists. The audience is also engaged throughout the migration of the exhibition, experiencing the artists' works in their entering in conversation with the contexts of display often via morphing and re-iterating (see 2.3.2). The role of the curator of *>get >put* is fundamentally that of a mediator, akin to that of the "node" (Cook and Graham, 2010, p.156), between online and offline production and distribution.

As a corollary to this reflection, it is worth stressing that besides the above categorisations, all curators worked experimentally with the online component of their exhibition projects, even with varying purposes: for Dang of *Beam Me Up* (see A.2.6), the online site offered the opportunity to devise "an expanded curating project", for Nichole of *>get >put* it permitted the chance to "tease people" before "they were invited to see the gallery show" (see A.2.4) and for Jacobs of *Accidentally on Purpose* "it allowed [her] to collaborate with artists in a way that they would not normally work" (see A.2.5) and evaluate the quality of audience engagement, such as the fact that a general audience "might not see the distinction from an artists' work and the google image". It also emerged that the exhibition projects of the case studies are historically connected to the outside-the-institution exhibitions organised by independent curators, such as Lippard or Siegelaub (see 2.4.1). What they share is the fact that the artworks enter different contexts of display, generating system-like structures of presentation for not-discrete objects. If both approaches seem to propel an evolution of curatorial functions and artistic production, the case studies take this further by proposing exhibitions whose configuration is based on the integration of different formats of production and sites of display altogether, configurations that are often generated with the intent to give life to complementary displays. And this hints at the possibility of creating new ecologies within the art system of the museum, gallery and art fair that are more akin to the format and process-based nature of festivals.

Another type of experimentation with integration and migration in the curation of web-based exhibitions is offered by the projects I organised with the curatorial platform or-bits-dot-com (see Chapter 4). Differently to the case studies, my projects were tailored at creating a comparison between modes of curatorial production online and offline since their inception. Even though this comparison was part of the curatorial intent that guided the development of offline projects, the changes in my curatorial work and overall understanding of the tensions between online and offline exhibition sites were still not formulated. Such formulation was made possible through locating my practice in relation to the work of the curators of the case studies and the exhibition projects they created, in that they highlighted the correspondences and differences between various types of independent curatorial work online. This became an anchor to validate each other's exhibition models and approaches, and allowed me to discuss my own practice, and theirs, in correlation with the larger context of the theory and history of curating contemporary art (see 5.4 and 5.5).

Chapter 4: Curatorial Practice: Curating Web-based Exhibitions and Offsite Projects with or-bits-dot-com

4.1. Introduction to or-bits-dot-com

4.1.1. Project Background

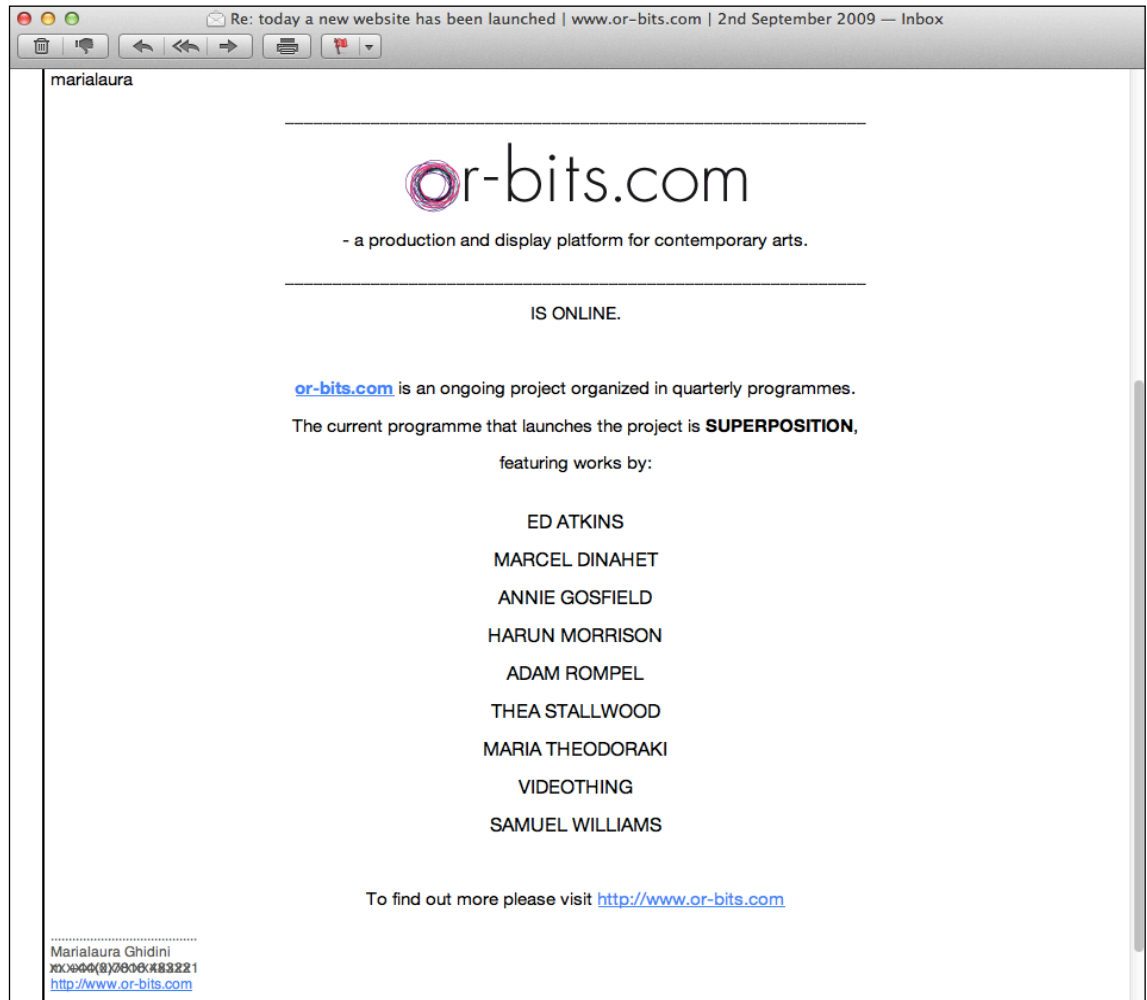


Figure 28: Marialaura Ghidini, *Today a new website has been launched*, 2009. Screenshot of e-invite. © the author, 2015.

This section provides an insight into the formation of or-bits-dot-com and the approach to curation I devised for it. It teases out how the project came to endorse experimenting with the integration of web-based exhibitions with formats of production offline, providing a context for the reading of the three

exhibition projects presented in this chapter (see 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4).

On the 2 September 2009 or-bits-dot-com was launched as a “production and display platform for contemporary arts” (or-bits.com, 2009) online and was announced through an email out to my personal contacts and specialist and not-specialist online circles, lists and magazines (see fig.28). Its mission was to explore the space of the web via organising web-based exhibitions and running a blog for critical writing related to its display activity. For each exhibition selected artists were invited to produce a work in response to a curatorial brief and the specificity of the format of display—the coded space, the networked page—which for many of them, myself included, was new because of the possibilities it offered (see 4.1.2). My primary intent was to experiment with creating a semi-open exhibition narrative built through feedback communication with the artists I was working with and open to further developments. The web seemed to be the best medium to achieve this; it being simultaneously a medium of production and channel of distribution seemed to better facilitate the creation of an exhibition environment that was emptied of pre-determined functions and open to a wide-ranging audience. Its very name refers to the path of the orbit that, at that juncture, strongly resonated with my mode of understanding curating art through organising exhibitions:

Orbit. A path that describes the continuous movement of anything within a structure. Because the movement within it is continuous, it (an orbit) is also impossible to define in terms of origin or destination. What is possible to determine at any given moment is the vector of an orbit (Narula, 2003).

My interests lay in the characteristics of an orbital configuration, in continuous movement, open ended, and functioning as a structure not anchored in a physical and exclusive location. Hence, all web-based group exhibitions generated from a keyword upon which a conceptual framework was built into a curator’s editorial. This editorial would then develop through the conversations with the artists and/or the guest curators to become a show revolving around a set of ideas explored through a variety of artistic practices and perspectives. Each exhibition attempted to speculate about the domain of technology and the digital within contemporary culture in collaboration with artists at different stages of their careers and whose practices spanned different fields of practice, from

visual arts and sound to filmmaking and music.¹⁹ A bespoke web architecture was supposed to mirror this exhibition process, a kind of architecture that would take the form of a dynamic constellation of visual and textual content. However, due to financial constraints, the first website—created by graphic designer Paul Kubalek²⁰ using the open platform WordPress—ended up being a plain and rather rigid environment far off from the fluidity I had initially envisaged.

Moreover, the technical requirements became more complex with the growth of the exhibition programme, hence the website redesign by artist and then web designer Sara Nunes Fernandes—aka Vivyanne Fernando—in May 2010, that was prompted by the necessity to improve the functionality and organisation of the featured material (see 4.1.3). Equipped with a more functional interface, or-bits-dot-com had stronger foundations to push further its exploration of open-endedness and collaborative curatorial narratives. The year 2010 marked a new phase with the first ‘offsite project’ of or-bits-dot-com: the gallery event *source coding* at Quare space in London. The offsite projects were exhibition activities taking place outside the web space, such as in the gallery, activities that expanded the online exhibition programme via adopting new formats of curatorial production and sites of display offline. Always including artists and bloggers who had already been featured on or-bits-dot-com, the offsite projects built upon already established collaborations with the aim of instigating new ways of understanding the web as a site of production and display. They functioned through comparison, reversing the curatorial strategy adopted for the website: taking the web-based exhibitions and artworks offline again.

The three projects discussed below—*128kbps objects* (4.2), *(On) Accordance* (4.3) and *OtU WYSIWYG* (4.4)—were organised to operate as a test field to

¹⁹ The very first exhibition of or-bits-dot-com, *Superposition* (2009), discussed the material existence of an object and the possibility of determining its position and location in relation to quantum theory and the ideas of “every-whereness” brought about by uses of digital. *Truth* (2011) looked at the increasing divide between understandings of the internet: the utopian visions of eighties, for which the internet was seen as capable to create a better society; and those of the early nineties marked by a growing skepticism towards it. For more details see also the curator’s editorial in A.3.1, A.3.2 and A.3.3.

²⁰ I met Paul Kubalek during my MA course at Chelsea College of Art and Design in 2008, and I will always be grateful to him for designing the very first or-bits-dot-com website with no fee and on his spare time during the summer of 2009.

practically explore the research questions of this study. Specifically, they were used to test curatorial strategies of migration, integration and translation. Organised as part of a larger programme titled *Online and Beyond*, the projects were funded by Arts Council England with the support of a variety of partners and collaborators.

4.1.2. The Curatorial Role: Characteristics and Challenges

I was not very familiar with web technology when I conceived or-bits-dot-com nor I am now, even after having organised nine online exhibitions and facilitated over eighty web-based commissions. I came to the curating of web-based exhibitions from a pure interest in the possibilities of producing exhibitions and curatorial narratives using the Web. Without the open and enthusiastic collaboration of the artists, the curators and collaborators I worked with, as well as the valuable work of the web designer Fernandes, or-bits-dot-com would have never evolved into what I consider a method of curation, a method for which the web space was understood and used as the kernel of curatorial and artistic activities also taking place elsewhere, offline.

or-bits-dot-com was prompted by some **conditions I encountered online**, mostly related to modes of production of knowledge and communication:

- Searching: During the (increasingly long) time I was (re)searching on the internet, I mostly encountered databases with scarce contextualisation of their own content, functioning more as indexes than critically organised environments. These databases were often “digitized displays of objects” (Cook and Graham, 2010), showing a lack of curatorial endeavours online, such as the commission and contextualisation of web-based artworks.
- Other ways of looking: The space of a website is determined by a different pace of engagement: content is accessed by ways of mouse-clicks and hyperlinks, for example (see 2.2). This provides a different spatio-temporal environment than that of the gallery, that of procedural time which was in line with my curatorial interests (see 1.1 and 4.1).

- A medium of many: A web site, with its intermedia properties, is a medium that encompasses all mediums at once—in ‘one dimension’. Akin to a white 4D canvas, a wide array of artists can experiment with it, with few restraints in terms of production and delivery of artworks—if not those of code language and protocols.
- Alternative circulation: The connectedness offered by the internet seemed to counterbalance the closeness of the contemporary art system, often based on assumptions about the modes in which artworks should be experienced and circulated, offering a space from which to devise new strategies of distribution (see 3.1).

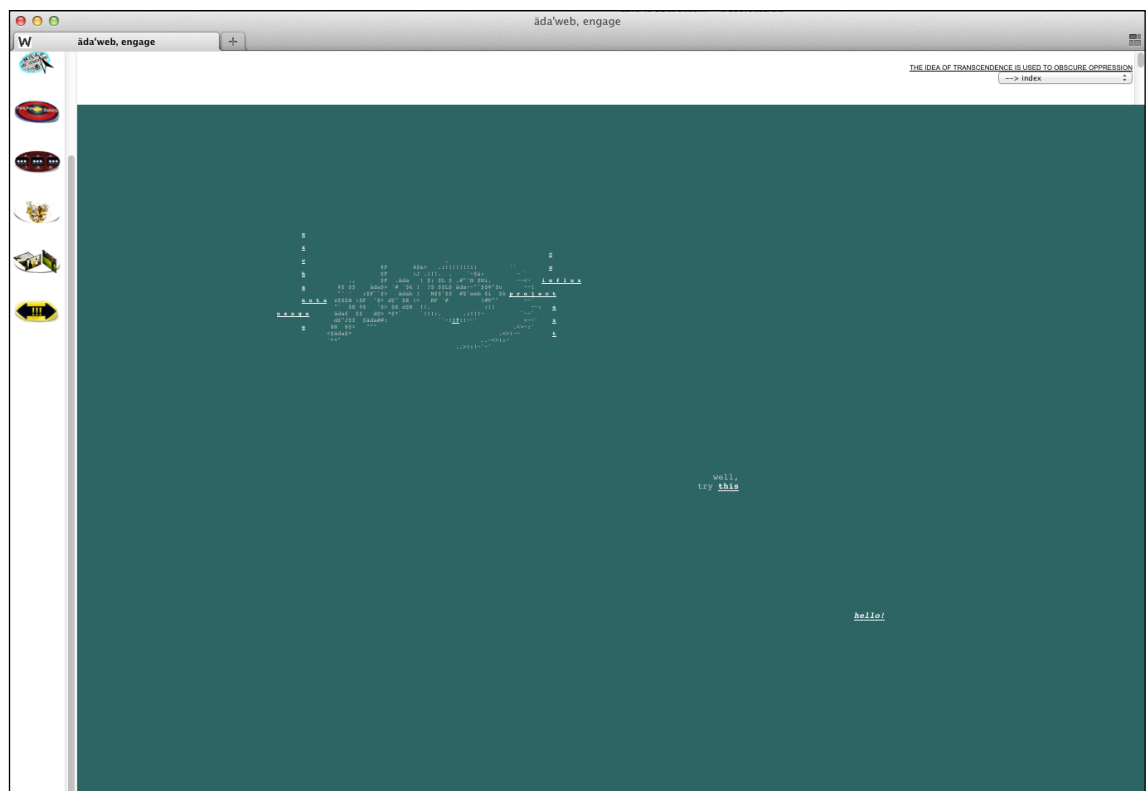


Figure 29: äda 'web, 1995. Screenshot of index page. @ äda 'web, 2015

or-bits-dot-com developed in response to these conditions and was inspired by some more historical web-based curated platforms: äda 'web (1995) and Runme (2003). The approaches to devising and running the two platforms of the curators—Benjamin Weil and Olga Goriunova, respectively—showed a deep understanding of the possibilities and limits of working with the web space

and commissioning works for it. They prioritise the nature of the practices of the artists they worked with (see 2.3.1), and I wanted to bring this to curatorial mode of work to or-bits-dot-com. Some of the challenges I had to overcome are worth a mention, since they impacted my curatorial role and function. The display framework I wanted to devise was that of a template within which different curatorial narratives could be developed in an environment recognisable for each exhibition. Additionally, I wanted the artworks to inhabit the contextualised space of the exhibition as single entities, while being experienced also as part of a group show (see 4.1.3). Engaging the audience also required addressing by devising a bespoke strategy of content navigation. In short, the aid of a web designer/programmer to build the exhibition space became of paramount importance. And the characteristics of the web medium—hybridity, variability, flexibility, and procedurality (see 2.3.2)—had to be taken into consideration in the design and curatorial work of production and mediation. My curatorial role became interwoven with that of the designer, in that I had to take into consideration the functioning of the platform in my work. Depending on the types of project devised, I was: a “platform builder” (Cook and Graham, 2010), an exhibition programmer, a researcher, a commissioner, a mediator between designer and artists, an editor, an instigator of collaborations and a seeker of partners and funding. Working with other curators on some of the exhibitions of or-bits-dot-com helped me to understand how my role was changing through practice, as in the instances of the exhibitions (*On Accordance* (see 4.3) and *Truth*. The latter, presented in December 2011, included a guest-curated project by Gaia Tedone, *Is Seeing Believing?*, a group exhibition taking place on one of the artists’ pages of the website (see also 4.1.3) that adopted the layout of a magazine—imitating the *Al-Jazeera* website— to showcase works by ten artists, including Jon Rafman and Alterazioni Video. In an interview I conducted with Tedone (see A.4.1), it emerged that she saw herself as a commissioning “editor” working in a space that was “extremely challenging”, a space that “required the ability to work simultaneously on different elements, from the editing of content to the formalisation of a coherent visual output, employing an approach both flexible and rigorous”. Tedone defined the curating a web-based exhibition a

“condensed version of a traditional show, yet faster in pace and with a different degree of curatorial control”.

Once the website was built, or-bits-dot-com began its activity, not anchored in a physical space and independent from the formal system of circulation of contemporary art. At the time of its latest exhibition, *Un-publish: Outsourced* (2013-2014), or-bits-dot-com was described as “an online curatorial project, a platform for the production, display and distribution of commissioned artworks and critical writing” (Ghidini, 2014).

4.1.3. The Website and its Exhibitions

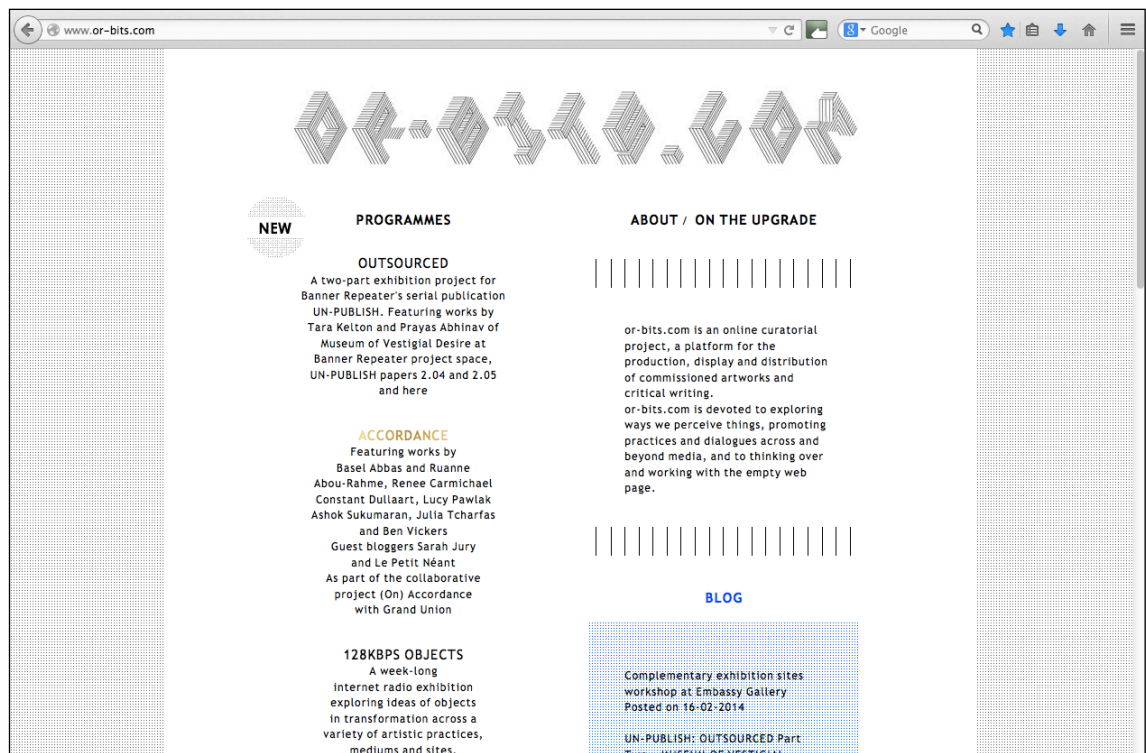


Figure 30: or-bits-dot-com, 2009. Screenshot of index page as of May 2014. © or-bits-dot-com, 2015.

This section focuses on the characteristics of the web platform and group exhibitions, as well as the way in which artistic content was commissioned from the artists, displayed on the website and mediated for an audience.

The site

The or-bits-dot-com website underwent three major redesigns since its inception; all aimed at minimising technical incompatibilities with continuously changing browser protocols and facilitating content navigation and archiving. The redesigns happened after careful observation of the navigation patterns of the audience and the quality of engagement, mainly through using Google Analytics: the time spent on a page, the type of browsing from one work to the other and one exhibition to another. Because the design of the first version of the website made it difficult for the visitors to go back to the index page, the redesigns focused on creating an environment that functioned as a template for all the exhibitions. This provided a standard way of framing and browsing the content that aided audience engagement with the artworks, despite the fact that it disadvantaged formal curatorial experimentation.



Figure 31: or-bits-dot-com: *From other spaces*, 2009. Screenshot of index page as of May 2014. © or-bits-dot-com, 2015.

Other viewing habits had to be addressed, such as the short-attention span of online viewers. A work like *FForward* by Emma Hart (*On-looking* exhibition, 2010) is an example of an artist grappling with such habits. The artist considers

the way an audience engages with the control bar of a video framework so that the artwork itself guides the viewer through a voiceover providing instructions (see fig.32).

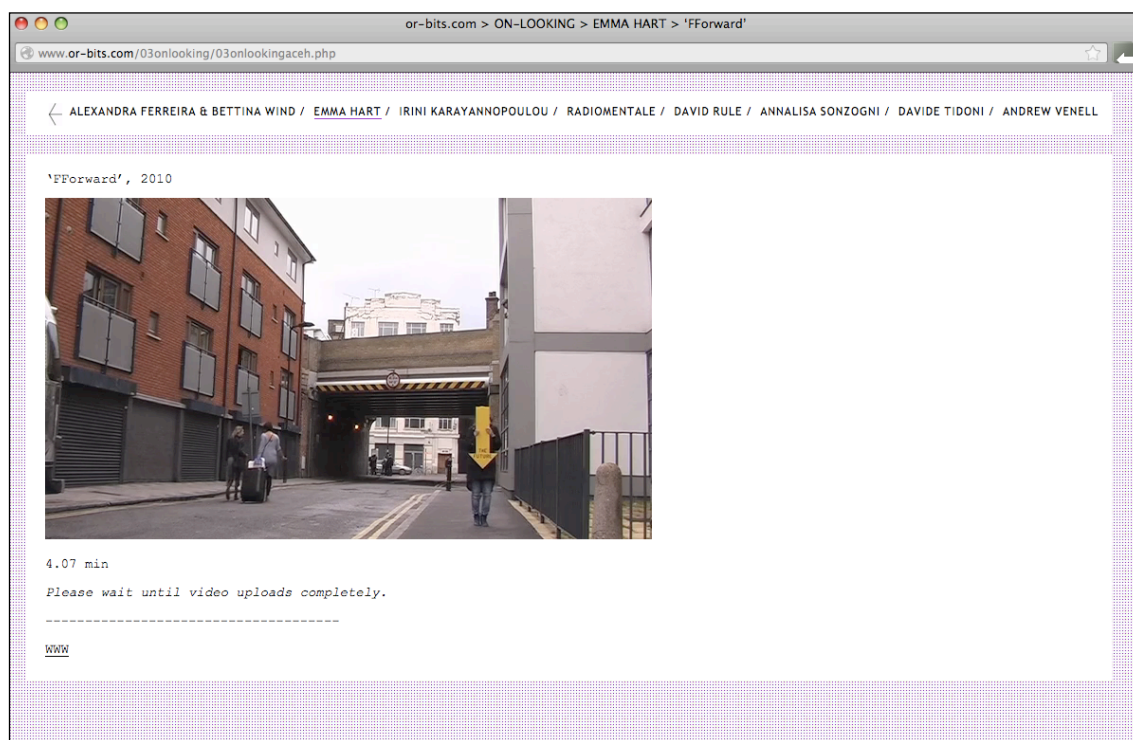


Figure 32: Emma Hart, *Fforward*, 2010. In or-bits-dot-com: *On-looking*, 2010. Screenshot of website. © the artist and or-bits-dot-com, 2015.

Technically, the *or-bits-dot-com* website is quite straightforward and minimal (see fig.30). Different display environments, preceded by an introductory one, depart from the index page, which houses a list of all the exhibitions featured on the website—the Programmes—along with the sections About, Links, Supporters and On the Upgrade, the latter being the page dedicated to or-bits-dot-com's publishing series (see 4.4). The index page also connects to the Blog, through a list of the latest published writing and Offsite Projects displayed within two frames, using the patterns adopted for the blog (see fig.31). In terms of browsing the exhibitions, each of them opens on an introductory environment displaying the details of the show, along with a quotation and the curator's editorial—also available as a downloadable PDF (see fig.33). There is no indication of the running time of the exhibition, which is always online, if not in the PDF. Some quotations are also accompanied by other content, for instance

On-looking presents a video of the artist Takashi Imura, which sets the tone for the initial conversations with the artists and browsing experience of the viewers. The list of the artists included in the show on the top of the page takes the viewer to a pop-up window; this is the exhibition environment, in which the participating artists have a page each to present their artwork (see fig.32). The artists' names are always visible on the top of the window horizontally to stress that the artworks are part of a group exhibition. The introductory and exhibition environments are standard for each of the exhibitions, functioning as architectural models of display (see fig.33). The only element that changes—beside the content—is the colour of the dotted framework surrounding the blank space where the content is showcased. This colour highlights the differences of each show against the 'default-ness' of the architecture of the website.

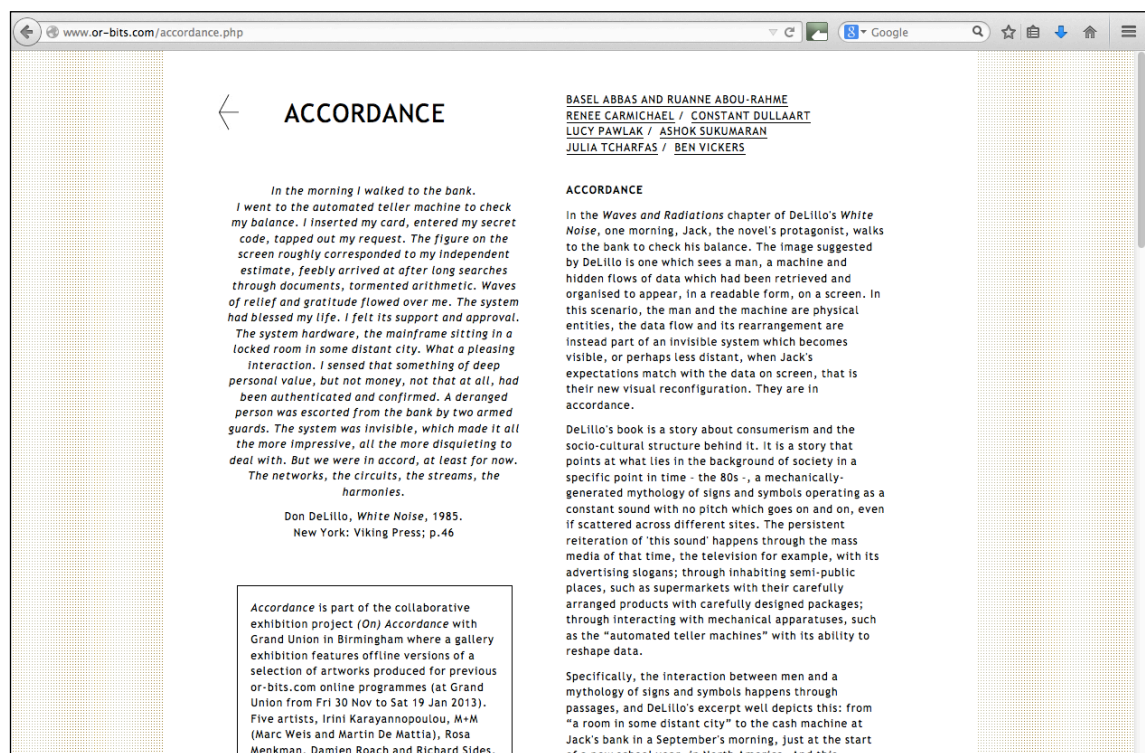


Figure 33: or-bits-dot-com: *Accordance*, 2013. Screenshot of exhibition's introductory page. © or-bits-dot-com, 2015.

The artistic content

Apart from one or two exceptions, such as the work of Samuel Williams, featured in *Superposition* in 2009, the vast majority of the featured artworks

were produced for the web-based exhibitions or translated specifically for their transition online. One of the curatorial premises of the project was to commission artworks that behaved site-specifically to the web page the artists were given, prioritising the space of display and engagement over the exhibition design. Hence, many featured artists experimented with the properties of the space at their disposal and the possible readings of their works.



Figure 34: Julia Tcharfas, *The morning of Ezra Folkman's death, the house switched on and went about its routine just as he had programmed it to do (A Plot Schematic)*, 2012. In or-bits-dot-com: *Accordance*, 2012. Screenshot of website. © the artist and or-bits-dot-com, 2015.

The morning of Ezra Folkman's death... (A Plot Schematic) by Julia Tcharfas (see fig.34) opens in its own pop-up window upon clicking on the title. This strategy was adopted by the artist to invite the viewer into the narrative of the work by having to browse an image in its entirety through the movements of scrolling up and down and sideways. Similarly, artist Lucy Pawlak's *I glove u 2* (see fig.35) functions as an interactive installation that takes the viewer into the multi-layered relationship between the human and the automated machine. The artwork has to be browsed in temporal steps that the viewer is 'forced' to follow

and conform to. Both works were presented as part of the *(On) Accordance* exhibition (see 4.3), and the former also transitioned to *On the Upgrade WYSIWYG* (see 4.4).

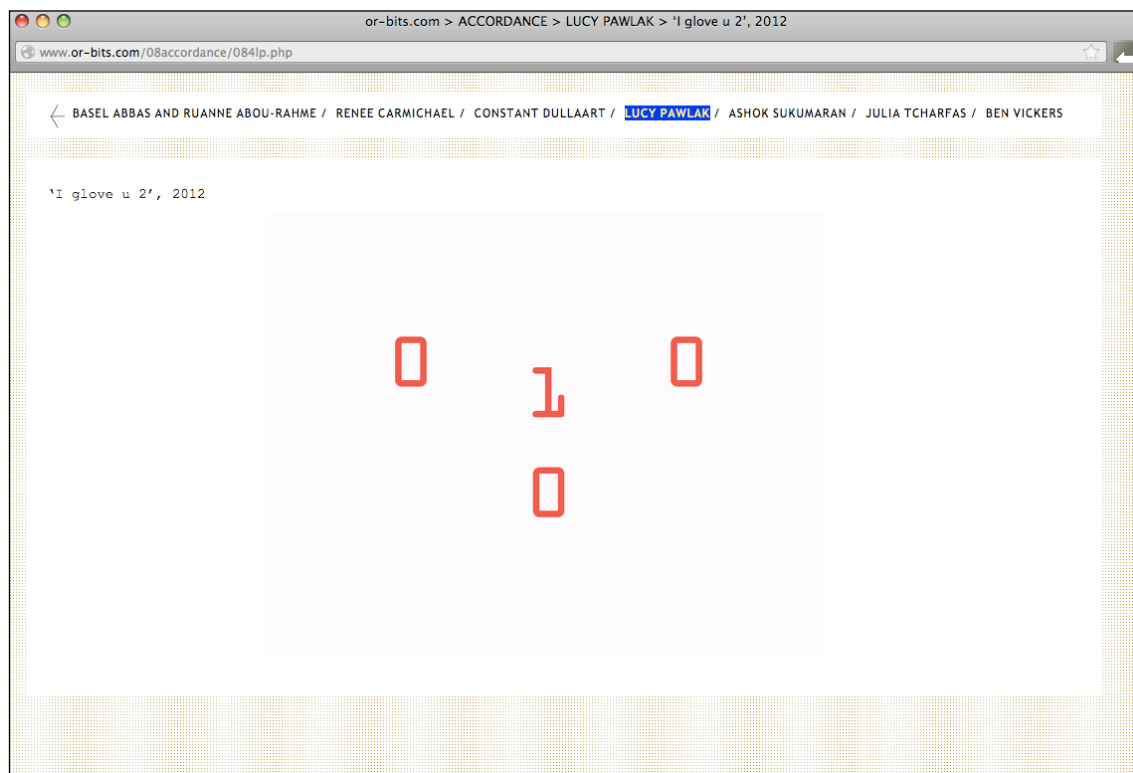


Figure 35: Lucy Pawlak, *I glove u*, 2012. In or-bits-dot-com: *Accordance*, 2012. Screenshot of website. © the artist and or-bits-dot-com, 2015.

Other works play more literally with the space of the web as a page, such as Damien Roach's *Michigan parachute/Kitchen/Arp 147* (2011), which explored the pace of online engagement through comparing it with experiences in real life. Working with content arrangement—an image, a text and an appropriated video—the work played with spacing to generate an environment combining different forms of content consumption and thus watching behaviours, also pointing to the relative instability of web-based content and the widespread reliance on third-party creation. It is worth mentioning that all of the artworks produced for or-bits-dot-com are hosted on the website server and they are owned by the respective artists who licensed the website the right to show them for the life span of the overall project.

This mode of commission forged productive conversations around site-

specificity and online engagement, as well as the role that digital and web technologies have in the contemporary cultural context. Artist Lucy Pawlak's response to my invite provides an example of the type of conversations generated:

I am especially interested in what you wrote about 'modes of interaction between us and invisible flows of data, us and systems of re-organisation'. I'm interested in the translation of symbols and signs from one medium to another—the flow of content. My focus right now is on computer vision and hearing. What rules and parameters are given to the computer when endowing it with sight and hearing? What are the structures that we build so it might process, analyse and understand images and data from the real world? (Ghidini, 2012c)

Whereas Tcharfas' response to the same invite pointed at the technicalities that needed to be discussed in the production process. Thinking of how the work would 'sit' on the or-bits-dot-com website, the artist asked me:

Is there a maximum image size to fit in a pop up window, and what resolution should I make my image? I want it to sit inside the window like a giant collage that you navigate by scrolling. I attached a really loose 'sketch' as a screen shot. (Ghidini, 2012c)

These exchanges were not only just functional to the organisation of the exhibition and the process of production of artworks, they also became the basis upon which the **offsite projects** discussed below were developed.

The engagement

Running a curatorial platform online and organising web-based exhibitions entail communicating with a global audience who is often only encountered through data analytics, seldom through feedback emails and very rarely in person—if not during events offline. This, in conjunction with my interest in testing the properties of the web space (see 4.1.1.), prompted the offsite projects of or-bits-dot-com. By taking the form of physical events, such as the already-mentioned *source coding* (see 4.1.1) and the book launches of *On the Upgrade WYSIWYG* (see 4.4.), these project offered to the artists and I an opportunity for engaging with an audience face-to-face, as well as of comparing modes of working online and offline, digital and physical.

In terms of engagement with content online, the default architecture of the website (see fig. 30, 31 and 32) facilitated the mediation of artworks to an

audience. From conversations I had with website visitors over the years, I gathered that such consistency created recognisability which, in turn, allowed the website to establish itself as a space showcasing contemporary art— besides medium-based definitions. It is difficult to judge the engagement of an audience online because it is often remote, one-to-one and mediated by software and devices. However, some reviews of the exhibitions might offer an objective insight, providing useful qualitative research material for this study. Writer Catherine Spencer described in detail her experience of browsing the artworks featured in the exhibition *Acceleration*:

Each of the showcased artists presents works concerned with the temporality of viewing. They explore – and test – audience attention span and endurance, mining away at the issue of how the time spent engaged in the act of viewing affects the experience, and attendant understanding, of an artwork. How long will we look at something? What is the correlation between duration, value and comprehension? Such thorny questions recur throughout the fabric of *Acceleration*. (Spencer, 2012)

Similarly, writer Oliver Basciano wrote about the artworks displayed on or-bits-dot-com in a review for *ArtReview* magazine. The browsing experience of Basciano was not circumscribed to a specific exhibition; rather he navigated across many shows and artworks:

Here works utilise the multimedia possibilities and infinite variations in design architecture that the context offer. Dun-coloured Veil (Reel 10) (2009), produced by Ed Atkins for the first exhibition, *Superposition* (2009), and consisting in an addictive scripted narrative (about an attempt to photograph a ghost), is navigated by a horizontal scrollbar, and accompanied by a haunting, minimal electronic composition, for example. The same show included Thea Stallwood's *Here and There* (2009), webcam footage which, when the server is refreshed, proves to be a recorded minidrama, only masquerading as live streamed event, [...] Jamie George made use of one of those zoom features common in online clothing stores, which here allowed the viewer to explore the contour of a yellow bed-sheet [...]. (Basciano, 2012)

The audience of or-bits-dot-com was not provided with 'devices' to activate their experience except the basic interactivity inherent in viewing web-based content—a fact that was more present in the case studies examined earlier, such as *Accidentally on Purpose* (see 3.6).

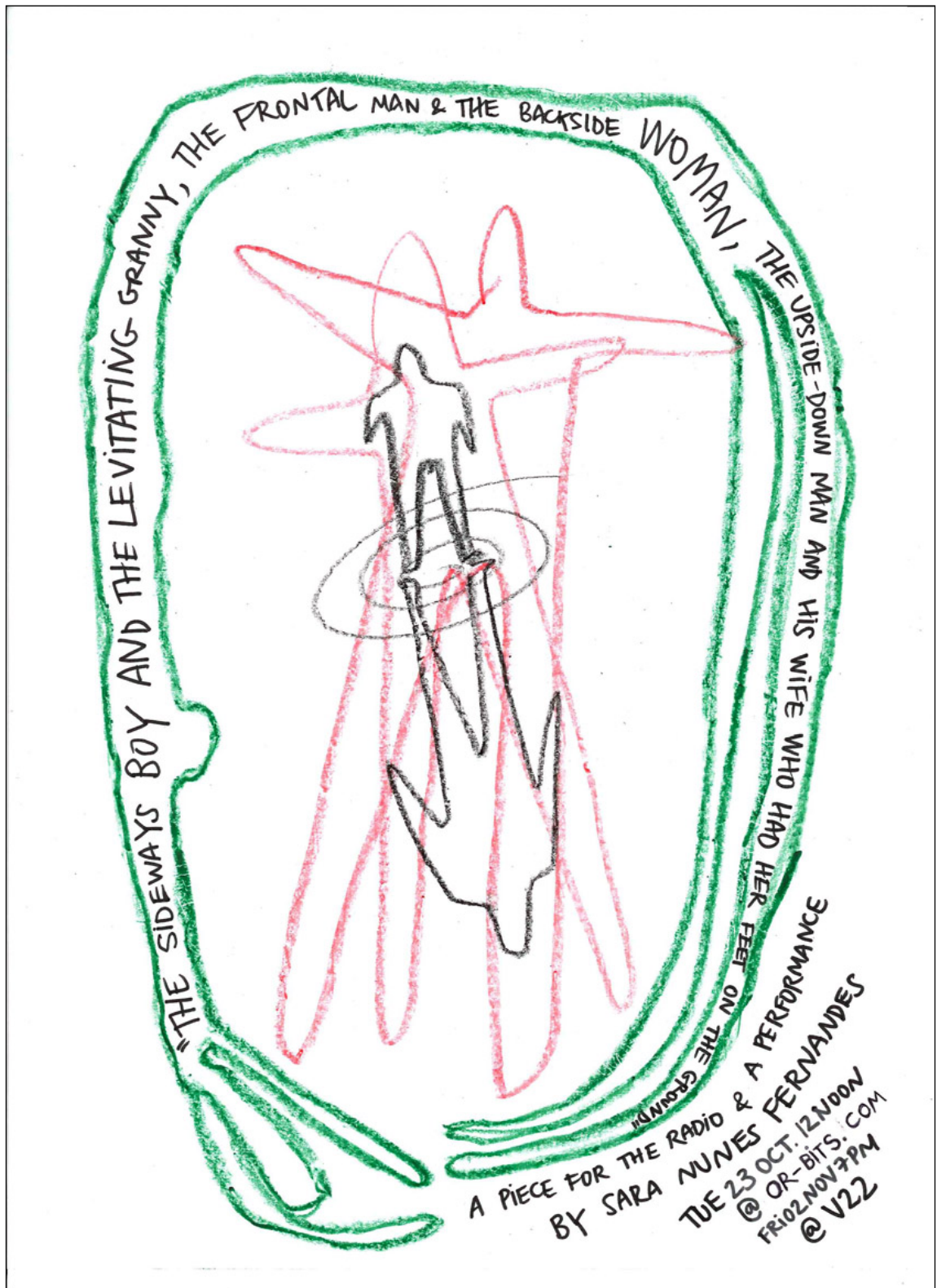


Figure 36: Sara Nunes Fernandes, *The sideways boy and the levitating granny, the frontal man and the backside woman, the upside-down man and his wife who had her feet on the ground*, 2012. Live performance e-flyer. © the artist and or-bits-dot-com, 2015.

Having asked some of the artists who participated in the project to tell me how they engaged with the web platform and their audience, what follows is their understanding of web spaces: “they are a place I have not been to before” (Maria Theodoraki); “there is an all-embracing atmosphere about them—they are open to everybody and travel everywhere” (Irina Karayannopoulou); “they are unique because anything can be made for them, and appear on them” (They Are Here); “they convey immediacy, accessibility and openness” (Adam Rompel).

4.1.4 Method of Analysis

The analysis method adopted for the following three exhibition projects—*128kbps objects* (4.2), *(On) Accordance* (4.3) and *On the Upgrade WYSIWYG* (4.4)—is the same as that of the case studies (see 3.1) in that they underwent a process of construction and reconstruction (see 1.3). What differs is their presentation: a third section adds a focus on the offsite exhibition to discuss more in detail the conception of each component of the projects. The section Context and Main Characteristics discusses my curatorial ideas and intents and how they informed the commissioning process and curatorial methodology. The Offsite Component details the organisational process, including problems and unforeseen issues that emerged throughout its delivery; and the Migration: Structure, Patterns and Function section analyses the characteristics of the migration of the exhibition. Analogous to the previous chapter is the three-column Summary table that accompanies each project.

4.2. 128kbps objects

KEYWORDS	CURATOR'S VIEW	AS...
RESEARCH PROJECT APPROPRIATION OF WEB-BASED PLATFORM TWO SITES OF DISPLAY WORKSHOP ARTIST COMMISSION ONLINE EXTENDED EXHIBITION	Online/Offline > Create comparison between a visual and interactive website and a time-based imageless and linear sonic stream / A durational sonic mosaic contrasting with the strong visual inputs often found in web-based and digital production. Migration > The transition between online and offline offered opportunities for translating artworks, and taking over a web platform for broadcast / AirTime Pro became a tool for curation, strongly impacting curatorial work and the organisation of artistic content.	“CURATOR AS” > PRODUCER, SERVICE PROVIDER, MEDIATOR, DJ, EDITOR, DATA INPUTTER. ONLINE PLATFORM AS > TIME-BASED THEMATIC RADIO EXHIBITION.

Figure 37: or-bits-dot-com: *128kbps objects*, 2012. Summary table.

(Further details, including Curator's Editorial, Analysis table and Radio Schedule, in Appendix A.3.1)

4.2.1. Context and Main Characteristics

128kbps objects was a week-long radio exhibition broadcast daily—for ten hours—on the internet radio station basic.fm, a project run by PixelPalace at Tyneside Cinema in Newcastle upon Tyne. With this project I was interested in exploring the workings of a web-interface for online streaming: how would it impact the commission and presentation of artists' works? And most of all, how

could I create a narrative that would unfold progressively over time? With many contemporary discourses around the idea of materiality, from object-oriented philosophy and web aesthetics to post-digital objects, the possibility of working with this format of display prompted me to establish a curatorial line of enquiry into the relationship between objecthood and digital materiality.

The format of the project, for which or-bits-dot-com took over a web platform for broadcast, entailed to translate the characteristics of the online exhibitions, such as the thematic organisation of the material and the commission of site-specific artworks, for the radio format; hence, it asked for addressing its specificities. The erasure of visual language and direct interaction with artistic content—through listening rather than mouse clicks—, the speed of sound streaming and its effects on quality were some of features impacting not only the curatorial process but also artistic production. Because of this, the style I adopted for the curator's editorial was more instructional than that of the editorials I would write for the web-based exhibitions which were more speculative in tone.

The project *128kbps objects* intends to explore contemporary notions of objecthood across a variety of mediums, sites and practices. It will investigate the potentials of displaying objects sonically taking into considerations the limitations of the web-tool employed, the online radio, which for instance by determining the sound quality threshold at 128 kilo bytes per second, cancels out all sonic data above it. (Ghidini, 2012b)

The idea was to inspire the invited artists—many of them were not sound artists—to stretch their practices and apply their research to a new medium and context of display, exploring the possibility of producing and presenting objects sonically. The essay “The Third Table” (2012) by philosopher Graham Harman operated as a source of inspiration both for the artists' production process and mine; and because of this a reading of it by a professional actor was proposed as the closing piece of the entire programme. In this essay Harman, borrowing the physicist Arthur Stanley Eddington's definition of a first and second table—the table of the everyday and the table of physics—, speculates about the existence of a third table, the real one according to him, which lies in between the two: "by locating the third table (and to repeat, this is the only real table) in a space between the 'table' as particles and the 'table' in its effects on humans, we have apparently found a table that can be verified in no way at all, whether

by science or tangible effects in the human sphere”. This was precisely the key point I wanted to explore throughout the broadcast, with the invited artists and by selecting other sonic material and grouping it into daily thematic.

The curatorial production of *128kbps object* was rather layered. Aided by my previous experience of working with sound art, I invited seven artists—chosen for they different approaches to sound and digital technology—to produce a work in response to a curatorial brief. I asked them to present a work—in the form of a live broadcast, sound, music, a reading, etc.—specifying that I would use each to establish the thematic motif of one day of the broadcast. One artist, Claudia Fonti, was commissioned to create the jingle of the exhibition. I also contacted a variety of artists previously featured on or-bits-dot-com, whose practices engaged with the domain of sound, and invited them to propose already existing work in relation to the theme of the show. Simultaneously, I invited three curators—Tim Dixon, Anne Duffau and Robert Sakrowski of *CYT* (see 3.2)—to propose a sub-programme related to their research interests that I knew collided with *128kbps objects*. With Duffau, we curated the daily playlist *This Is Not a Pipe. Neither is this*, which included an array of sonic forms, from artworks to films and music and was organised according to sub-themes resonating with the seven main commissions. They ranged from *Exquisite and Other Corpses* to *Faster, Stronger, Louder*. Most of the material of the playlist came from our own personal archives and YouTube; when we asked the artists—where possible—for the right to broadcast their ‘found’ work it was rarely suggested to use original files. This is revealing of the context of the radio broadcast, and the expectations of its audience, as well as the greater flexibility in the use of copyrights in the context of a community radio versus, for example, the gallery one. An open call for works was also publicised in collaboration with the basic.fm team, leading to the selection of twenty artists’ works. *128kbps objects* was supposed to include two artworks broadcast live from public space around Newcastle. However, due to production and budget constraints—the scale of the project became much greater than what I had envisaged at the beginning—they had to be cancelled.

The curatorial narrative of *128kbps objects* developed in conjunction with the

production of the artworks, expanding, tangentially, upon the original curatorial editorial.



Figure 38: or-bits-dot-com: *128kbps exhibition*, 2012. Screenshot of exhibition's introductory page. © or-bits-dot-com, 2015.

4.2.2. The Offsite Component

The migration offsite of *128kbps objects* concerned my curatorial work rather than the exhibition itself. My approach had to adapt to an online platform for broadcast, thus with different functions and modes of production, display and distribution than those of or-bits-dot-com.

The basic.fm platform not only demanded that I work with new parameters but also that I adopt the open source software, AirTime Pro, as a means of production for the exhibition (see fig.39). AirTime Pro became my tool of curation, very much impacting my role and the organisation of artistic content. The architectural framework of *128kbps objects* was given by the successive arrangement of the sound pieces. To generate a flow, a pattern of engagement, Fonti's jingle was used as an interval and as a motif for introducing the radio

announcements, which provided information about each of the artworks on show.



Figure 39: or-bits-dot-com: *128kbps objects radio schedule*, 2012. Screenshot of AirTime Pro software. © basic.fm and or-bits-dot-com, 2015.

To aid the engagement with a completely non-visual display, the basic.fm blog became a placeholder for the contextual information and in-depth descriptions of the artworks. Each blog entry, which was imageless, consisted of: the title of the work, the date and duration of the piece, the date and time of the broadcast, the description of the artwork and the artist biography with link to her/his website.

With the curator’s brief the invited artists were given broad technical specifications outlining the type of digital files and the options for the broadcast:

Contributions can be in the form of a one-off submission, or a series of sound files to be broadcasted at specific times and for more than one time a day or the week. They can be sound works, music, readings or live streaming from specific location, and they can be presented in the format of a radio slot or as intermezzo, e.g. radio announcements or ads, etc. (Ghidini, 2012b)



Figure 40: or-bits-dot-com: *128kbps objects on basic.fm*, 2012, 2012. Screenshot of basic.fm radio player. © basic.fm and or-bits-dot-com, 2015.

The seven main artist's commissions covered a wide range of formats and themes, from Jamie Allen's series of *Internet Radio Fluxus Scores, Is This Thing On?*, to be presented at different times on the first day of the broadcast, to the processed-based work exploring the materiality of objects through sound by Andre Avelãs and the story-telling piece by Sara Nunes Fernandes, *The sideways boy...* Most of the artists already featured on or-bits-dot-com produced a new work for the exhibition because the sonic display appealed to them as a context for new artistic explorations, a fact that provided material for reflecting upon the transition of artworks from an online visual platform to a sonic one. For instance, Irini Karayannopoulou proposed the sound of the video, *Immaterial*, which was featured in the exhibition *On-looking* in 2011 and Patrick Coyle did a reading of a work produced for the same exhibition, *Simplicity, Empty Grey Squares* (2010), re-titled *Empty Grey Squares (Registration)* (2011) for this occasion.

The audience interacted with the show—and amongst themselves—through the basic.fm live chat (see fig.40) and social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter. Facebook was particularly functional for continuous promotion, in that the listeners used the project’s event page as a sort of discussion board, reminding others to listen to a specific piece or promoting their work. Both basic.fm staff and I used it to keep audience engagement going. Due to the density and length of the programme, a radio schedule pamphlet designed by Studio Hato was available as a downloadable PDF on the or-bits-dot-com and basic.fm websites, as well as in printed form for local distribution (see fig.41).

128kbps objects became a durational sonic mosaic, contrasting with the strong visual inputs often found in web-based and digital production.



Figure 41: or-bits-dot-com: *128kbps objects* radio schedule, 2012. A3 newspaper pamphlet. © or-bits-dot-com, 2015.

4.2.3. Migration: Structure, Patterns and Function

128kbps objects is the outcome of migrating an approach to curating from a dateless, visual and interactive website to a time-based, imageless and linear sonic stream. It was strongly impacted by the functions allowed by a given tool of curation, AirTime Pro, which put forward a series of limitations, as well as new and distinctive curatorial tasks. If the architecture of the or-bits-dot-com website operated as a container for the artworks, determining their arrangement, in *128kbps objects* it was the grid-like timeline given by the software for broadcast that determined the organisation of artistic and contextual content (see fig.39). With its own specific workings, AirTime Pro did not allow the functions of copying and pasting, for example, making the uploading of artworks an intensive and meticulous task. The presentation of works like Adam Rompel's *Same Old Song*, which was one-minute long and broadcast multiple times throughout the show, became a very time-consuming work of inputting. My role became akin of that of a DJ who created an exhibition by shuffling content around and then putting it together, requiring the skills of a data entry clerk. The software mediated the curation.

While organising the project it became evident that more specialised figures were required, both in terms of production—the inputting and uploading work mentioned above—and post-production of the artistic material. If for the web-based exhibitions of or-bits-dot-com the production of artworks happened through my mediation between the artists' ideas and the execution by the web designer, the sound exhibition required a sound technician and a lab for the basic collation of material for broadcast.

As I said above, some of the web-based artworks already featured on or-bits-dot-com migrated to the radio broadcast. They underwent a process of translation, becoming an imageless sonic scape in the case of Irini Karayannopoulou and a performative reading of an online text-based work in the instance of Patrick Coyle.

While programming the exhibition, it was difficult to envisage how the audience would have perceived the show as a whole, especially because the narrative was spread over a long period of time and was constructed to unfold throughout the week and be completed at the end of it—conceptually with Graham Harman’s essay “The Third Table” (2012). The radio schedule, by adopting the format of a pamphlet in print and PDF (see fig.41), functioned as a guide for this narrative. Conversely, the basic.fm blog functioned as an aggregator without a centre, in that it required users to access the information about each piece on separate windows, failing to provide cohesion especially for listeners who were on-the-go using mobile devices. The broadcast reached a great number of listeners who would tune-in and out the show on a daily basis to listen to parts of the programme, showing that the broadcast was experienced in fragments²¹.

128kbps objects conformed to the one-way communication of the standard radio broadcast, missing the opportunity—because of time and budget restrictions—to exploit some of the interactive properties of the live audio streaming. A discursive element was proposed by the *Sound Writing* workshop, organised by Daniela Cascella, which, despite not paralleling the online broadcast, touched upon its critical framework, offering another example of mediating sonic material for an audience offline.

As to this day the exhibition is not archived in its original form, its documentation is offered by the radio schedule and the blog entries on the basic.fm blog. However, it was re-presented a few months later in an edited version, *128kbps objects EDITED*, which was broadcast for eight hours on basic.fm while it played live, through a bespoke listening station, at the Metre Room Gallery in Coventry.

128kbps objects shows, by way of comparison, the differences between a web-based exhibition and a time-based radio exhibition on an online radio station, as well as how the latter and its content are inherently prone to morph for a variety

²¹ The number of listeners reached one thousand and seven hundred national and international people, with an average listening time of sixteen minutes.

of other contexts of display and distribution. Another example of working with the analogies and differences between online and offline curatorial and artistic production is the exhibition *(On) Accordance*, which achieved this through creating parallel and simultaneous displays of commissioned artworks.



Figure 42: or-bits-dot-com: *Sound Writing workshop*, 2012. Image of event. © or-bits-dot-com and The Northern Charter, 2015.

4.3. (On) Accordance

KEYWORDS	CURATOR'S VIEW	AS...
<p>CURATORIAL EXPERIMENTATION</p> <p>CONSTRUCTION OF WEBSITE</p> <p>TWO SITES OF DISPLAY</p> <p>WORKSHOP</p> <p>ARTISTS COMMISSIONS ACROSS SITES</p> <p>COMPLEMENTARY EXHIBITION</p>	<p>Online/Offline > They provide different viewer encounters with the works (Jones) / Lack of interactivity of the physical site which, as an exhibition, lost all the properties of the online display.</p> <p>Migration > The transition between online and offline allowed to integrate different curatorial approaches, to create a model of collective curating, multi-layered and multi-format / It requires considering the specificities of transitioning between the physical and digital more closely.</p>	<p>“CURATOR AS” > MEDIATOR, PRODUCER, PLATFORM PROVIDER, TRANSLATOR.</p> <p>ONLINE PLATFORM AS > THEMATIC GROUP WEB-BASED EXHIBITION.</p>

Figure 43: or-bits-dot-com: (On) Accordance, 2012. Summary table.

(Further details, including Curator's Editorial, Analysis table and Gallery Material, in Appendix A.3.4, and Interviews with the curators in Appendix A.4.2 and A.4.3)

4.3.1. Context and Main Characteristics

(On) Accordance was a collaborative exhibition project between or-bits-dot-com and the gallery Grand Union. It was a curatorial experiment in “exploring the possibilities of working across sites of production and distribution through the presentation of new online commissions and offline versions of web-based artworks” (Ghidini and Jones, 2012). With this project I set out to stretch my previous thinking about the interaction between artistic content on a website

and its audience by looking at how a web interface as a site of online display might interact with the site of a gallery. The aim was to create a strategy for which the audience would interact with the curatorial narrative and artistic content across two sites that are physically disconnected—yet critically united—and hold different—yet interconnected—characteristics. On the one hand, I wanted to explore how to generate “accordance” between such sites of display and channels of distribution without bringing the web space into the gallery literally. On the other hand, I wanted to explore how my curatorial ideas could lead to the production of commissioned artworks that would exist within an exhibition configuration ‘moving’ between the web space and the one of the gallery.

To question some of the utopian narratives of the technological, and specifically the supposed sustainability of the hybrid formats of (re)presentation which the idea of convergence seemed to have established within the domain of digital technology, I used the book “White Noise” (1985) by Don DeLillo as a metaphorical starting point to navigate through some theoretical issues related to the interaction between mechanical systems/interfaces and the human. From this, my curatorial invitation to the artists moved onto focusing on the relationship between technological developments, cultural industries and their often hidden agendas, starting from questioning the very notion of site-specificity. Issues related to the fictitiousness of the standardisation of digital forms, hegemonic technological developments, and the partiality of the ideals of converging platforms, all came to the fore with the artists’ contributions, which addressed how the intricate above-mentioned relationship has an impact on cultural production and consumption.

Besides the commission of new works, the project also instigated the migration of web-based artworks from their original display environment, on or-bits-dot-com, to a physical site, the project space of Grand Union (see fig.33). On this occasion, my curatorial role was that of initiating the process of migration, organising the group exhibition online and leaving the curating of the gallery space to the Grand Union team, led by the director Cheryl Jones. To avoid

organising a project that could have come across as a mere translation of arbitrarily-chosen content and to keep the or-bits-dot-com website as the kernel of it, Jones and myself agreed upon organising two parallel group exhibitions that would take place simultaneously online, with seven newly commissioned works, and offline, through inviting five artists already featured on or-bits-dot-com to 're-propose' their work for the gallery. Hence, two curatorial strategies were integrated as a collective voice. The thematic trajectory for the exhibition was established by the curator's editorial (see A.3.4), which was written by myself and proposed to the Grand Union team.

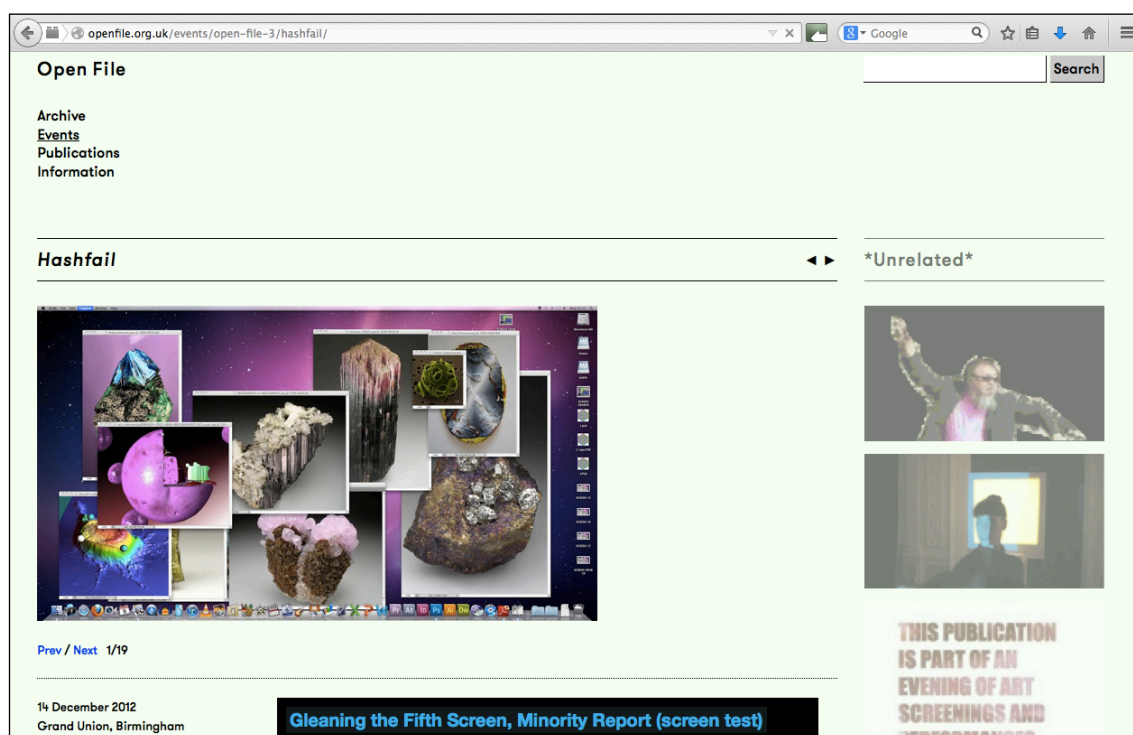


Figure 44: Open File: *Hashfail*, 2012. Screenshot of project page. © Open File, 2015.

During the development of the project, Jones and I decided to create a more fluid integration of curatorial roles and strategies by adopting additional formats of display. This led to involvement of Open File, a nomadic curatorial project co-directed by Tim Dixon and artist Jack Brindley, that curated the project *Hashfail*, a one-night event presenting a series of artworks and performative interventions, a publication and a torrent file of artworks, essays and other artistic content which was distributed on their website (see fig.44) and that of

Grand Union. Another additional medium of exhibition we adopted was a downloadable YouTube playlist, the *(On) Accordance Playlist*, consisting of sound works and music chosen by each of the artists featured in the exhibition project—on the website, at Grand Union and for *Hashfail*.

4.3.2. The Offline Component

After choosing five artworks featured on or-bits-dot-com that, according to Jones, chimed with the curator's editorial, she invited them to take part in the group exhibition at Grand Union. Jones asked them to re-propose their work addressing, via questioning or side-lining it, the widespread contemporary idea of the seamless translatability of content from one site to another. The artists, Irini Karayannopoulou, M+M (Marc Weis and Martin De Mattia), Rosa Menkman, Damien Roach and Richard Sides, with a draft of the curator's editorial at their disposal, responded to this invite by presenting very different takes on content migration from online to the gallery space. Some, such as Karayannopoulou, requested that the work be presented as a video installation; her video *Immaterial* was shown in a self-contained room with a sound-system and with a bench for the visitors to sit on. Similarly, M+M asked to Jones to create an installation with already existing material—in fact the web-work they had presented on or-bits-dot-com was already a version of a previous gallery work—leaving a high degree of curatorial freedom in the installation, so Jones decided to transfer onto the wall a logo that was part of the original work. Other artists showed more concerns about the interaction of the audience with the artwork in a gallery setting. Sides, who presented a sculptural version of the highly interactive web-based work *The Joyful System* (see fig.45), titled *The Joyful System (the Usual Suspects rendition)* (see fig.46), responded to Jones as follows:

The only thing I'm worried about is the level of interaction - what I personally thought was successful about that [web] work was how it was defined in terms of order / length / overlap. (Ghidini, 2012c)

A similar approach was adopted by Roach who created a video version of the work *Michigan parachute/Kitchen/Arp 147* to be shown—following his instructions—on a flat screen as digital file, aptly maintaining the same title.

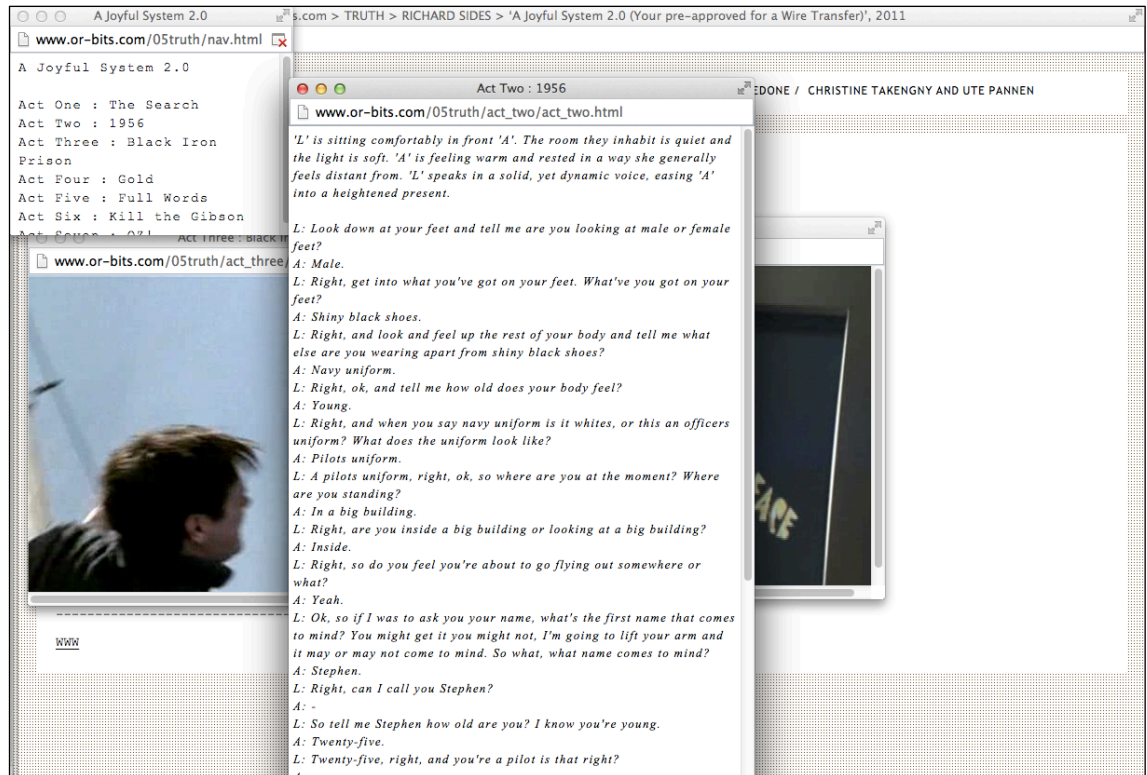


Figure 45: Richard Side, *A Joyful System 2.0 (Your pre-approved for a Wire Transfer)*, 2012. In or-bits-dot-com: *Truth*, 2012. Screenshot of website. © the artist and or-bits-dot-com, 2015.

The arrangement of the artworks in the project space was decided once Jones had a full idea of what type of works the artists were going to submit, and the display solutions responded to the technical requirements of the artworks to facilitate a qualitative audience engagement. Reference texts contextualising the curatorial research behind the show, the collaborative nature of the project were also presented at the entrance of the project space as a walk-in display to offer a common ground. The texts included Henry Jenkins' "Convergence? I Diverge" (2001), Robert Smithson's "A Provisional Theory of Non-Sites" (1996) and Inke Arns & Jacob Lillemose's "It's contemporary art, stupid? Curating computer based art out of the ghetto" (2005).



Figure 46: Richard Side, *The Joyful System (the Usual Suspects rendition)*, 2012. In *or-bits-dot-com & Grand Union: (On) Accordance*, 2012. Installation shot at Grand Union. © the artist, Grand Union and or-bits-dot-com, 2015.



Figure 47: Open File: *Hashfail* at Grand Union, 2012. Live performance documentation. © Grand Union and Open File, 2015.

The *Hashfail* event appeared with the existing artworks for one night (see fig.47), expanding on the display with the intention to “consider the specificities of transitioning between the physical and digital more closely” (Dixon, A.4.2). It responded to the idea of “translation and transfer” through commissioning a series of new works displayed in the gallery, the curated torrent file and the print publication.

(On) Accordance became an exhibition integrating different curatorial approaches through the adoption and combination of various formats of display, online and offline, instigated by the migration of artworks, their location and dislocation.

4.3.3. Migration: Structure, Patterns and Function



Figure 48: M+M, *Autobahnschleife (Motorway-Loop)*, 1996-ongoing. In or-bits-dot-com & Grand Union: *(On) Accordance*, 2012. Installation shot at Grand Union. © the artists, Grand Union and or-bits-dot-com, 2015.

(On) *Accordance* proposed a multiform and multi-layered migration; it created a series of narrative trajectories through the integration of formats of production and combination of sites of display, such as 'distributable curatorial devices' like the YouTube playlist and the torrent file curated by Open File. This offered a variety of opportunities of engagement to its audience, showing the possibilities of expanding curatorial work through complementing sites and using already existing web platforms for assembling, sharing and downloading content. As a whole, (On) *Accordance* functioned as a system based on different curatorial approaches that was prompted by the curator's editorial of the web-based exhibition.

As for the migration and translation of artistic content for the Grand Union project space, an obvious difference emerged: the 'loss' of interactivity. Some of the artworks seemed flattened, even in their being presented as installation, such as Richard Sides' work (see fig.46). The loss of complex spatio-temporal features, such as the rhythm given through browsing the different layers of the artwork and switching between pop-up windows, disappeared in favour of object-hood and materiality. It seems that, especially after conducting the interview with the Grand Union director (see A.4.3), such 'loss' depended on the background of Jones herself, who having never organised a web-based exhibition was not interested in emphasising the characteristics of web-based production. Because of this, when experiencing the works at Grand Union, what was emphasised were the *differences* rather than the *tensions* between online and offline modes of production and engagement. Differently, the event *Hashfail* operated as a dynamic interface consisting of an unfolding of performative interventions that punctuated the night. It created connections between the viewer's relationship with the web interface and the physical space (see fig.47), promoting visual cohesiveness between sites of display, formats and curatorial approaches was key.

A literal connection between the or-bits-dot-com and Grand Union sites was made by indicating the tile of the 'original' web-based work on the gallery labels and adding to the floor the list of the artists featured in the online component of

the project. Online, on or-bits-dot-com, the connection was made by adding to the introductory exhibition environment a frame with details about the Grand Union exhibition and a link to its website. The marketing material, designed by Endless Supply, distinguished aesthetically the two exhibitions by using black text for the information about the Grand Union show and web-blue colour text for details about the web-based exhibition.

If the online exhibition was greatly appraised as a show on its own, it was hardly read in connection to that at Grand Union. The latter was similarly not experienced in connection to the web-based show:

It's difficult to know how many actually experienced both—I didn't have any conversations with people who had seen the online side of the exhibition in any detail before coming to encounter the exhibition at Grand Union. I think we could have done more to bridge that gap with a series of talks live in the gallery.
(Jones, A.4.3)

All this said, it was with the Open File event that *(On) Accordance* was experienced as a distributed exhibition consisting of the coming together of different display formats and modes of interfacing artworks with an audience.

If *(On) Accordance* is an example of expanding a curatorial narrative through migrating content from a website to a gallery space and bringing together different approaches to site-specificity, *On The Upgrade WYSIWYG* did so through adopting the print format and using it as an overarching thematic framework to bring together an array of web-based works produced for previous exhibitions on or-bits-dot-com.

4.4. *On the Upgrade WYSIWYG*

KEYWORDS	CURATOR'S VIEW	AS...
<p>CURATORIAL EXPERIMENTATION</p> <p>CONSTRUCTION OF WEBSITE</p> <p>TWO SITES OF DISPLAY</p> <p>LAUNCH EVENTS</p> <p>ARTISTS COMMISSION OFFLINE</p> <p>COMPLEMENTARY / EXTENDED EXHIBITION</p>	<p>Online/Offline > They provide different ways of creating an exhibition narrative and framing artistic content in a web-based exhibition and in a book.</p> <p>Migration > The transition between online and offline allowed the comparison of modes of engaging with web content and in print / It generated a curatorial and design re-alignment of material originally compiled for online consumption for the book interface / The book became an archival device for web-based content.</p>	<p>“CURATOR AS” > PLATFORM-BUILDER, PRODUCER, EDITOR, ARCHIVIST, MEDIATOR, DISTRIBUTOR.</p> <p>ONLINE PLATFORM AS > THEMATIC GROUP WEB-BASED EXHIBITION.</p>

Figure 49: or-bits-dot-com: *On the Upgrade WYSIWYG*, 2013. Summary table. (Further details, including Curator’s Editorial and Analysis table, in Appendix A.3.3; and Interviews with artists included in the project, in Appendix A.4.4)

4.4.1. Context and Main Characteristics

On the Upgrade WYSIWYG (*OtU WYSIWYG*) is an exhibition in a book that proposes a new configuration of web-based artworks in print. Building upon the exploration into the relationship between artistic production and distribution on the web and in print that I had already carried out with the project *On the Upgrade September 2011*, I wanted to shift my curatorial angle for this new instalment of the same series. Hence, I concentrated on exploring the tensions existing between a website and a book, understanding them as ‘interactive’

interfaces—the holdable interface of the book and the website on a screen—and not just as modes of production or distribution (Ghidini, 2013b). Differently from *128kbps objects* (see 4.2) and *(On) Accordance* (see 4.3), for *OtU WYSIWYG* I adopted a line of commission that required working with a more traditional format of offline production—the book: I asked the artists to strip previously produced web-based artworks off of their formal characteristics, their interactivity and modularity. What was interesting for me was that the integration and coupling of sites would be understood by the audience starting from the book, which would then instigate the audience to move onto the website of or-bits-dot-com. This would put into questions the fact that the website was the kernel of the curatorial activities of or-bits-dot-com. I then decided to achieve this by finding a design strategy to “re-align material originally compiled for online consumption for the book interface” (see Book Foreword in A.3.3) to better understand the similarities and differences between working with the web and the book interface.

The *On the Upgrade* series (see fig.50) aimed to facilitate the migration of artistic content from the web page to the print page(s) through devising various publishing formats referring to the web space. “How could we reflect on the tension existing between the act of web browsing and that of looking at material in print that one holds in their hands?” was the starting point of the series’ investigation. Curatorially, it offered me new opportunities to work with different ways of creating an exhibition narrative and framing artistic content in print. It also prompted an evolution of my role as a response to the specificities of print production. The first instalment of *On the Upgrade* was an A3 customised postal box containing six unbound works—from a poster to a booklet of postcards and prints of various formats and qualities—by Patrick Coyle, Benedict Drew, Jamie George, Tamarin Norwood, Damien Roach and David Rule. The artists were invited to produce a version of the web-based work already featured on the website for the postal box—the container—addressing the idea of technological obsolescence in the publishing domain. The “multimedia magazine”, *Aspen*, initiated by Phyllis Johnson in 1965, was one of the sources of inspiration for

the whole series.²² *Aspen* was a reaction to the changes occurring in publishing in the sixties, an experimental response to the rise of the glossy magazine and advertisement that aimed to promote new magazine formats. Instead, *On the Upgrade* aimed to respond to the increasing hybridisation of content.

OtU WYSIWYG is a perfect-bound colour A5 paperback printed with the online publishing service Lulu that includes artworks by nine artists, and interviews I conducted with them to contextualise their artistic processes and their understanding of production across interfaces (see A.4.4).



Figure 50: or-bits-dot-com: *On the Upgrade*, 2011. Screenshot of project's series page © or-bits-dot-com, 2015.

The role of Studio Hato—collaborators in several other print projects—was key in shaping the final form of the project. Ongoing discussions led the design process, which ended up being highly mediated by our print service provider. The decision of using Lulu's services was a difficult one, for conceptual and

²² A well-known *Aspen* issue is the 5+6 (Fall 1967) curated and designed by Brian O'Doherty. It sustained the production of an intermedia collection of artworks ranging from sound pieces and moving images on reels) to poetry and posters.

technical reasons. Weighing the pros and cons, we decided to embrace the restrictions given by yet another software-based curatorial tool.

4.4.2. The Offline Component

The email invitation I sent to invited artists stated that *OtU WYISWYG* wanted “to explore the idea of the bound-book as an interface” through metaphorically referring to the concept of *What You See Is What You Get* across web and print technology. WYISWYG is the mark-up language that first allowed the content displayed on a computer screen during the editing process—the text and graphics—to be seen in a form closely corresponding to its coded appearance when printed or displayed. Using this as a starting point of reflection, I invited the artists to “translate and migrate” their web-based work and to consider that “a book operates as an interface that has a set of characteristics other than those of the web space” (Ghidini, 2013b): the fixed format determined by the size of a page; the (conventionally) linear reading pattern given by consecutive pages; the material nature—the paper and the ink—of the support and the one-to-one mode of engagement and specific browsing patterns” (Ghidini, 2013b). In addition, I suggested that the artists address a set of parameters that were going to become the framework for devising the design strategy with Studio Hato:

- The book is a bound-book A5 size;
- The work should take up 3 to 5 A5 pages;
- Each work should be presented as material that spreads linearly across maximum 5 pages;
- The work should be monochrome or B/W with the option to include 1 full-colour page out of the 3 or 5 pages. (Ghidini, 2013b)

Initially supposed to be printed in a small run and distributed via independent bookshops, the book became a POD publication, also available as a PDF file, to test the now-available-to-all publishing tools online. Studio Hato adopted a series of design gimmicks to respond to the parameters set by Lulu and explore the concept of interface across computing and printing, while aiming to provide the reader with the experience of switching between interfaces. Considering the

passages taking place when moving between interfaces—from the computer screen to the book—the design was conceived around three elements: gestures, material and access. This gave life to an exhibition architecture in print that reflected upon modes of looking/reading and holding (orientation of material); changes in the definition of colours from web to print (differences in naming, chart groupings and dimensions) and variability of reading settings (readers-on-the-go with tablets, at home in front a computer, or in a cafe with a book in their hands).

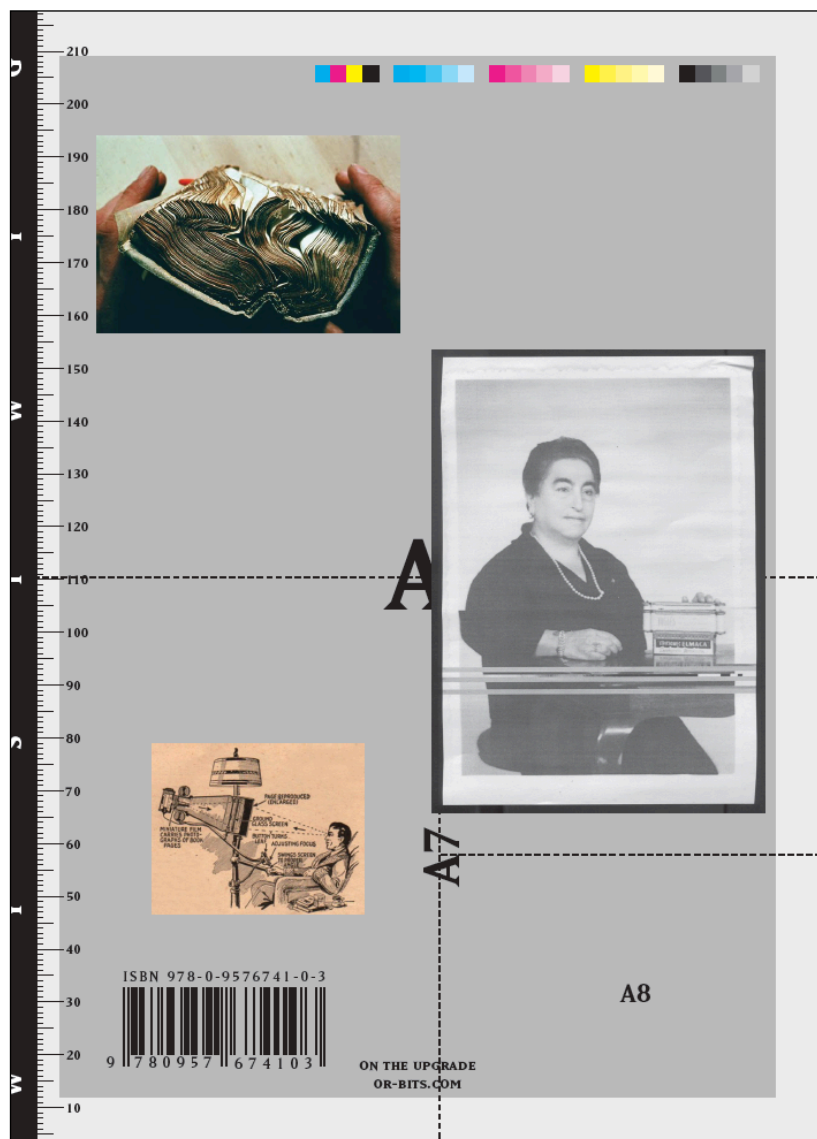


Figure 51: or-bits-dot-com: *On the Upgrade WYSIWYG*, 2013. Image of book front cover. © or-bits-dot-com, 2015.

The design of the covers (see fig.51 for front cover) also reinforced the idea of migration between the website and the book. The front and back represented the online and offline contexts respectively, with the spine becoming the liminal space. Placed on a grey background—the default colour given by Lulu’s design guidelines—the cover images broadly reflected upon the technological evolution of print technology, including the punch card and a portrait of Ángela Ruiz Robles, a Spanish teacher who invented the *Mechanical Encyclopaedia* (1949), which was intended to make reading more portable and accessible to students.

In terms of the organisation of material in the book, after the *Foreword* (see A.3.3) the artworks were grouped around three thematic threads—not openly revealed to the reader—and shown consecutively. The threads were: reading patterns (Carmichael, Kargl, Theodoraki); scripts (Horvitz, Nunes Fernandes, Allen) and systems (Sides, IOCOSE, Tcharfas). Each artwork was preceded by two introductory pages each (see fig.52), which adopted a horizontal layout to create an interruption in the viewer’s reading patterns. The first page presented a quotation from the curator’s editorial of the online exhibition in which the original web-based work was shown, while the second one had detailed information about the artwork, including a reference to the original web-based work—the tile and hyperlink of the hosting exhibition.

A sense of wonder, of discovery of the liminal spaces between online and offline sites, was intended to be conveyed through the interweaving of curatorial and design strategy in the presentation of the artworks.

4.4.3. Migration: Structure, Patterns and Function

Whilst exploring the tensions between exhibition interfaces—on the web and in a book—*OtU WYSIWYG* is undeniably also an archival device, a method of presenting web-based content offline and in print, in a fixed form that “indefinitely represents itself” (Ault, 2011). The re-contextualisation of the artworks operated in two ways: it generated further development of already existing artistic content and it archived web-based works in print.

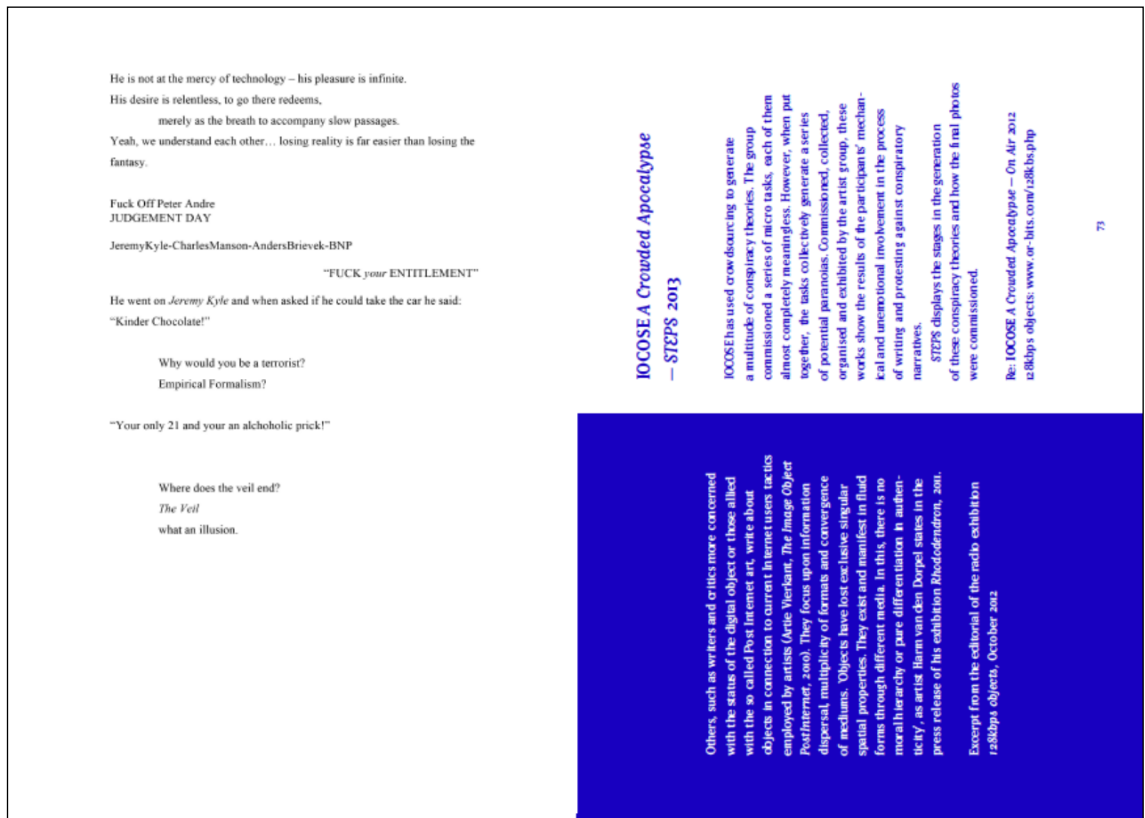


Figure 52: IOCLOSE, *A Crowded Apocalypse – STEPS*, 2013. In or-bits.com: *On the Upgrade WYSIWYG*, 2013. Image of artwork's introductory page. © the artists and or-bits-dot-com, 2015.

My role became that of a commissioning editor, whose choices were mediated by the online publishing service adopted. As for the or-bits-dot-com website, I acted as a platform-builder, yet within the parameters given by a fixed support—the A5 booklet—and in close collaboration with a graphic designer (see A.3.2). Lulu, our print provider, played a major role in shaping the final product and the economy of its distribution. In terms of the former, it impacted the quality of the design, giving the book the quality of an ‘incomplete’ yet finished product: some of the spacing between the content and margins looked ‘wrong’, one copy can differ from another, some images do not join in same way as others do. Rather than working against this seemingly inaccuracy, Studio Hato and myself embraced the errors that we knew were going to manifest in print.

The migration of the artworks clearly highlights the differences between the organisational structure of a web page and a book. Michael Kargl and Renee

Carmichael's works, *Orbitals* and *An Homage to the Death of Print: a Reading of the Remains* respectively, addressed the changes in adapting a web-based work to the format of a page. In the interview I conducted with Carmichael, she highlights our often-superficial understanding of these spaces/pages:

A webpage actually reveals the way in which it has been controlled more than a book does. [...] You see how its structure has been formed. Whereas, a book page usually comes to us as a finished product, you cannot readily see the design template, or the designers who had created it, from having the book in your hands. In other words, the structures of what makes a book are often taken for granted, whereas the structures of a webpage are seen as dynamic and changeable. (Carmichael, A.4.4)

Writer Orit Gat also offers an example of the reader's experience of the migration inherent in the project:

One of the most intriguing things about *On the Upgrade* [...] is the way it considers shifts in formats [...]. We should support such structures that work beyond the binary division between offline and online presentation. (Gat, 2013)



Figure 53: or-bits.com: *On the Upgrade* WYSIWYG launch event, 2013. Image of event documentation. © the artists and or-bits-dot-com, 2015.

This shift in formats was stressed at the two book launch events (see figs.53 and 54) by including an additional web component to confront the physical audience with the tensions between displaying and experiencing content online and offline—either in print or in a physical space. A computer displaying a video of browsing of the works on or-bits-dot-com that were included in the book was presented at the Northern Charter, whereas, a series of performances accompanied the Banner Repeater launch (see Appendix A.3.3 for more details). For the latter, artist Jamie Allen presented *Sounding the Alarm with a Muted Bell*, originally created for the *128kbps objects* exhibition, a sound event that was broadcast live using the service Google Hangouts throughout the event.



Figure 54: or-bits-dot-com: *On the Upgrade WYSIWYG* launch event, 2013. Image of book display. © the artists and or-bits-dot-com, 2015.

OtU WYSIWYG is an example of a complementary exhibition in print borne from previously developed web-based exhibitions, a publishing project that while it

can stand on its own, it is best understood in relation to its online component because of the tensions that the two interfaces generate.

4.5. Reflection on Curatorial Practice: Exhibition Models and Changes in the Role of the Curator Emerging in the Migration

As in the Case Studies chapter (see 3.8), this reflection examines the types of production and combination of sites—online and offline—and my curatorial approach. It also discusses the three shows in relation to the exhibition models identified in the reflection in 3.8, the ‘expanded’ and the ‘complementary’. However, the focus of this reflection is on the ‘migrated exhibition’ and the changes in my curatorial role (whereas the introduction to this chapter has largely discussed the online component and my understanding of the web space and artistic production, see 4.1.3). This focus is also due to the fact that this research was prompted by questions deriving from practice (see 1.2). In the process of migration to offline sites inherent in *128kbps objects* (see 4.2), *(On) Accordance* (see 4.3) and *OtU WYSIWYG* (see 4.4) the type of curatorial work I undertook differs significantly from that of the web-based exhibitions of or-bits-dot-com. These differences were enforced by the new sites of display and the medium of production they required—the software-based broadcast of the online radio platform (see 4.2), the gallery show in the project space (see 4.3) and the POD book of the print publishing project (see 4.4)—all asking for appropriating modes of production pertaining to other fields of work. In the case of *128kbps objects*, I had to work with the functions (and restrictions) determined by the software I was ‘given’ to produce the exhibition in the form of a coherent sonic narrative. As already described (see 4.2.2), the display platform provided by the radio broadcast was not only inherently other than that of the website—the total erasure of the visual element—but it required me to arrange the artistic content according to a linear and time-based framework. *OtU WYSIWYG* required me to work with and within a given, fixed framework governed by specific parameters—that of print publishing (see 4.3.2). This fixity made the process of commissioning almost instructional and the arrangement of artworks based on creating a linear narrative in successive pages. My role

expanded to include different functions. If for *128kbps objects* I was akin to a DJ who also had to operate as a data inputter, for *OtU WYSIWYG* I was a commissioner and editor, very much reliant on the decisions of the graphic designer whose work, in turn, was orchestrated by our print service provider. Although the curatorial roles varied with each project—the assembling clerk (4.2), the juxtaposing instigator (4.3) and the interface(ing) editor (4.4), to attempt to use ‘new’ definitions—there is a common thread that runs throughout the three projects: I created contexts of production and display aimed at generating tensions between online and offline formats of production, always starting from the or-bits-dot-com website.

In terms of my mode of commissioning artworks, it is worth stressing that my relationship with the artists was based on on-going collaboration (see also 4.1.1). Since my interest was in “reconfiguring” (Paul, 2006) web-based exhibitions through integrating offline modes of production and sites of display, it was natural to achieve this with artists who had already produced web-based works for or-bits-dot-com. For instance, some of artists included in *OtU WYSIWYG* had taken part in the earlier online exhibition *Informal* (2011), which I co-curated with Gil Leung. In other instances, such as with artist Jamie Allen, when working on *128kbps objects* we were already discussing how his work could be shown in print—hence its inclusion in the or-bits-dot-com following project, *OtU WYSIWYG*. Some other artists produced a work for more than one of the three exhibition projects, such as Sara Nunes Fernandes (see fig.36), Richard Sides (see fig. 46) and Julia Tcharfas. Because of this, the migration of artworks was always considered beforehand in conversation, through processes of “re-location and dislocation” (Joselit, 2012) of artistic content and practices. The mode of commission differed for each project, morphing in accordance to the site adopted and the medium of curatorial production. Besides providing a context—a common ground for critical reflection—with the curator’s editorial I usually adopted for the web exhibitions on or-bits-dot-com, I had to specify to the artists the characteristics ‘required’ by the new display site. While for *128kbps objects* I suggested the form the sound works could take to ensure consistency and meet the requirements of the software I used to curate

the radio broadcast, for *OtU WYSIWYG* I established a more restrictive set of parameters because, if done differently, the artworks would have required reformatting by the designer or myself to be ‘accommodated’ into the book. Moreover, in this project, the designer, Kirton, acquired a key role of mediation between the artists and the site of display—the book. *(On) Accordance* set forth a slightly different scenario because it was the director of Grand Union who commissioned the artists to produce work for the gallery space. Since this was the first time Jones worked curatorially with web-based content, I had to clarify the ‘conditions’ of commissioning artworks and mediate between my previous experience and her lack of practical understanding of this field of work (see 4.4.3).

With the intention of highlighting similarities and differences across the online and offline components, the integration of formats of production and combination of sites occurred in different manners, resulting in an impact on the overall organisational structure of the exhibition and its components. *128kbps objects* was an offsite project online, which was experienced as a self-contained exhibition. *OtU WYSIWYG* was a book exhibition that functioned as an aggregator of site-specific works that had been produced for a variety of earlier web-based exhibitions. *(On) Accordance* was a scattered orchestration of different curatorial voices, where migration was interpreted differently by the three parties involved—Grand Union, Open File and myself as or-bits-dot-com. Diverging from the latter, *128kbps objects* and *OtU WYSIWYG* were not constituted of simultaneously-produced online and offline components, but through the creation of tensions that occurred at different times.

In terms of **the exhibition models**, if *128kbps objects* can be identified as a solely ‘extended’ exhibition, *OtU WYSIWYG* is also an example of ‘complementary’ exhibition, along with *(On) Accordance*. The focus of *128kbps objects*, in its being based on appropriating the basic.fm platform (see 4.2.2), was not on migrating web-based artworks to an offline site but on offering a new context of production and presentation online. Hence, the exhibition hardly proposes the model of devising complementary components online and offline.

OtU WYSIWYG also holds many characteristics of the ‘extended’ exhibition, such as the fact that it re-presents the online component to propose diverse manifestations of web-based content. Because of this it functioned as a method for documenting web-based works to facilitate a different understanding of their behaviours, and thus audience engagement (see also *eBayaday* project in 3.3). Yet *OtU WYSIWYG* (see 4.4) proposes a thorough comparison of the conditions and characteristics of web production and print. The process of commissioning artists was driven by the intent to explore “a new configuration of selected material [artworks] that was first presented online or for web broadcast” (see 4.4.1), performing a type of mediation based on appropriating modes of work and the experience of content coming from different fields of work. (*On*) *Accordance* took this further. As a fully-achieved ‘complementary’ exhibition it presented the following characteristics: the curatorial intent and artistic production take place through the integration of formats of production, the sites of display are combined to build reciprocally upon each other and the engagement with the artwork is achieved thanks to the tensions created by the curator—for which neither the web-based exhibition nor the offline format of display are experienced as redundant. Yet, it also showed the curators’ different attempts to understand web and physical mediums and sites—*or-bits.com*, the gallery space at Grand Union and web services of distribution—and combine them, along with the willingness to engage with the artists’ practices in relation to the contexts of display. The intent, even if not fully achieved (see 4.3.3), was to engage the audience throughout the migration and the combination of the three exhibition components (see following paragraph). This makes (*On*) *Accordance* also an example of the ‘distributed exhibition’, which in a different way to *>get >put*, was achieved through curatorial collaboration.

To close this reflection, what makes these projects different for the majority of the exhibitions explored in the case studies is that they are all based on a close collaboration with the artists during the process of commission across sites of display. Moreover, my role functioned as that of a mediator, facilitating the migration of the artworks and the curatorial narrative through acquiring new expertise pertaining different fields of work. Because connected to a kernel—the

or-bits-dot-com website—the projects appear to facilitate “the continuous evolution of the art form” (Paul, 2006) through creating new configurations of exhibition displays. The fact that some guest-curated projects and artworks included in the three exhibitions were further developed through being presented in different exhibition contexts stresses this evolution. Gaia Tedone’s *Is Seeing Believing?* became a round-table discussion at Impakt, Utrecht, in 2012, and a symposium at the Accademia di Brera, Italy, in 2011; Sara Nunes Fernandes’ work for *128kbps objects* project (see 4.2) was re-proposed as a performance at V22 (see fig.36) and the ICA in London in 2012 and the exhibition *128kbps objects* itself was presented as an edited version—*128kbps objects EDITED*—at the Meter Room project space in Coventry, UK. This highlights the “discursive production” (O’Neill, 2012) engrained in the method of curatorial work of or-bits-dot-com. Such method stresses the fact that online and offline exhibition sites are not “different worlds” (Dullaart, 2009), but can be integrated through processes of migration (see 5.3).

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1. Introduction

My interrogation of the praxis of curating online and projects in which the web-based exhibition is combined with the gallery exhibition, print publishing, and/or radio broadcast has identified certain characteristics of curatorial work on the web, relationships with technological developments and the changes in curatorial roles and functions. It has also located the contemporary tendency of the exhibition that migrates across sites, integrating different formats of production and modes of curatorial work—online and offline. This tendency has led to the rise of new exhibition models, including the distributed exhibition. This type of exhibition originates from mediating different sites of display and modes of production to generate complementary exhibitions that give form to system-like structures of display and distribution.

One of the challenges this research has had to overcome is the complexity of the domain of curating online and its subset of curating web-based art exhibitions. Despite spanning just two decades since the emergence of the web in the mid-nineties—of which only the second decade saw a wide adoption of the web space as an exhibition venue by curators (see 2.3.1)—the way this domain has been discussed and understood, especially outside the field of academia and new media theory, has undergone substantial transformations. At the beginning of this study, in 2011, curating online was an area little discussed in the context of curatorial studies (see 2.1 and 2.2.2). However, while undertaking this research, it began to be debated across a variety of disciplines, including marketing and technology and even in non-specialist newspapers, which described it as “entrepreneurial in spirit”, enabling “artists and curators to cut out the institutions to instead create and access their own (largely peer-led) audience” (Allen, 2013). Significantly, the issues raised by such debates had already been discussed in the nineties—mostly on online mailing lists—by people working in the field which, in the early 2000s, were followed by initiatives such as CRUMB, co-founded by Sarah Cook and Beryl Graham, which has instigated thematic conversations pertaining to this field of practice in its

international New-Media Discussion List. Yet such issues and discussions remained both somewhat niche (despite renewed interest) and not exactly incorporated within curatorial studies. Balancing perspectives became necessary for accomplishing this interrogation; the field of practice had increasingly expanded, proposing a variety of new approaches to exhibition making, however its historical mapping had not. Hence the intention of this study was to find a position from which to contribute to this mapping process, starting with investigating how online and offline formats of production and modes of work can operate in conjunction, given the last decade's socio-technical changes (see 1.1).

In the following sections (5.2, 5.3 and 5.4), I highlight the findings related to each of the three research questions that prompted this study. Since they are all highly related to each other, a reflection on the overall new knowledge as a curator is proposed to emphasise its potential usefulness to my peers (see 5.5).

5.2. Question One: Production, Display and Distribution Online

How have the commission and exhibition of artworks been affected by employing the Web as a curatorial medium of production, display, distribution and critique?

The key findings emerging from this question are briefly listed here and discussed more organically and in detail below:

- A brief historical mapping of online exhibition models that built upon earlier categorisations was outlined, highlighting the relationship that the evolution of exhibitions has had with socio-technical changes and with their curators' understandings of the technology.
- A tendency within curating web-based exhibitions, and its contexts, was identified as the integration of formats of production in correlation to the migration of an exhibition across sites, from the online to offline ones.
- The changing role of the curator was located not only as a consequence of

adopting the web medium but also of integrating formats of production—the curatorial choices of commission, display and distribution—and the combination of sites of presentation and engagement.

Throughout this research, the importance of combining the analysis of web-based exhibitions within a history of technology has emerged. This combination allows the identification of an historical trajectory for discussing online curating and the models of exhibition that have emerged since the nineties. With the simplification of web technology, curators began to experiment not only online, with the web space and its properties (see 2.1, 2.3.2 and 4.1.2), but also with the web's relationship with offline formats, production processes and sites. The result is the exhibition that migrates across sites, integrating formats and generating tensions that blur the dichotomy between online and offline (see 2.4.2). This tendency is part of a larger phenomenon of exhibitions that migrate, online and offline, that was originally identified by Dietz (1998) in the activities of museums adopting the Web to extend their site-based activity, and then discussed by Cook (2004) in relation to the responses of independent curators to net art (see 2.4.1 and 3.8). However, embedded in the practice of curating online, this tendency did not spring up without precedents. Rather, it is part of a larger history, whose common denominator is traceable in the ways in which curators respond to the application of technological tools in the context of mass media communications, especially outside the framework of institutional work. The alternative curatorial practices of the sixties, such as the work of Siegelau and Lippard, can be considered as precedents. Their exhibitions were configured to be distributed across different sites in correlation to the emergence of new technology—the magazines, advertisement billboards and TV—stressing their freedom from the circumscribed space of a gallery or museum (see 2.4.1). With the shift from the globalised, networked communication of the nineties to the digital culture of the twenty-first century, which is characterised by the web as the predominant medium of communication and representation, the mode of work of curators changed in accordance to their understanding of the technology. Web space has become increasingly considered as a space with equal value to that of the gallery and

the publication, for example (see 3.8 and analysis tables in chapter 3). This perspective has facilitated the creation of new exhibition configurations across online and offline spaces—the ‘alternative’ configurations described by Lichty (2002) that are exemplified by the projects in the case studies. While the projects ranged from investigating the realm of e-commerce and Web 2.0 culture to purely curatorial exhibition strategies, they also exploited the possibilities of integrating offline formats of production not solely to reach larger and different audiences, but also to expand the scope and function of the exhibition, and artistic production, across spaces. These projects also show that the definition of curatorial work has stretched, as it emerged from the discussion of the “curator as...”, as noted in the reflection on the case studies (see 3.8), that built upon the “metaphors of the curatorial role” identified by researchers Cook and Graham (see 2.3.2). In the analysis of the case studies it became apparent that curators performed a combination of different functions which pertained to different fields of work: sound production (Sakrowski of *CYT* has paralleled his work to that of a record label); commerce (as in the work of Mondrak of *eBayaday*) and multidisciplinary publishing (in the case of Storz of *Beam Me Up*). My own curatorial projects also showed a move away from the traditional curatorial tasks of selecting, organising, framing and promoting a group exhibition. My role varied from the 'assembling clerk', to the 'juxtaposing instigator', to the 'interface(ing) editor' (4.4). My work became that of a producer who created contexts of production and display based on tensions between online and offline formats of commission and presentation and sites of display. In the context of this study, the role of the curator is no longer that of a static mediator but of a mediating “node” (Cook and Graham, 2010, p.156) who operates across a variety of fields and areas of expertise.

The surpassing of the limits related to curating gallery-bound objects is a characteristic of contemporary production, display and distribution online. To cite Paul (2006, p.87), the spatial, organisational and monetary constraints that are typical of curating an exhibition of objects in a physical venue are done away with by the freedom given by the adoption of the web medium that is “interactive”, “modular”, “variable” (Paul, 2006) and above all distributive.

Different forms of mediation of the artwork for an audience are facilitated, forms where the notion of space as a specific and unique location has been overturned because it is no longer necessary, allowing the rise of curated “spaces of art’s dissemination” (Cook and Graham, 2010, p.56)—the ‘distributed exhibition’.

5.3. Question Two: Migration, Integration and The Distributed

How have online and offline modes of production, display and distribution been integrated in the work of independent contemporary art curators (including my own practice)?

The key findings emerging from this question are briefly listed here and discussed more organically and in detail below:

- The types of relationships between online and offline exhibition formats were determined in terms of migration.
- Categories of exhibition models—‘extended’ and ‘complementary’—were identified through evaluating types of integration that built upon Steve Dietz and Maria Miranda’s work.
- The notion of the distributed exhibition emerged as a significant feature of the exhibition that migrates, generating complementary exhibition sites.
- A terminology and an angle of enquiry were developed to discuss migration and integration in the field of online exhibition making.

The interrogation of the behaviours of exhibition projects that migrate across sites of display, integrating formats of production, required an analysis of the online and offline components of the projects and their relationship, as informed by their curators’ modes of work and reasons for integrating them (see 3.1). Highly dependent on observing curatorial projects—the case studies and my own practice—this question required the development of a terminology to establish categories and clarify definitions pertaining to this type of work. Through the interviews with the curators of the exhibition projects and my

collaborators (see A.2 and A.4), new definitions emerged—ranging from the notion of translating and re-presenting content to those of the web space as an exhibition venue or a gallery space without physical walls. These definitions informed the naming of the tensions between online and offline practices and the function of integration (see summary tables in chapter 3, and 5.4). Such tensions, defined, variously, as “the friction between online and offline” (Nichole, A.2.4) and “contexts adopting different languages” (Mondrak, A.2.2) to name a few, are what generates different configurations of exhibition projects in which the production of artworks and their display is enabled by the way in which curators understand the relationship between sites of display, online and offline.

The analysis of both the case studies and my own exhibition projects identified some patterns in the practical approaches of the curator. In terms of using the web space as an exhibition venue, the patterns were those of the ‘appropriation’ and ‘construction’ of websites, whereas in terms of commissioning artworks, they were those of ‘overriding’ and ‘facilitating’ the production of artistic content (see 3.8). Categories of exhibition models were established, drawing upon past and current categorisations of online curatorial and artistic production, applying renewed meanings to them, and the models of the ‘extended’ and ‘complementary’ exhibitions were recognised. Building upon Dietz’s notion of the “extended exhibition” (1998) and Miranda’s notion of “expanded site” (2009), it emerged that the ‘complementary’ exhibition (see 2.4.2 and 3.8) is characterised by the following: the curatorial intent and artistic production take place through the integration of formats of production; the sites of display are combined to build reciprocally upon each other and the engagement with the artwork is achieved thanks to the tensions created by the curator—for which neither the web-based exhibition, nor the offline format of display, are experienced as redundant. Moreover, when the complementarity of components sustains artistic production and enhances the artwork’s mediation to an audience, we can talk about the ‘distributed’ exhibition (see 2.4.2). That is, an exhibition that is actualised through migrating across sites and achieves the status of a “space of art’s dissemination” (Cook and Graham, 2010, p.56), functioning as a system-like structure of display and distribution where the

artistic and curatorial productions undergo processes of transformation in the migration from one site to the other. *>get >put* (see 3.5) is exemplary of this: the migration was instigated by the curator in collaboration with the participating artists who were involved in the development of the exhibition and whose artworks and practices, in turn, determined the choice of the formats of display adopted by the curator. Hence, the distributed exhibition is governed by both an internal and external organisational structure based on the simultaneous, or at least reciprocal, commissioning of artworks for online and offline sites, as also shown in the projects *(On) Accordance* (see 4.3) and *OtU WYSIWYG* (see 4.4).

It is worth mentioning here that a process of refinement in terminology occurred from the initial analysis of the type of relationship between online and offline formats. The terms ‘hybridity’ and working ‘in-between’ sites, which were initially adopted by this study, were later substituted by those of ‘integration’ and ‘migration’. Neither the mode of curatorial work nor the exhibition could be hybrid and take place ‘in-between’ online and offline. Because hybridity entails the merging of two or more forms into one, it emerged that the term ‘integration’ would better allow the discussion of exhibitions as organisational structures consisting of various components (online and offline) without erasing the specificities of both the web-based exhibition and the offline formats (such as publications). Lastly, the term ‘migration’ was chosen because it better stressed the movement of the exhibition and the changes in the modes of curatorial production in connection to the specificities of the sites of display and mediums employed by the curators.

5.4. Question Three: Curating Contemporary Art

How can such exhibition models be discussed in the larger context of the theory and history of curating contemporary art?

The key findings emerging from this question are based on the cumulative findings from the previous two questions and are as follows:

- The tensions between online and offline sites and 'new' modes of curatorial work were identified, along with the ways in which curators have sought to address them.
- The role of curatorial knowledge of online and offline practices and work, as well as their background, were recognised as primary factors in the mediation between an artwork and its audience in the process of migration of an exhibition.

As noted at the beginning of this chapter (see 5.1), curating online is a domain characterised by changes brought about by the role of web technology in the larger domain of cultural production. Therefore, what follows below locates the findings of this study in the larger context of curatorial production. Although the networked space of the web—the online—is increasingly conceived by contemporary curators as interwoven with the space in which we are physically embedded and experience things ‘bodily’—the offline—this research shows that their relationship is not seamless. Although web technology has entered the everyday and web content has reached the ‘collective consciousness’ through the ubiquity of devices connected to the Internet, there is a “friction” (Nichole, A.2) between them. This friction asks for curatorial intervention in the form of mediating between the artwork, its display and the audience. For instance, the screen interposes between the experience of the web-based artwork and its viewer as much as the walls limit the experience of an object in physical space. Despite contemporary discourses developed around the post-Internet ‘perspective’ (see 2.2.1), curatorial mediation is necessary also in the context of the web-based exhibition, specifically in connection to the tendency identified by this study (see 5.2).

The case studies and my own curatorial practice show that the so-called fluidity between online and offline sites and modes of work occurs because curators mediate the differences and tensions between them: the different workings and type of engagement they offer to the audience. In the example of my own practice (see 4), it emerged that curating web-based exhibitions as well as their related offsite projects was often highly affected not only by the architecture of

the website initially adopted, but also by the software tool of curation I used—such as AirTime Pro for *128kbps objects* (see 4.2)—in a similar manner to the way in which the Gridr tool determined the exhibition formats and artworks of the projects of *CYT* (see 3.2).

Types of mediation depend on the curators' approaches to the role and function of web-based technology, as well as their own technological expertise. If in the 'extended' exhibition the curator approaches integration as a way of re-presenting the web-based exhibition offline—for archival purposes or reaching new audiences—in the 'complementary' exhibition the curator aims to generate parallel components that enhance each other, offering new opportunities for further artistic production and consumption of web-based content. The fact that in the former the offline component is used by the curators as an add-on, and in the latter the web and gallery display are adopted in synergy, derives from the type of experience and knowledge of their curators. As for my own curatorial projects, the work of mediation was shaped by the experience I acquired by working online, which allowed me flexibility in responding to different modes of production, as in the instance of the print publishing project *OtU WYSIWYG* (see 4.4). For this project, the processes of commissioning, online and offline, were devised in response to the similarities and differences between working with the web space and that of the book—the former “interactive”, “modular” and “variable” (Paul, 2006) and the latter based on instructions and the arrangement of artworks generated by laying them out on successive pages (see 4.4.2). The importance of such flexibility became more evident in the project *(On) Accordance* (see 4.3), which required the co-organiser of the exhibition, who had never previously curated exhibitions online, to be briefed about the process of commissioning web-based artworks in order to organise their offline display in the gallery. What seems to emerge is that having experience of both curatorial work online and offline is key for the curator who operates as a mediating “node”, and is thus able to “re-locate and dislocate” (Joselit, 2012) artistic content across sites to give form to the distributed exhibition.

In the context outlined by this study there is not one form of representation, unlike that which is conventionally put forward by the institutional gallery exhibition—often fixed in space and based on circumscribed categorisations. In this context, there are many forms of representation that respond to the networked and distributive properties of the mass media of our time, the web, as well as the mediating role performed by contemporary curators.

5.5. Overall Reflection on New Knowledge, as a Curator

This reflection proposes to emphasise the possible usefulness of the research findings to my peers:

- Mapping of exhibition histories within the domain of curating online for which the notion of the ‘distributed exhibition’ was identified as a key feature.
- Development of a terminology to describe the migratory patterns of an exhibition and the integration of formats in relation to commissioning artworks and displaying them.
- Identification of the importance of curatorial intents and background in the adoption of web technology and services, and their integration with other formats of production.

This research has proposed a brief historical mapping of a series of online exhibition projects, taking into account the evolution of their curators’ understanding, and thus use, of web technology. The way in which the web space is integrated with offline formats of production and combined with other sites is an integral part of this mapping. Through bringing together earlier research in the field—such as Dietz (1998), Cook (2004) and Goriunova (2012)—and observations on case studies, new exhibitions models have been analysed and discussed, and could be used for further research in the field of curatorial studies, where the role of the distributed exhibition and of the curator as mediating node have specific emphasis. In parallel to this, a terminology to describe the migratory patterns of an exhibition that moves across sites and adopts different formats of production was developed. This terminology

emphasises the relationship between curatorial work and the production of artistic content in the context of the distributed exhibition: artworks that are translated for a gallery display in order to re-present online exhibitions, artworks that are mediated for offline consumption and live exhibitions that are fixed in time for archival purposes. The role of the curator, and her/his understanding of the technology employed, has emerged as paramount in understanding the reasons behind the configurations of exhibition projects that integrate online and offline formats of production; the more the curator is familiar with web technology and the artwork, the more complementary are the online and offline formats that result in the exhibition.

Although this research is focused on independent curatorial practices and the exhibitions arising outside institutional activities, it is worth noting that current research in the field of museology has begun to discuss the notion of the “distributed museum” (Dewdney, Dibosa, Walsh, 2014) in relation to the effect that digital culture and tools are having on the production and reception of knowledge. The authors of *Post-Critical Museology* introduce Siegal’s concept of “transmediation”, which indicates the act of “taking understandings from one system and moving them into another sign system” (Dewdney, Dibosa, Walsh, 2014, p.202). Although they apply this concept to the end of the univocal way of mediating artistic content assumed by the pre-digital-culture museum and the levelling of roles between audience and curators, it is interesting to consider it in relation to the exhibition projects discussed in this study. In fact, the curators represented in the case studies work across a variety of fields of work, merging methods and modes of practice, in that their exhibitions migrate across sites, incorporating the workings and functions of each site.

Given that this study is practice-based, it is important to highlight how these findings have impacted upon my own curatorial work. Besides enabling me to contextualise my practice theoretically and historically, the terminology and understanding I have acquired throughout have allowed me to better understand the role of the curator as a mediator who moves across fields of work according to her/his understanding of the exhibition medium(s) adopted

and the nature of the artworks. At the end of the study, complementarity has emerged as a way of mediating the translation of an artwork not only across sites independent from each other, but within an exhibition project that behaves as a system-like structure. A distributed exhibition is one that is characterised by a way of commissioning artworks that is procedural and presents itself as distributed, in Baran's sense, and thus as a series of nodes connected to other nodes—sites of production—and is also transmediated, in Siegal's sense, thus incorporating other areas of knowledge and work, such as sound production and print publishing, as well as commerce.

Whilst I cannot claim the methods of research used are wholly new, this study has reinforced prior indications that the methods of including knowledge garnered from online discussion list conversations and interviews with both artists and curators leads to useful findings about curatorial knowledge and practice. Hence they should be included in the literature about curatorial practices, not merely laying behind the scenes but as important factors related to curatorial work. This research will be of use for scholars in the field, artists and curators, both independent and institutional. It provides a series of exhibition models that could be used as models of practice, while the brief historical mapping offers tools to contextualise the praxis of curating online in the larger context of curatorial practice and current debates. Especially for curators, this study offers detailed insights into the technicalities of organising web-based exhibitions, both as events on their own and in conjunction with other offline formats.

5.6. Reflection on Method

This study has clarified a method of analysis for identifying and describing web-based exhibition models (see 3.1): a practice-based approach that combines an historical take on theory and the analysis of case studies that is paralleled by practical work devised in synergy with theory, interviews and online discussions. This method has put forward overlooked features arising from within the practice of curating web-based exhibitions, such as the organising principles existing both within a site—technically, aesthetically and conceptually—and

outside it, in relation to other sites and fields of work, such as publishing (Goriunova, 2012). It proposes a type of research that offers new analytical elements for investigating curatorial practice, focusing on the role, intents and background of the curator; that is her/his relationship with tools of curatorial production and artistic content. It also considers the type of artistic production and the context of presentation, which is understood as a site-specific environment with unique production and display features. This method allows an understanding and analysis of an exhibition as a system for disseminating contemporary art beyond a division between the virtual and physical, digital and analogue, web-based and embodied, online and offline, while taking into consideration the specificities of the formats of production adopted. This is a step towards expanding the scope of the study of the domain of curating contemporary art.

The chapter devoted to the case studies defines the method of analysis of exhibition projects that migrate and integrate the web-based exhibition with offline formats of production, display and distribution. Based on a process of deconstruction and construction of the exhibition projects, this method separates the analysis of their online and offline components (see A.1) and brings them back together as a reflection. This reflection highlights the tensions between online and offline sites and modes of work that are associated with four areas of enquiry: the curatorial, organisational structure, artistic content and engagement (see 3.1). The identification of the type of integration and models of exhibitions that migrate from online to offline enabled the definition of the notion of the 'distributed exhibition' (see 2.4.2 and 3.8), a method of analysis that was also applied to my own curatorial projects.

The three exhibition projects described and analysed in chapter 4 were organised to test the structures of migration of an exhibition by creating opportunities for comparing online and offline formats of presentation and modes of production. This work allowed me to travel between theory and practice and understand the interplay between online and offline and across spaces, as well as the incorporation of different formats of production within a

curatorial strategy. The idea of ‘discursive production’—understood in relation to organising exhibitions which narrative unfolds through adopting different sites and mediums—emerged from observing the projects in this chapter (see 4.5).

The findings of this research would have not been possible without the parallel development of theory and practice. Without my own work of curating web-based exhibitions, I would not have had the sensibility or the know-how to understand what curating web-based exhibitions entails—not just conceptually but technically—in connection to the transformation of my tasks, modes of commissions and strategies of audience engagement, as well as to issues pertaining to economic sustainability and resilience. The analysis of the case studies sustained the development of an objective methodological framework to describe my own practice, which in turn enabled me to locate the projects produced by other curators within the larger field of curating web-based exhibitions and subsequently to interview their organisers.

This method has not achieved an opening up of the perspective of curatorial studies to other research fields—such as print publishing and radio broadcast—as much as was initially envisaged. In relation to my practice, this was partly because of working with a limited budget, so that some of the original intentions of my own three curatorial projects were not fully achieved. Specifically, *128kbps objects* had to be rescaled, hence the cancellation of live artistic interventions in the public space that would have brought about other research findings into interactivity and the tensions between online and offline environments through the public space. The focus of this research on the migration of exhibition and integration of formats left little space for diving into other research trajectories. For instance, the historical premises of the proposed case studies were only hinted at; the HTML exhibition of *>get >put* and the grid tool of *CYT* could have been analysed through the lens of the modernist grid as a mode of representation, further considering its application in the field of web technology, such as Web 2.0 services like Tumblr, Pinterest and The Art Stack—all of which have largely adopted the grid for participatory public curation.

5.7. Suggested Further Research

The initial mapping of modes of curating online and models of web-based exhibitions, along with their technical description and naming, while being of use to other scholars in the field—curators both independent and institutional and artists—would benefit from further research. The focus of this research was on integrating online and offline formats of display; an historical mapping of online exhibition models is still necessary and could build upon the terminology and initial categorisation provided by this research. This research has observed and examined only a limited range of case studies, and a necessarily limited number of exhibitions organised by myself. It could certainly benefit from analysis of and experimentation within a broader range of types of integration. A further investigation into the relationship between the practice of independent curators and the activities of institutions, and how they connect with each other, would be significant in relation to the observations that have emerged from this research.

Questions of sustainability, and the appropriation of existing web platforms and services, are two subject areas that this research has only touched upon but would benefit from further investigation. In terms of the former, the case studies scarcely propose viable financial models. Although this seems to derive from the fact that their curators understood curating online as a ‘cheaper option’ to that of organising gallery exhibitions, it would be significant to consider the funding structures for this type of work and how they operate nationally versus the supposed ‘universality’ of the Internet. Hence exploring alternative financial models that resonate with the characteristics of curating online is a timely issue—see, for example, the adoption of commercial e-enterprises services as in the instance of the *eBayaday* project (see 3.3). As for appropriation, a further exploration of the adoption of already-existing commercial services, such as exhibition venues and tools of curation, could open up discourses related to the way in which web technology is shaping contemporary artistic production and the encounter with an artwork—as the instance of the *CYT* project (see 3.2).

In conclusion, these exhibition models could be discussed in the larger context of the history of curating contemporary art by identifying the ways in which curators have worked around tensions between online and offline, taking into account the role of curatorial knowledge and the background of the curator (in relation to understanding and use of online platforms), both of which have emerged as primary factors in the way that artworks and their audiences are mediated.

Appendix A: Case Studies

A.1 Case Studies: Analysis tables

A.1.1. *CYT: An Acoustic Journey through YouTube*

	TITLE(S)	DATE
	<i>CYT: An Acoustic Journey through YouTube</i> URL: www.curatingyoutube.net / http://gridr.org/	2007-ongoing (CYT) / December 2011 to July 2013 / 7 to 16 December 2011 (gallery exhibition) / October 2012 to July 2013 (radio broadcast)
	STATUS	FUNDERS
	Fully accessible on CYT blog but original YouTube video content is lost / Exhibition and radio broadcast fully archived on CYT blog	Self-funded with artists' support / Gallery exhibition supported by ŠKUC Gallery.
	CURATOR(S) (occupation)	
	Robert Sakrowski (founder director of CYT, curator and new media art historian)	
	EXHIBITION FORMATS	
	HTML soundbanks displayed on CYT blog and at SKÜC Gallery as an interactive installation / Monthly radio broadcast of new HTML soundbanks.	
	PATTERN of MIGRATION	
	Artistic production on the Gridr database and display on CYT blog (FOLLOWED BY) Gallery exhibition (FOLLOWED BY) radio broadcast.	
	ONLINE	OFFLINE
SITE(S)	CYT blog / Gridr database / (YouTube channel)	SKÜC gallery (Ljubljana, Slovenia) [1] / CoLaboRadio (Berlin, Germany) [2]
ARTISTS	(YouTube users) / (11) Robert Sakrowski / Andreas Dorwarth, Ute Fischer, Vlado Replik and Martina Ruhsam, Laturbo Avedon, Dick Whyte, timineaux, Kim Asendorf, John Dekron, Jonas Lund and Jan Thoben.	Same

<p>CURATORIAL: Intent</p>	<p>To explore the modes of artistic expressions enabled by YouTube, the curator created a free and publicly-accessible tool for curation based on adopting YouTube as a sound/video database: the Gridr. The tool is both a piece of software and a database, enabling the creation of HTML soundbanks, which are aggregations of videos in visual grids. The CYT blog is used for presentation, contextualisation and archival purposes.</p>	<p>To create different experiences of the HTML soundbanks, emphasising some of their aspects and to reach different audiences. The gallery installation was created to respond to the exhibition <i>Radio as an Art Space</i> at SKÜC Gallery, and the radio broadcast to an invite from the community radio station CoLaboRadio.</p>
<p>CURATORIAL: Approach</p>	<p>The first part of the project (in response to the gallery invitation) saw the production of an HTML soundbank by Sakrowski himself, after an open call for artists submissions failed. For the second part (in response to the radio invitation), the curator commissioned 10 artists to create HTML soundbanks to be presented as a sound mix, live, on the CYT blog and, as recordings, on the radio station.</p>	<p>In response to the theme of the exhibition, Sakrowski proposed an installation of <i>An Acoustic Journey Through YouTube</i>. For the radio broadcast, Sakrowski acted as mediator between CoLaboRadio and the commissioned artists, with whom he also carried out interviews.</p>
<p>ORGANISATION AL STRUCTURE: The Site</p>	<p>The CYT blog comprises various sections, each of which is related to the research strategies of Sakrowski into the YouTube phenomena. The use of tags allows content search as categories. The top menu includes: Blog / About / Exhibitions / Interviews / CuratingYouTube BOX / Links / Events / Archiving NetArt. The Exhibition section is where the CYT exhibitions are archived and HTML soundbanks displayed. / The Gridr website is not clearly accessible from the blog. It presents the series of HTML soundbanks with no contextual information and search features. / The YouTube channel <i>ikonoskop</i> hosts the screen recordings of the artists' playing their own HTML soundbanks, which are then embedded on the blog.</p>	<p>At SKÜC, the project was showcased, along with the work of other participants, in an allocated room. / CoLaboRadio presented monthly broadcasts of the recorded HTML soundbanks at 1am.</p>

<p>ORGANISATION AL STRUCTURE: The Exhibition</p>	<p><i>An Acoustic Journey</i> page includes: a project description; an embedded YouTube video of the recording of playing the soundbanks; links to the sound files of such recording; information about the gallery exhibition at ŠKUC gallery and link to the documentation on Flickr. The actual work opens on a separate page. / The artists' commissions for CoLaboRadio are archived under the Events section as follows: title and description of the piece; date and time of broadcast and artist bio; an embedded YouTube video of the recording of playing the soundbank with a link to the original work on the <i>Gridr</i> database.</p>	<p>The <i>An Acoustic Journey</i> soundbank was shown on a laptop connected to a sound system and placed on a plinth. A mirror display was played on a wall-mounted screen. A series of (empty) CD cases were hung on an adjacent wall as a grid. Each of the cases presented the titles of one of the video assemblages constituting <i>An Acoustic Journey</i> and the credits related to the source material on YouTube. / Each of the radio broadcasts was followed by an interview between curator and artist that focused on the artistic practices and the content of the work. Interviews were never made available on CYT blog.</p>
<p>ARTISTIC CONTENT: Site and Mode of Production</p>	<p>The artworks are determined by the format enabled by the Gridr tool for which YouTube is the source material and hosting server of the content, and the grid is the format adopted to aggregate the content. / The HTML soundbanks consists of one or more grids of 2x2, 3x3 or 4x4 videos, which can be combined to create soundbanks of various sizes. Once created they are ready to be played by the artists themselves or the viewers.</p>	<p>Sakrowski's <i>An Acoustic Journey</i> was shown directly from the CYT website and was presented as a contextually-mediated piece. / The works for radio broadcast were produced online by screen recording the playing of the artworks/grids.</p>
<p>ARTISTIC CONTENT: Description of Representative Artworks</p>	<p>The soundbank produced by Sakrowski presents his personal journey through the commercial platform and includes 48 grids of appropriated YouTube videos. It includes content taken from TV news and also other thematic sonic collections, such as: <i>sound of the Space</i>, <i>500 wikiLeaks of Civilians killed in Bagdad</i>, <i>Noisy Transformer</i>, public messages from the Anonymous groups and a series of video instructions of how to make a gun. / The soundbank can be played live and it can also be experienced in the form of a sound recording of Sakrowski playing it, i.e. the 1h10min-long version of <i>Acoustic journey.mp3</i> or the <i>Teaser</i> of 10min.</p>	<p>For CoLaboRadio, Jonas Lund (NL), who also programmed the Gridr tool with Sakrowski, presented a sound piece of thematic video assemblages that explored themes that ranged from our relationship with social media, such as <i>Facebook</i>, to ideas related to glitch aesthetics, such as <i>Glitchy</i>.</p>

ENGAGEMENT: Type and Navigation Patterns	<p>The viewer actively engages with the artworks, in that they require to be played to be activated/experienced. The viewer becomes a DJ and the artwork operates as a curated database of audio/video material. The audience is less active when listening to or watching the recordings of playing the soundbanks. The audience experience takes place within the CYT blog, where the original work is contextualised and archived.</p>	<p>Visitors were offered different ways of engaging with the work in the gallery such as: browsing the soundbank with a mouse or watching other visitors doing it by looking at the monitor. They also had access to contextual information and a list of the original authors of the YouTube videos. / Radio listeners would get one aspect of the artwork: the sound resulting from playing the soundbank. More details about the artworks emerged in the following Q&A.</p>
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Figure 55: *CYT: An Acoustic Journey Through YouTube*, 2011. Analysis table.

A.1.2. eBayaday

	TITLE(S)	DATE
	<i>eBayaday / eBayaday: World Travel of Complete Artists Listings / eBayaday: DOCUMENTS</i> URL: www.ebayaday.com	1 to 31 December 2006 (web-based exhibition) / January 2007 (catalogue) / 9 February to 2 March 2007 (gallery exhibition)
	STATUS	FUNDERS
	Website URL banned by eBay, hence no longer available online.	University of Michigan's School of Art & Design, Institute for the Humanities at Rackham Graduate School
	CURATOR(S) (occupation)	
	Rebekah Modrak (artist, author and educator at University of Michigan), Aaron Ahuvia (assistant professor at UM-Dearborn, School of Business) and Zack Denfeld (artist and designer).	
	EXHIBITION FORMATS	
	Series of artwork-listings auctioned on eBay and archival project website / Mail exhibition catalogue / Gallery exhibition of material included in the catalogue.	
	PATTERN of MIGRATION	
	Artworks produced for display and auction on eBay (IN PARALLEL TO) eBayaday website archive (FOLLOWED BY) Exhibition catalogue (FOLLOWED BY) Gallery exhibition.	
ONLINE	OFFLINE	

SITE(S)	eBay and <i>eBayaday</i> websites	Mail-box catalogue / Work gallery (Ann Arbor, US)
ARTISTS	(26) Abishek Hazra, Ellen Harvey, Annie Varnot, Matthew Bryant, Slope Mountain College Faculty (Adriane Hermann & Brian Reeves), Nancy Hwang, Davy Rothbart, Conrad Bakker, Robin Kahn, John Roos, Osman Kahn, Karen Eliot, Josh Greene, Christine Hill Volksboutique, Dan Price, Sheryl Oring, Nick Tobier, Institute of Infinite Small Things, Charls Fairbanks, William Pope L., Marc Ganzglass, Carl Diehl, Rebar, Yashas Shetty and Stefano Pasquini.	Same
CURATORIAL: Intent	To explore the domain of e-commerce, its language and symbolic value, and its impact on artistic production, presentation and collecting.	To “fix the ephemerality” (Mondrak, A.2.2) of the auction-exhibition via: documenting the process, the artworks, the conversations between artists and collectors, the commercial transactions and the distribution.
CURATORIAL: Approach	Artists whose practices engaged with the field of commerce and its language were invited to produce artworks to be presented as listings on eBay, each for a seven-day-long auction. The curators mapped the auctions’ processes and archived them on the <i>eBayaday</i> website simultaneously.	The curators collected screenshots of the artwork-listings on eBay, transcripts of conversations between artists and buyers and details of commercial transactions. The format was chosen to mirror the characteristics of the exhibition, such as mail distribution. / The gallery exhibition proposed enlarged versions of the print material included in the catalogue.
ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE: The Site	<i>eBayaday</i> adopted the blog format (without comments) and functioned as a placeholder and archive of the auctions on eBay. It was structured in two main columns with content displayed in the centre. The left column hosted: Navigation, which included Featured Auction / About / Artists / Auction Archive / Live Auctions. The Auction Archive displayed a calendar showing the auctions schedule. The right column hosted the sections Press and Essays, which included commissioned critical texts.	Unbound print material contained in a postal box including: a booklet with three curatorial essays and a calendar for the auctions schedule; 26 postcard-like cards (17.5x12.7cm) of the artwork-listings; a poster showing the commercial transactions on a map (front), and conversations between artists and buyers plus details of the artworks (back). / The exhibition was hosted in the main room in the upper floor of the gallery.

<p>ORGANISATION AL STRUCTURE: The Exhibition</p>	<p>Artworks were auctioned individually on eBay and accessible through database search enabled by the platform. Each artwork was displayed/published under one or more eBay categories (34 at the time of the project) that had been chosen by the artists to contextualise their work. They functioned as sub-exhibition sites. / The individual auctions were brought together in the <i>eBayaday</i> website which also linked to the individual auctions on eBay when they were live.</p>	<p>Each artwork/auction was 'transferred' into print on each of the 26 postcards as it appeared on eBay website at the time of the auction. Each postcard (back) would display the artist's name and work title with the text used to describe it in the listing. / The exhibition displayed, chronologically, blown-up versions of the postcards along with the conversations between the artist and the collectors on eBay. The poster map was painted as a mural on the central wall and displayed the geographical distribution of the artworks after being purchased.</p>
<p>THE ARTISTIC CONTENT: Site and Mode of Production</p>	<p>Artworks responded to the context and parameters of eBay. They were not web-based but documented in the form of listings. / They ranged from sculptural objects and paintings to sound works. Many artworks were performative pieces that conceptually responded to eBay as a context of display. They adhered to the eBay interface and format of the listing including: an image of the artwork/idea, a short description with link to the <i>eBayaday</i> website, auction details and shipment conditions. The artwork/listing included a section for questions and answers between the artist/seller and the audience/buyer.</p>	<p>Documentation material as compiled by the curators—see Organisational Structure.</p>
<p>ARTISTIC CONTENT: Description of Representative Artworks</p>	<p>Abishek Harza's (India) <i>Own my voice you can use it for anything</i> was listed under the Musical Instruments > Other Instruments category. It offered the right to use his digitally recorded voice, "for any purpose", for up to 5 hours. Annie Varnot's (US) <i>Uncharted territory/Scenic parcel, Wildlife Sanctuary</i>, listed under Real Estate > Land, was a series of paintings of tracts of scenic land in Varnot County, a fictional area near the artist's home in New York. John Roos (US), a car salesman, sold consultancy sessions presented as <i>Sales marketing automotive business industrial story</i>, posted under Everything Else > Personal Development > Other.</p>	<p>Documentation material as compiled by the curators— see Site and Mode of Production.</p>

ENGAGEMENT: Type and Navigation Patterns	eBay provided an open framework of engagement for the 'audience', which was general and un-targeted, including artists, who also joined the projects without having been invited. Its format allowed direct interaction with the artists through Q&A and comments on the artwork-listing page. <i>eBayaday</i> website provided a contextual space for the auction-exhibition. / Only the artists and collectors encountered the 'original' artwork.	The catalogue provided an experience similar to that of searching through the eBay database, like browsing the Internet. It also offered a comprehensive overview of the project and its outcomes. / The exhibition functioned as a walk through the chronology of eBay auctions. / For both projects, interaction happened though reading and engaging with print material.
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Figure 56: *eBayaday*, 2006. Analysis table.

A.1.3. bubblebyte: *Secondo Anniversario / Casa del Divertimento*

	TITLE(S)	DATE
	<i>Secondo Anniversario / Casa del Divertimento</i> URL: www.seventeengallery.com / www.bubblebyte.org	12 April to 11 May 2013 (gallery exhibition) / 12 – 19 April 2013 (web-based exhibition) / 2011–ongoing (online gallery bubblebyte)
	STATUS	FUNDERS
	Documentation of gallery exhibition on both bubblebyte and Seventeen websites. / Web-based exhibition not publicly archived. / Previous web-based exhibitions on bubblebyte archived with descriptive text and e-flyer.	Self-funded with the support of the participating artists.
	CURATOR(S) (occupation)	
	Attilia Fattori Franchini (curator), Rhys Coren (artist) and Paul Flannery (artist).	
	EXHIBITION FORMATS	
	Gallery exhibition of artists previously featured on bubblebyte. / Web-based installation of submitted artworks	
	PATTERN of MIGRATION	
	Web-based artworks translated for the gallery exhibition (COMBINED WITH) Gallery website takeover.	
	ONLINE	OFFLINE
SITE(S)	(bubblebyte website) / Seventeen	Seventeen Gallery (London, UK)

	gallery website	
ARTISTS	David Raymond Conroy, Rhys Coren, Paul Flannery, Tom Hobson, Candice Jacobs, Nicholas Sassoon and Laurel Schwulst.	Constant Dullaart, Paul Flannery, Cieron Magat, Yuri Pattison, Hannah Perry, Angelo Plessas, Sylvain Saily, Travess Smalley and Jasper Spicer.
CURATORIAL: Intent	To test a new exhibition format online which would put a stress on the value of a website as an exhibition venue, equal to that of a gallery space.	To celebrate two years of bubblebyte's exhibition activity online in a gallery space, with an audience physically present, and to mark a new curatorial direction for the project.
CURATORIAL: Approach	Coren and Flannery commissioned artworks to be integrated as elements of the architecture of the Seventeen website. The format and form of the artworks were given by the already-existing web architecture. The curators 'ingrained' them in it as design elements to create a web installation, like it was the "10th piece" of the gallery exhibition (Flannery, A.2.3).	Nine artists, who had had solo exhibitions on the bubblebyte website, were invited to produce a work for a gallery exhibition at Seventeen Gallery to mark this celebratory moment.
ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE: The Site	The Seventeen Gallery website had a straightforward structure used to archive their past and forthcoming exhibitions and to give information about their artists. It had a top menu consisting of the News, About, Exhibitions and Artists sections; the content, mostly consisting of documentation images, was displayed in the centre of the page.	Artworks were on show in the basement of Seventeen Gallery, a dark space often used by the gallery for showing video works and projections.
ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE: The Exhibition	Because the curators worked with the existing structure and code of the website, the artworks were displayed as constitutive, yet animated, parts of the original website. Some element of the original website were replaced, added and transformed through building in the artworks. The original structure remained the same but it was animated by the artworks.	The group show included mostly moving-image artworks displayed on TV monitors or on screens, and web-based pieces that were projected on walls, following conventional gallery display. The website takeover was shown on a computer in the space after it was taken down from the website, one week after the opening.

ARTISTIC CONTENT: Site and Mode of Production	<p>Because the artworks were commissioned to become integral elements of the website, their format ranged from background images to favicons and sound pieces. Other artworks, mostly documentation of already existing artworks, were displayed within this new architectural layer, such as David Raymond Conroy and David Blandy. The takeover—an animated web-installation—was structured in such a way that it was difficult to distinguish the artworks' authors between them, as well as the artworks themselves from the design elements.</p>	<p>There were no particular themes or instructions that were given to the artists. The artists proposed works that either drew on what they had previously presented online, addressing them in the physical space, or new ones which made evident the relationship that their practices had with the Internet or web-based production.</p>
ARTISTIC CONTENT: Description of Representative Artworks	<p>See Site and Mode of Production sections above.</p>	<p>Paul Flannery showed the animated GIF work <i>Untitled</i> (2012)—previously displayed on bubblebyte—as a video on a large monitor. Hannah Perry presented a sculpture, <i>Kicking</i>, which “didn’t directly relate to her previous online show/work but reflected her kind of practice that references the Internet as source material”. Angelo Plessa’s work, <i>OnTopOfTheEmpire.com</i> (2012), which is a website, was presented as a projection with mouse on a plinth, as was done for the work of Paul Flannery.</p>
ENGAGEMENT: Type and Navigation Patterns	<p>Engaging with the live web-based exhibition was not straightforward because of the various animated elements. The aim was to surprise the audience who would have expected to browse the 'original' Seventeen website. Conceptually this was supposed to bridge the gallery exhibition with the previous activity on the bubblebyte website. This was not made specific to the online audience by the curators on the website itself, nor was it done in the gallery press release.</p>	<p>The gallery exhibition was accompanied by a press release providing basic information about the project, including the website takeover. No direct connection with the works that had previously been shown online was offered to the audience.</p>

Figure 57: bubblelyte: *Secondo Anniversario / Casa del Divertimento*, 2013. Analysis table.

A.1.4. >get >put

	TITLE(S)	DATE
	>get >put URL: www.get-put.net; www.rhizome.org/thedownload/2012/nov/	1 November 2012 (web-based exhibition) / 1-24 November 2012 (gallery exhibition)
	STATUS	FUNDERS
	Not archived and not documented online.	Not funded, with the support of the artists.
	CURATOR(S) (occupation)	
	Kelani Nichole (former curator, current gallerist and media user experience strategist)	
	EXHIBITION FORMATS	
	Gallery exhibition of commissioned artworks (COMPLEMENTED BY AND IN PARALLEL TO) Downloadable HTML exhibition on Rhizome's The Download.	
	PATTERN of MIGRATION	
	Artworks production for gallery exhibition and HTML exhibition.	
	ONLINE	OFFLINE
SITE(S)	>get >put website / Rhizome's <i>The Download</i>	Little Berlin (Philadelphia, US)
ARTISTS	Benjamin Farahmand, Derek Frech, Alexandra Gorczynski, A. Bill Miller, Travess Smalley and Giselle Zatonyl.	Same
CURATORIAL: Intent	To explore the conversation between physical and digital artistic production, and the layering between online and offline spaces by combining an exhibition format mirroring the themes of the exhibition, and aligned to the type of artistic production.	To explore the conversation between physical and digital artistic production, and the layering between online and offline spaces through combining an exhibition format mirroring the themes of the exhibition, and aligned to the type of artistic production.
CURATORIAL: Approach	Adopted in conversation with its initiator Zoë Salditch, <i>The Download</i> was conceived to host an exhibition that would facilitate the display of artworks. The artworks for the gallery show firstly materialised as digital files, thus the curator invited the artist to present	Six artists, who were all working digitally, were invited to create a work in response to the themes of the exhibition, addressing the transposition of their digital practices in the physical space.

	this side of their practice in the HTML exhibition.	
ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE: The Site	The project website functioned as a placeholder. It did not show the artworks, only contextual information about the exhibition and the list of the participating artists with links to their websites. The HTML exhibition was hosted and distributed for download on <i>The Download</i> . Housed in the Programs section of the <i>Rhizome</i> website, the November 2012 edition of <i>The Download</i> presented <i>>get > put</i> as follows: a series of images taken from the HTML exhibition, followed by the title of the show and technical details about the download itself, such as “198 MB, package variable media files in 6 folders”. On the right-hand side of the page there was a column offering details about how to browse the show, Instructions, and the project as a whole, About the Artist.	The group show took place in the gallery, which was a former industrial site and maintained some of its tattered feel.
ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE: The Exhibition	After downloading the <i>>get >put</i> file from the <i>Rhizome</i> website, the exhibition could be accessed by opening <i>index.html</i> in the computer browser. The viewer could also choose to open the works individually from the folder. On a black background, the HTML exhibition would display contextual information about the show next to which there was a list of the artists with the title and date of their work (in the default colour command of MS-DOS). By clicking on the artist’s name, the viewer would access a page with a short description of the work and a further link, which would lead to the artwork itself.	The exhibition functioned as traditional group show and occupied the entire gallery space. It included printed artworks hanged on the walls as well as interactive sculptural pieces, video and vinyl drawings.
ARTISTIC CONTENT: Site and Mode of Production	The HTML exhibition was built to be experienced by the viewer as “a series of flipping-through artefacts” (Nichole, A.2.4). The artworks were versions of the material that was generated during development of the pieces of the gallery exhibition and the email conversation with the curator. This is because the artists’ practices already engaged with digital tools of production. The pieces ranged from video animations and HTML	A. Bill Miller’s <i>gridworks_walldrawing2</i> was a vinyl piece originating from his animation work, which had been translated as cut-outs to become a work to be shown in the gallery. Travess Smalley’s <i>Head Of A Peasant - Kazimir Malevich</i> was a digitally-printed image and a zine that was digitally produced, and was also presented as a file for the HTML exhibition.

	compositions, to text and animated GIF. Some artworks included an artist statement, such as that of Benjamin Farahmand.	
ARTISTIC CONTENT: Description of Representative Artworks	Giselle Zatonyl's sculptural piece <i>The Internet</i> (2012) was drafted as a 3D model, which according to the curator functioned as an "idealised sculpture", the perfect version of the piece that was realised for the gallery space. The artist created a video out of the 3D-model that was presented on <i>The Download</i> and also incorporated in the gallery display.	Giselle Zatonyl's <i>The Internet</i> (2012) is a mixed-media sculptural piece, which consists of two panels of collage and digitally animated screens and a book entitled <i>The Internet for Women</i> full of pressed flowers and presented on a plinth. The piece is a translation of a 3D model that was adapted for the physical space. The video of the 3D model, also shown in the HTML exhibition, was presented on a screen hanging on the ceiling above the work itself.
ENGAGEMENT: Type and Navigation Patterns	Viewers were actively involved in the process of viewing the exhibition because they had to download it to access it. They could browse the HTML exhibition either on their own computer or suitable mobile devices. The browsing pattern was determined by the path offered by the architectural structure devised for it, such as the clicking on the Next button. Artworks were shown thus and browsed individually.	The exhibition was accompanied by a launch event, with a performance by the artist A. Bill Miller and a closing round-table discussion, which some speakers joined via Skype. The talk was broadcast on Skype so that people online could also join in.

Figure 58: >get >put, 2012. Analysis table.

A.1.5. Accidentally on Purpose / Accidental Purpose

	TITLE(S)	DATE
	<i>Accidentally on Purpose / Accidental Purpose</i> URL: www.accidentalpurpose.net	27 July to 7 October 2012 (gallery exhibition) / 27 July 2012–ongoing (web-based exhibition)
	STATUS	FUNDERS
	Exhibition archived on the curators' website / Web-based exhibition still online and functioning.	QUAD (commissioner of the exhibition), Arts Council England, Derby City Council, Kultur (Basel), Pro Helvetia. No artists and production fees for the online exhibition.
	CURATOR(S) (occupation)	
	Candice Jacobs (artist and curator) and Fay Nicholson (artist)	

	EXHIBITION FORMATS	
	Gallery exhibition with a series of soundtracks and a closing event / Online visual compendium.	
	PATTERN of MIGRATION	
	Gallery exhibition of selected artworks (IN PARALLEL TO) Web-based display of submitted artworks.	
	ONLINE	OFFLINE
SITE(S)	<i>Accidental Purpose</i> website	QUAD Gallery (Derby, UK)
ARTISTS	(100) Jonathan Allen, Kari Altmann, Marie Angeletti, Majed Aslam, Nathan Barlex, Gareth Bell-Jones, Vanessa Billy, Simon & Tom Bloor, Beth Bramich, Stella Capes, Pedro Cid Proença, Martin Cole, Mike Cooter, Rhys Coren, Patrick Coyle, Kit Craig, Elena Damiani, Simon Davenport, Stephane Devidal, Hugh Dichmont, Marjolijn Dijkman, Grazyna Dobrzanska-Redrup, Brian Dooley, Benedict Drew, George Eksts, An Endless Supply, Mark Essen, Leo Fitzmaurice, Jess Flood-Paddock, Ed Fornieles, Tom Godfrey, Oona Grimes, Colin Guillemet, Florian Göttke, Fatima Hellberg, James Hines, Paul Housley, Rowena Hughes, Leslie Kulesh, Candice Jacobs, Nick Jenson, Aaron Juneau, Robert Leckie, Jonty Lees, Gil Leung, Rob Lye, Barbara Rodriguez Muñoz, Harriet Murray, Kryssy Naylor, Benjamin Newton, Fay Nicolson, Rose O’Gallivan, Sally O’Reilly, Berry Patten, Yelena Popova, Henrik Potter, Emily Price, Ruth Proctor, Pedro Cid Proença, Richard Rigg, Alex Ross, Giles Round, Samara Scott, Erica Scourti, Tai Shani, Berndnaut Smilde, Oliver Smith, Jack Strange, Chooc Ly Tan, Neil Taylor, Oliver Tirre, George Vasey, Joey Villemont, Dominic Watson, Joe Welden, David Ben White, Laura Wilson and Jesse Wine.	Becky Beasley, Rachel Lois Clapham & Emma Cocker, Karen Cunningham, Michael Dean, Cyprien Gaillard, Ryan Gander, Paul Graham, Jonathan Monk, Rose O’Gallivan, Edit Oderbolz, Dan Rees, Clunie Reid, George Shaw and Ryszard Wasko.

CURATORIAL: Intent	To explore the possibilities of adopting an ‘incidental display’ (see A.2.5) of images, videos and text that could be arranged by the audience, while keeping to the themes of the gallery exhibition.	To explore critical frameworks adopted to evaluate success and failure and the relationship between them. To experiment with combining exhibition strategies aimed at disrupting the viewing habits and circulation patterns of the gallery audience.
CURATORIAL: Approach	Following a series of parameters, artists were invited to submit an image, video, GIF animation, or a few words each in response to the exhibition themes and type of display. The act of arranging artistic content for display was relinquished to an algorithm that would automatically aggregate artworks on the index page.	Artworks were selected by the curators in response to the exhibition themes and curatorial intent. Exhibition soundtracks were commissioned to disrupt the audience’s experience of the artworks. A printed transcript of a conversation in which the curators discussed their ideas was provided in print to guide the audience through the display.
ORGANISATION AL STRUCTURE: The Site	The website, a customised Tumblr and algorithm, consists of the following: an Index page, displaying different assemblages of artistic content generated by refreshing the browser or clicking on the embedded refresh icon on the top right-hand side of the page; an Artist page, presenting a list of the names of the 100 contributors, and from where artworks can be accessed and an About page, which provides information about the online exhibition and the overall project. The website functions as a standalone exhibition environment.	The exhibition took place in the main gallery space, a large, white-cube space with windows on one of the walls.
ORGANISATION AL STRUCTURE: The Exhibition	The content has two modes to be accessed: on the Index page, where the various aggregations are given by the algorithm, choosing the number and position of artworks and through the Artists page, where each submission can be viewed on its own and fully on a clean white background with details about the work including title, year and name of the artist. On the Index page each refresh or click produces diverse assemblages of images, videos and text of approximately the same size. The artist’s name and the title of the work appear when rolling over the image on the top left-hand side of the page. All the visual material is in an unlocked position and can be moved around by the viewer. No description or	The exhibition followed the convention of a gallery exhibition. The soundtracks commissioned to accompany the display were provided in the space. The online project was shown in a space adjacent the main exhibition, The Resource Room. <i>Accidental Purpose</i> was running on a computer, next to a monitor showing a video of the curators discussing the exhibition.

	curatorial text accompanies the artworks.	
ARTISTIC CONTENT: Site and Mode of Production	Artworks were responsive to the curatorial themes and the given parameters. They had to conform to the following: images no larger than a 1000px, videos less than 10MB to be sent as Quicktime files or as a link to Vimeo and YouTube and written pieces less than 100 words. The artists were asked to upload their work directly on the server by using a Tumblr link provided by the curators. On the Index page all artworks were subject to the architecture of the website, which facilitated randomised display.	Most of the artworks, which ranged from photography to sculptural installation and video, were selected rather than commissioned anew. Some artworks were part of a series of a body of work, such as Paul Graham's <i>Beyond Caring</i> .
ARTISTIC CONTENT: Description of Representative Artworks	Chook Ly Tan's <i>The distinguishability of Quantum State</i> is a GIF of an earlier performative work and shows the writing down of a mathematical equation. Marjolijn Dijkman's <i>Image from Thetrum Orbis Terrarum</i> is an image of a landscape and is part of the artist's ongoing project of the same title. David Raymond Conroy's <i>The Reality Effect</i> is a screenshot of a website showing a collage of Photoshop windows displaying images of burgers, also deriving from an earlier work. Emily Price's <i>Untitled (boy on beach)</i> is a 4-minute long video of a boy playing on a beach. Many works are excerpts from earlier artworks.	Edit Oderbolz's <i>Untitled</i> was a curtain-like fabric installation that almost divided the gallery into two sections. On the main wall there was a photographic installation by Clunie Reid, <i>Your Higher Plane Awaits</i> , made of prints of collaged imagery taken from fashion magazines and comics. The gallery window showed Ryan Gander's <i>The Medium</i> , a broken neon sign reading MESSAGE. Michael Dean's <i>Analogue Series (Head)</i> required audience interaction; the viewer was invited to tear pages of play written by the artist.
ENGAGEMENT: Type and Navigation Patterns	The access to artistic content is straightforward, in that it is configured as a visual assemblage of artworks on the Index page. The audience actively interact with the exhibition by shuffling the content-image on the Index page, creating their own temporary visual display. On the About page the audience is also redirected to the QUAD website.	According to the curators (see A.2.5) and some reviewers (Trigg, 2012) the gallery visitors found difficult to grapple with the multiple ways of navigating the show and they only partially engaged with the online project on display in The Resource Room.

Figure 59: *Accidentally on Purpose / Accidental Purpose*, 2012. Analysis table.

A.1.6. Xcult: *Beam Me Up*

	TITLE(S)	DATE
	<p><i>Beam Me Up</i></p> <p>URL: www.beam-me.net</p> <p>(2 of 5) guest-curated projects: [1] Sarah Cook's <i>representing/re-enacting/simulating outer space</i> and [2] Dang's <i>Scotty's Back</i></p>	<p>June 2009 to June 2010 (duration of the project, still online) / (2 of 5 guest- curated projects: 16 June 2009 [1] ; 20 Mar 2010 [2]) / 14 January to 14 March 2010 (gallery exhibition)</p>
	STATUS	FUNDERS
	<p>Website still online and functioning / Exhibition documentation available online.</p>	<p>Pro Helvetia, Kunstkredit Basel-Stadt, Christoph Merian Stiftung and Bundesamt für Kultur; (exhibition) MIGROS Kulturprozent and Plug.in.</p>
	CURATOR(S) (occupation)	
	<p>Reinhard Storz (project funder / art and media historian and curator) + 5 guest curators: Sarah Cook (curator writer, and new media art historian), Gitanjali Dang (curator, critic and writer), Stefan Riekeles, Annette Schindler and Lansheng Zhang.</p>	
	EXHIBITION FORMATS	
	<p>Web-based exhibition of commissioned artworks and guest-curated projects (two public performative works archived online [2]) / Gallery exhibition of the commissioned web-based work and talk event and exhibition reader including commissioned writing.</p>	
	PATTERN of MIGRATION	
	<p>Web-based artworks (and documentation of two public performances) [2] displayed on <i>Beam Me Up</i> website (FOLLOWED BY) Gallery display and printed reader.</p>	
	ONLINE	OFFLINE
SITE(S)	<p><i>Beam Me Up</i> website</p>	<p>Plug.in Gallery (Basel, Switzerland)</p>
ARTISTS	<p>Jaime Andres and Tania Ruiz Gutiérrez, Guillaume Belanger, Regine Buschauer, Martin Brauen, Johanna Domboi, Jayanne English, Tan Genxiong, Stephan Günzel, Abhishek Hazra, HOIO, Jieming Hu, Esther Hunziker, knowbotic research, Marc Lee, Zhenhua Li, Agnes Meyer-Brandis, Jamie O'Shea, Nils Röller, Vishal Rawley, Nilanjana S Roy, Richard Schindler, Keiichiro Shibuya, Alan Sondheim,</p>	<p>Martin Brauen, Jieming Hu, Samuel Herzog, Esther Hunziker, Knowbotic Research, Marc Lee, Jamie O'Shea, Alan Sondheim, Monica Studer and Christoph van den Berg, Genxiong Tan, Carlo Zanni, Li Zhenhua, Joe Winter and the authors of the essays.</p>

	Monica Studer and Christoph van den Berg, Anand Vivek Taneja, Christina Vagt, Joe Winter and Carlo Zanni.	
CURATORIAL: Intent	To create an “interactive multimedia magazine dedicated to the explorations—across arts and science—of the relationship between physical and virtual spaces” (Storz, A.2.6). The project magazine grew with a series of commissions of artworks and writing by guest curators and the project initiator. The offer of different paths for content navigation was part of the intent of exploring the properties of a multimedia magazine online.	To present the content produced for the online platform in a different environment and for a different type of audience engagement, while maintaining the interactive properties of the online display.
CURATORIAL: Approach	Guest curators were invited to commission three artworks and three pieces of text each in response to the themes and the nature of the project, encouraging multidisciplinary. Each project was launched at different times over two years and proposed different thematic perspectives on the overall theme, as well as modes of work. Storz commissioned some of the works himself. Cook commissioned works from artists and scientists, asking them to respond to her editorial and the characteristics of the platform [1]. Gintanjali Dang proposed a “decentralised project” for which two artists created public performative pieces.	Created to re-present the online project in a gallery space, the exhibition was curated by Reinhard Storz in collaboration with the director of Plug.in Gallery. Architects collaborated in devising the exhibition display. Guest curators and participating artists were not involved in the organisational process of the exhibition.
ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE: The Site	The website is built as a database. It has a main top menu, including Editorial, Contributions, Guided Tours, Participants, and a Filter column on the right-hand side, which displays the categories used to organise the contributions. An icon is applied to each category—art, cultural science, natural science, field studies, essays, narration and poetry, movies, music and performance— and is used to mark each of the 40 contributions. The Guided Tours section features 'curated' paths to guide the viewer through the content published on the website.	The exhibition occupied the entire gallery including the basement. Architects Morger and Dettli intervened in the space making a “spatio-symbolic comment” (Storz, A.2.6). They painted the entire space white, from floor to ceiling, to highlight the idea of 'traces' and stretched ropes that connected different points in the gallery space but also outside it. / The exhibition reader was an A5 colour book of 72 pages.

<p>ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE: The Exhibition</p>	<p>The artworks and texts are displayed as a list under the Contributions section and not as part of the guest-curated projects. The list includes the following for each artwork: the title and name of the artist next to the category icons and date of publishing, as well as a short description of it. By clicking “Link to contribution” the viewer accesses more information and a comment area. From here, the viewer is provided with a further link that opens the actual artwork in another tab within the website—apart from HOIO’s <i>Mission Kaki</i> and Vishal Rawley <i>Hauz-E Shamsi</i>, which are hosted on different servers. Amongst the five guest curators only Cook and Dang used the Guided Tours tool to bring together the works they commissioned in the form of a curated project.</p>	<p>The exhibition emphasised the single artworks rather than their being part of guest-curated projects. It was based on the idea of developing “a suitable [gallery] installation around the computer screen display” (Storz, A.2.6) to suit the nature of the online project, stressing interactivity. It was accompanied by a series of events: a performance by artist Knowbotic Research at the opening night, six lectures with some of the participants—starting with the Berlin philosopher Christina Vagt—and 10 artists’ presentations during the Basel Museum Day which took place between 8pm and midnight on the same day.</p>
<p>ARTISTIC CONTENT: Site and Mode of Production</p>	<p>Artworks were site-specific to the online platform and responsive to the themes of the project. Many of the contributions focused on alternating between the real and virtual worlds. The degree of engagement with this relationship varied according to the approach of the guest curators, moving from the work being site-responsive to being site-questioning, such as Dang for the latter. Storz invited curators whose practices already engaged with the Internet, and with an interest in space and science. Each artwork was accompanied by a Comments section.</p>	<p>Artists were not involved in the exhibition process and their works were displayed in a way that would maintain their interactivity, such as being shown on networked screens. / The written contributions were only presented in print in the reader, losing their “multimedia character” (Cook, A.2.6a). The artworks in the Reader were presented following a basic layout: title, image (such as screenshots of the online display, video stills or images used in the text), short description of the artwork and comments by the project visitors online where present.</p>
<p>ARTISTIC CONTENT: Description of Representative Artworks</p>	<p>HOIO’s <i>Mission Kaki</i> was a time-based piece, a “fictional travel adventure in episodes” of regularly published travelogues also including food recipes from the visited localities for the viewers.</p> <p>Cook’s project: in Joe Winter’s <i>Xerox Astronomy and the Nebulous Object-Image Archive</i>, the viewer activates the artwork through clicks. <i>Shrine to the Martyred Phoenix Lander</i> by Jamie O’Shea, which recreated the NASA’s robot lander in the form of a toaster in the fridge in his studio in New York, was presented as live stream of data</p>	<p>Modes of re-presenting the artworks were as follows: six of the works, such as those by O’Shea, Carlo Zanni, Joe Winter, were displayed on networked stations in the form of a wall-mounted computer screen with a trackpad under it, which viewers could use to browse and activate each piece. They were displayed aligned around the perimeter of the gallery. The <i>PIC-ME.COM</i> search engine project by Marc Lee, which was based “on a software which would comb the Internet for people’s names and put together new</p>

	<p>updated every 12.5 minutes from June 2009 to Jun 2010.</p> <p>Dang's project: Abhishek Harza's <i>#cloudrumble56</i> was a Twitter performance that took place at the German Book Office in Delhi. Invited observers were asked to tweet about it, thereby recording it. Vishal Rawley's <i>Hauz-E Shamsi</i> was an interactive sculptural piece that people engaged with via phone, at the location, or on Skype on a specific day. The two commissioned essays functioned as remnants of the works.</p>	<p>personal profiles from their associated details", was projected on a wall and functioned as a fulcrum of the exhibition. Three video-based works were displayed on a screen and headphones placed on a table with chairs. The exhibition also included the costume that artist Knowbotic Research used for his performative piece, <i>Macghillie: Just A Void</i>. The basement was used as a cinematic room with a projection of the work <i>T.R.I.P.</i> by Monica Studer and Christoph van den Berg.</p>
<p>ENGAGEMENT: Type and Navigation Patterns</p>	<p>The audience could access the content in different ways, via the Contributions section or the categories of the Filter menu. The Guided Tours section was supposed to provide further navigation patterns, this feature was only adopted by Cook, Dang and Storz. The website allowed users to comment on each of the artworks pages, this feature was hardly adopted by anyone, apart from some contributors, such as Guillaume Belanger who participated in Cook's project. In the case of Dang, the visitors could only experience the artists' works by being present at the time of the performance, either in person or remotely.</p>	<p>The exhibition allowed visitors to have different experiences of the pieces: on interactive stations, as videos and as text-based pieces, facilitating different kinds of experience of browsing the web in a more public setting. Maintaining the networked nature of the artworks, such as the fact that they would need to be activated by mouse-clicks, offered active engagement with the pieces.</p>

Figure 60: Xcult: *Beam Me Up*, 2009. Analysis table.

A.2. Case Studies: Interviews with curators

A.2.1. Interview about *CYT: An Acoustic Journey through YouTube*

Interview with Robert Sakrowski, founder director of *curatingYouTube*

Sakrowski, R., 2013. *Interview about CYT and An Acoustic Journey Through YouTube*.

Interviewed by Marialaura Ghidini [transcript of Skype conversation] March 24, 2013, 9am GMT, London. (see also 3.2)

M.G.: Hi Sakrowski, can we start by talking about your project *An Acoustic Journey Through YouTube* since it took up different formats of presentations and then we move onto the questions I sent you?

R.S.: The main goal of *curatingYouTube*, which started in 2007, was to leave the star system, the art business. To me YouTube was a new field to explore, a field where everyone can do art-related activities. I was long-term friends with Brane Zorman, who was one of the founders of radioCona,²³ and with whom, along with the group Bootlap and Peter Daniels, I had many discussions around the relationship between the Internet and radio in terms of freedom but also media transitions. In 2011, Brane invited me to be part of the jury for one of radioCona's projects, *Radio Arts Space*, which entailed an exhibition of radio pieces solicited via an open call and presented in their own radio studio as well as in a gallery. I declined the invitation because I did not believe in the idea of having artists to submit radio pieces for a gallery show. And I proposed an alternative open call related to my work with *curatingYouTube*, so that artists could submit pieces that were their own remix, more specific to the medium of radio. At that point in time I was working on creating a collaborative tool for curation, the first step toward the Gridr tool of *curatingYouTube*, so I decided to apply this idea to the *Radio Arts Space* project. I then built an HTML soundbank, with the idea that anyone could use the tool to do the same and present a mix of material of their choice taken from YouTube along with their own screen capture of the material for the exhibition. With this tool anyone could submit their own remix, and not just artists. But, no one did it! So radioCona asked me to do it and I did, and so I was told that I became an artist!

M.G.: How did you promote the show, then?

R.S.: I asked radioCona to send out my open call via their network and mailing list. But it did not work very well. The idea of my open call was that one could use the tool I built to create HTML soundbanks that could be used as tools for DJ sets, and then record them playing as screen recordings in a way that they would also work as audio pieces. Eventually, the whole project was then presented as my artistic project. The organisers of the gallery show for the *Radio Arts*

²³ radioCona, produced by CONA in Ljubljana and launched in 2008, is "a platform that uses the radio frequency space in art contexts. FM frequency is understood as public space, explored from different perspectives and mediated through artworks audiobooks, programming and exhibitions. radioCona is intervention into public space." (radioCona, 2014)

Space project, Brane Zorman and Irena Pivka, also asked me to show how the tool I developed and the whole project worked, so they invited me to do a workshop and a live performance on the occasion of the exhibition they put on at Škuc Gallery in Ljubljana. From this experience, I became very interested in developing the project further, and this is why I did the Berlin collaboration with CoLaboRadio afterwards.

M.G.: Let me try to clarify a few points about *An Acoustic Journey Through YouTube*. Did this project, which was presented as a series, start as an exhibition platform, as an exhibition device that would enable general users to gather and assemble material taken from YouTube using the tool you had devised – basically the inception of what later became the Gridr?

R.S.: Right... For me YouTube is a huge sound and video archive, a sort of vinyl box, and the soundbank is a synthesiser. In Ljubljana I made many soundbanks of different topics. I assembled each of them in this huge grid which is *An Acoustic Journey Through YouTube*, and for the gallery exhibition I played it live. People can actually still play it and record their performance on their screen.

M.G.: For the first instalment of the project, as part of *Radio Arts Space*, you were the artist because no one submitted works for the exhibition, right? What do you think went wrong there, why did people not respond to the project?

R.S.: Software like the screen-recording tool is not easy to use for everyone. At that time, with the technology I was using, you had to make your own soundbank in HTML, code your own page and record it for broadcast. So people needed to have special skills to do this. I came to the current Gridr tool from here, and Jonas Lund helped me to programme it. And it is much easier to use. I used Gridr for the Berlin series of radio broadcasts on CoLaboRadio. I invited people to make their own sound mix using the tool and then upload it to the *CYT* YouTube channel. Once uploaded, they would play and record it for the radio broadcast. Each intervention was broadcast along with an interview.

M.G.: Would you be OK if someone wanted to use the *An Acoustic Journey Through YouTube* soundbank for different purposes and contexts?

R.S.: Yeah, no one has ever asked me though... I don't think many people know about the project and I have not been marketing it...

M.G.: Can we talk a bit more about the Berlin series of *An Acoustic Journey*?

R.S.: For each of the show with CoLaboRadio I made a soundbank, each of which is to me like an exhibition presented in a form of a grid. It's a Gridr presentation. It's an exhibition of videos and it gives you the opportunity to mix material and broadcast it live.

M.G.: So what is the soundbank for you: a show, a database...?

R.S.: It is not really a database. For me, it is both a show and a tool for making your own sound remix, thus a tool for giving your own presentation and perspective on the material selected (from YouTube).

M.G.: Have you ever used artists' works that you rearranged yourself?

R.S.: For the Ljubljana series I didn't. For the Berlin series, I did invite artists to present their work. For example the artist LaTurbo Avedon, who was broadcast at CoLaboRadio last year,

produced *Club Rothko* using her work and found material.

M.G.: How did you commission the artists?

R.S.: I usually contact artists which are close to the vision of *curatingYouTube*; artists who work with video and sound, who often come from the music field or have a sensibility for it. I invited them personally and asked if they would make a remix for *An Acoustic Journey Through YouTube*.

M.G.: How do you show the work outside the radio broadcast format?

R.S.: For each artist I make a blog entry on the *CYT* website. Each entry has the final recording of the mix as an audio file, the screen recording of the video grid playing live, the soundbank on the Gridr and a short description. I also add details of the work, such as the day of broadcast, artist name, title of the work and place of the broadcast (CoLaboRadio for example). You can see this in the blog entry for the musician Dick Whyte,²⁴ whose work was broadcast in February 2012. Each piece was also broadcast at specific times on the radio, where it was accompanied by an interview, which was only presented there and never on the blog.

M.G.: Is your collaboration with CoLaboRadio ongoing?

R.S.: No, it lasted one year and it was a monthly show. I collaborated with them because this project is run by people from the Bootlab, who I have known for a long time, and also because they are a community radio station, so my show was very unique compared to the rest of their schedule.

M.G.: How did you promote this series?

R.S.: It was promoted on their blog and on mine, as well as on Twitter. I have not been very good with promotion... I don't promote things that much.

M.G.: Why don't you do it more?

R.S.: It's personal... I do it for myself mostly... Some people – people like me – need a sort of label, an agency to promote their work I think...

M.G.: Now that you have done few instalments of *An Acoustic Journey* would you consider the way you archive the project on *CYT* blog as a sort of exhibition format?

R.S.: I don't consider it as an exhibition format. This is the way I ask people to make their own profile online.

M.G.: So what is it for you, an archive?

R.S.: It is the way I present the material, it is more a documentation of the material. The exhibition is the soundbank on Gridr. So in the case of Dick Whyte, the soundbank on Gridr titled *supercollider* is the exhibition. You can still see it as it was, and if you wanted to see the artist's perspective on the material you would need to go on the *CYT* YouTube channel to see its screen recording, which, at the same time, is only a documentation for the broadcast.

M.G.: What is the radio broadcast for you then within this format of presentation? Another way of reaching the audience?

²⁴ See: <http://www.curatingyoutube.net/dickwhyte/>

R.S.: For me what was interesting was the live element. For example, the live interview was a way of talking to an audience and imagining it in the form of a salon. The interview acts as a contextualisation of the artist's work and intention. And then there was the acoustic presentation part, which for me was like the situation of an old, live orchestra, a moment in which the sound material was mixed, which is something related to my interests in DJ culture. To me, using YouTube is both a way of DJing and storytelling.

M.G.: What do you mean by storytelling?

R.S.: If you watch my pieces you'd see that I usually tell a story, for example in the instalment of *An Acoustic Journey* I did in Ljubljana.

M.G.: Were the works broadcast on the radio played live?

R.S.: In Ljubljana it was all live, but in Berlin only one was live because it was technically impossible for the radio station to have a technician working at night. Remember that for the artist, the screen recording is the live moment; the moment in which the material comes together in the way they want it to be.

M.G.: Going back to the list of questions I had sent you: why did you start curating online and initiate the project *curatingYouTube*?

R.S.: As I said at the beginning, I was really fed up with the art world, with the net-dot-art phenomenon. Circa 2003 was the starting point of this post-internet movement that to me represented the commodification of net-dot-art and was about marketing and self-promotion, attitudes driven by an American spirit that was against the utopian ideals of net-dot-art. When I saw Cory Arcangel named as a net.artist I responded: "what?!" I could not follow or be part of this, because to me the net-dot-art movement was all about going outside the structure of the contemporary art world. It was subversive, and I liked it a lot in the nineties. And later it was made into an affirmation of capitalism. As a response to this, I started to think about YouTube. I thought about early net-dot-art artists, such as Olia Lialina, who to me were all working with the form of video art. YouTube was fascinating to me because it created a scene – an Internet scene – in which everyone could be an artist. In there, you have text, small pictures, videos, sound – all at the same time. It is an archive platform, a presentation platform, a platform for discussion, and so on. It is so broad that to me it represented what the Internet could be (in 2006) and a year later I started to use it from an art-historical point of view, to verify if it is true that, as Beyus said, "everyone is an artist". Is this art? Is this amateur art? Is there a difference between the two? What is professionalisation? These were some of the questions that could be explored through YouTube.

M.G.: So do you see it more as a research project for yourself as an art historian and as a platform to explore some of the possibilities of YouTube for the artists?

R.S.: At the beginning it was a research project to me. In 2010, I claimed the domain name for

the exhibition the *3 hours in one second*²⁵ which I organised in a physical space. The research project started with my YouTube channel, *ikonoscope*, and a few blog posts. After 3 years and with some conclusions reached, I organised this show: I asked net-dot-art artists, old—from the 90s—and new, to participate, using the Gridr tool, in what was to me a way of showing YouTube content. This is the point at which my research project became a curatorial project.

M.G.: Can you describe the specificities, structurally in terms of platform and conceptually in terms of its mission, of *CYT*?

R.S.: With *CYT* I have been trying out different strategies, different ways to understand and put together socio-cultural and economic phenomena arising from YouTube. The website shows the main strategies I have adopted: interviews, exhibitions, proposals and the archiving net-dot-art project.

M.G.: In this regards, can you tell me more about your *CYT Box*, which is one of the headings of your website?

R.S.: *CYT Box*²⁶ is a response to the question of how to show works from YouTube in a physical space. It takes a transparent position within the art world – this is also why the box is a transparent architectural device that would insert itself as a parasite inside a gallery space. In the box, as a viewer, you could control the video exhibition. This is a proposal yet to be built as I have found no one who could build it.

M.G.: Have you ever asked YouTube? Actually, what is your position in relation to YouTube/Google?

R.S.: It's a complex one. I think YouTube exploits us, it exploits our labour, labour for which people should get paid. The algorithms that Google uses should also be transparent. Think of the streets in your everyday life, they are a public infrastructure because they are necessary to everyone. The profits from YouTube should be shared with everyone, with the people who are putting in their labour. I still have no solution for my concerns, we should organise on a more political level. That said, when I presented the project at Transmediale in 2011 the display was actually sponsored by Google! Gansing, the director of Transmediale, got funding from them. We did not have any other money so we accepted.

M.G.: Is there any money exchange happening with *CYT*?

R.S.: There is no money involved. I support the project myself and I don't use any form of advertisement. It is a personal project, almost. Everything on the blog is part of the different perspectives I have on the YouTube phenomenon. One of the latest developments of the project, of these different perspectives, is the *Gallery Surfing* project.

M.G.: Is this the series of interviews you are doing about gallery spaces/exhibitions online?

R.S.: I don't know if you know one of the latest YouTube-induced phenomena, *Let's Play...*?

²⁵ *3 hours in one second* was organised at the BASSO Gallery in Berlin in February 2010, originating from the production of web-based works. The participants ranged from artists, curators and scientists, and included: Constant Dullaart (NL), Carlos Leon-Xjimenez (PE), Guthrie Lonergan (U.S.) Sandra Naumann (D), Igor Stromajer (SL), Franz Thalmair (AT)

²⁶ For more information see: <http://www.curatingyoutube.net/cyt-box>

M.G.: No...

R.S.: It is about people who film themselves playing computer games and they have a huge audience following them. And for me what is interesting about this phenomenon is the empathy created through the exchange. I did one of the interviews with Annett Dekker on the Facebook gallery #0000FF— a non-profit art gallery/space, hosted in its entirety in Facebook. I think that people always talk about net art but no one watches it because it takes too long; at times, it takes an hour to browse a work and half an hour to read a text. Very often people access online projects through secondary material. So the idea behind *Gallery Surfing* is to watch it. And I have to say that most of the things I watch don't function. We have so many net art pieces coming out every day but no one browses them or reviews them. The YouTube model of playing and watching is what I use to explore this area of work and phenomena.

M.G.: It is so true that there is very little criticism about online exhibitions and projects... and I am included in the bunch of people who should write more about them and do something about this...

R.S.: You have to try net art out to understand it... like Facebook art...

[Long detour on 'Facebook art']

Going back to my relationship with Google, I don't know if I will ever accept money from them for a project. I now try to be more engaged with the local scene here in Berlin – the pirate and independent scene – with the hope that there will be some changes occurring through political change; changes related to transparency and to the rights of our digital selves, for example, rather than just the human rights related to our physical bodies. In the *Gallery Surfing* project we discussed the online exhibition *MON3Y AS AN 3RRROR* (*mon3y.us*), for which I tried to bring emphasise more political aspects, through discussing, for example, the *Loophole* project by Paolo Cirio.

M.G.: With *curatingYouTube* you organised a series of shows that took place in offline spaces – I am thinking of the already discussed *An Acoustic Journey Through YouTube* and *3 hours in one second*. We have not discussed the latter and perhaps the way it relates to the online exhibitions of *CYT* – could you tell me more?

R.S.: In the early stage of the exhibition I discussed the project and YouTube a lot with the artist JODI, as we both were interested in the phenomena related to it. We discussed the meaning of the grid as a format, which is not just a picture but sometimes, because of the way you interact with it, it acts as a painting, revealing hidden textures in the videos. We discussed the *CYT* grid as a sound piece, as a chronological archive and many other ways in which it can be used to express artistic ideas. We discussed it as a web-based installation too. We then invited people we wanted to work with, such as Constant Dullaart, with whom I also talked a lot about YouTube. So, the old and new guys of the net-dot-art scene were invited to express their views on YouTube for *3 hours in one second*; this was my curatorial intention and I also gave the task of exploring YouTube to others... [Laughter]

M.G.: If you were to describe the relationship that exists between the show online and what you present in the gallery (*3 hours in one second*), or the *CYT* exhibition online and then *CYT box*,

how would you do it? Do you see the modes of presentation offline as a reiteration of what is online, as a different way of accessing the same material, or as a way of setting up a multiform exhibition device?

R.S.: I would separate my answers differently than the way you ask your questions. The whole thing is a piece. If you have the online presentation and the presentation in a space, in the city space or in real life – but I don't like this expression— they are both aspects of the same thing. For me the transition between the online exhibition and the offline exhibition depends on how carefully you think about the space and the context; and also on what you want the exhibition to achieve, what you want to show – if you want to engage the audience to participate, collaborate or interact. It depends on whether you want to just show a story or an aesthetic effect; if you want to create an atmosphere or an environment where the audience could passively reflect. Only then you have to change your situations. I have tried different situations to achieve this transition for *3 hours in one second*. In the gallery space, people had various possibilities to interact with the pieces: with a mouse, headphones and projections of the video grids on the wall. This situation is something you never have online, where, for example, you would see one grid after the other in succession. In the gallery space you can compare the grids because they are next to each other. You can see what the person next to you is doing. Next to the grids there were other people and this was a different presentation than what you have online. It was more playful; it was more an installation about YouTube.

M.G.: You think it is important to 'go into' physical spaces to get your message across?

R.S.: Yes, it is. It might seem naïve, but we as humans have our own way to be which is in physical space. It gives us a different experience from what you have online. And I think it is important to mediate this digital content. When shown, digital material acquires an ontological aspect, it might become an aesthetic and it tells more about the works than when viewing them online, because it brings about other aspects since it is in a different situation. This has always been an important aspect of my work with *CYT*.

M.G.: Do you think the radio creates a different experience of the online content, the grids, as well? You think of the radio as another effective way of exploring the effects of YouTube?

R.S.: If you take my pieces they are more sound collages that tell a story. The first soundbank I made for *An Acoustic Journey* in Ljubljana was about people hearing strange sounds, they were all videos that had been uploaded with the intentions that the people should listen to them rather than watching them. There were no important images connected to them, it was just about recording a sound. This brings us back to the fact that YouTube is not just a video portal, people use it in many different ways. Similarly, on the radio, you cannot see the videos, the images. So the point is that there is a visual element which is not necessary to the videos. Very often people make things to be heard rather than watched on YouTube. To bring the material to the radio, to broadcast it on the radio, was important for me because it reflected on how YouTube relates to the broadcast medium, through functioning as a box, as an archive.

M.G.: During this process of migration did the artworks transform, e.g. did you facilitate, as curator, a process of translation, asking the artists to rethink their work for these new contexts?

If so, could you tell me more about this movement, about its specificity, and how you deal with it as curator?

R.S.: What do you mean?

M.G.: Did you know, since the inception of the exhibition, that you were doing a show for a radio broadcast; if so did you choose the content that would be the most interesting to translate in this way?

R.S.: Yes, but that was more in the background. In the initial process of building grids, the selection, you can choose between 500 washing machines, but as soon as you try to put them in the grid you have limitations. These limitations lead you to make specific choices. The grid always dictates the choices of material and then the conditions in which I play them. As an experiment, I am now working on one based on aesthetic criteria rather than sound.

M.G.: Did you do the same when you were working with the artists? Did you talk about this transition, from using the Gridr tool and then showing it as a broadcast? When you commissioned them, was it important to suggest thinking about this transition?

R.S.: My invite was like "I want to broadcast a mix from you", so that the main element was the broadcast. But then there are other visual aspects that emerge when using the Gridr that are very interesting.

M.G.: Have you ever published in print anything related to *CYT*?

R.S.: No. I thought it was unnecessary. There was no possible and useful transition for me there. If I was going to publish something it would be about the whole *CYT* project.

M.G.: You should do a whole book about *CYT*! The next question coming from my initial list was supposed to be about what brought you to draw the activity of *curatingYouTube* offline, as an exhibition in the gallery space and as a radio broadcast? But you have already responded to this. So the next one is: how would you describe the relationship between online and offline sites of display in your curatorial practice? Do you see such sites as hybrid, complementary or relational? If none of these terms fit your practice, could you suggest a way of describing their relationships?

R.S.: By site you mean the space of gallery or the radio, for example?

M.G.: Yes...

R.S.: As I described before, you have to think about material even for a website: how it will appear in different browsers, which kind of software you will use, e.g. would you use Wordpress like me because it is easy to use, free, open and understandable, or would you use your own tool, a platform or proprietary software to present your show? Other concerns might be: would you use a template designed by someone else or create your own? All this is at stake when creating a website for an online project. For *CYT* I decided to use a blog as one page, as the entrance of one shop. I created my own design like it was anonymous. And I used it for most of the pages, some of which I had subdomains for too. Only for the project *Watch me watching!*,

which I organised as part of Aram Bartholl's *Speed Show*²⁷, did I use a different design because I wanted to emphasise the location. So I used the floor plan of the gallery as the layout for the website. The idea is that you would log in to the works as if you were in the internet cafe. So again the layout was created in response to a special situation and to offer people a way to relate to the location by imaging its look, its spaces. In *An Acoustic Journey* or the *Anonymous* exhibition there is more neutrality and objectivity, almost as if you were in gallery space, so that the art can talk on its own and not through the website.

M.G.: If, as a curator that creates exhibitions bridging online and offline, you were to use a definition to describe the way the two connect with each other – their relationship – what would you say?

R.S.: I have problems bringing things down to one term. It depends, as I said, on what it is intended and what the show says at the end. I try to adapt different styles and formats to the situation. If you have two photo exhibitions they will be different, they will be arranged differently, and the same is true of curating online. I ask myself when I work: how should I arrange things? The *Watch me watching!* situation was a hybrid one for me because it was part of *Speed Show*. In the blog entry that I made later to present the project, I documented the show and now this documentation is an online exhibition for me. The same is true of the soundbanks and the Gridr: everyone can make them and upload them online. And they are all exhibitions for me. In my work I keep to the default contextual information of gallery shows: I use titles, artists, details, metadata and credits. However credits are a big question in this context. I embed the grids on my website and I would probably need to clear copyrights, in fact sometimes I have the impression that when I click on a video on YouTube and then I use it for one of my grids, I do not find the video a few days later because it has been taken down. So I am adopting the strategy of opting out. I don't ask permission to anyone and I go with the idea that if someone allows the embed option then a video can be used. In the case of a download though, the author cannot say no because there is no option to opt out so I don't do it. But one time I downloaded all the material. It was for Transmediale in Berlin last year. I could not show the work live because the festival did not have the right bandwidth... so the whole soundbank went offline becoming more like an installation. And in this sense that was really a transformation, a transition, because it was offline and the context of YouTube was gone, you could not read the text for example although the format of the videos was quite recognisable. For this display, we never asked for permission to download the material. For galleries and museums this is very difficult, it is a very complicated process to clear copyright. So you see, every situation has its own set up. And for each set up, I have been thinking about all these aspects.

²⁷ *Speed Show* was presented at Tele-InternetCafe in Berlin Mitte on Thursday 7th June, 8 – 12pm. For more information on *Watch me watching!* see: <http://www.curatingyoutube.net/exhibitions/wmw/>

M.G.: We are getting towards the end of the interview, what is best practice in terms of curating online? And what role has curating offline within it? As you said many times it is about taking into consideration the context, right?

R.S.: There is no real difference between curating online and offline to me. Curating is to try to think about things through exhibiting them, bringing them to speak together, such as arranging painting in a line on a wall. What you want to do online is the same: you want to show your opinion and arrange material. What is really different is that online you have access to a huge amount of material and you can be in touch with whomever you want. The latter was impossible 20 years ago; you had to go to Moscow, for example, to France. You also have an unbelievable amount of material that you cannot go through anymore because it takes too much time. Think of the Guggenheim show of YouTube videos.²⁸ I calculated that it would have taken them over ten thousand hours to watch all the submissions they received. So how did they do it? In the same old way: through networks, through looking at people they knew, through using interns to go through initial submissions. The role of the curator has changed, it is not possible anymore to go into everything objectively because there is too much of everything, and artists have been using curating to get exposure, because as a curator you have more power to express yourself and your gang. There is a need to survive in this mass culture, which is different than when I started curating in the nineties— when I also curated paintings and sculptures and not just digital art. Before, I had many discussions with artists and scientists. Now curating is almost about self-marketing and it is not so important what is shown and expressed but who is in a show.

M.G.: How would you position/define what you do within the ecology of the museum, gallery and festival system of display and distribution of contemporary art? You think you do something different?

R.S.: At the beginning I saw myself outside of it, and I thought I had the freedom to be my own distribution system, my own gallery and museum. I think it is similar to what artists were thinking in the nineties, a way of competing with museums and being liberated by networking and the business. But then it was all rapidly occupied by the business, erasing differences. At the beginning it was liberating for me. The *CYT Box* was a statement: “I would like to be part of this but if I were I would change it”. It was an attempt to reform things, to think in a new way about artists and art, my counterproposal to a museum. And I am missing a bit what was motivating me to do it. *CYT Box* was presented at ISEA, and in the paper I proposed that museums should change. I would like to see galleries more as a space for collaboration, like a record label, like a network for discussion. The museum scene is now all obsessed with archives and databases, and how to show things on mobile devices. They use algorithms to track their audience behaviours. YouTube showed this broad perspective of possibilities some time ago.

M.G.: Thank you!

²⁸ The event, entitled *YouTube Play: Live from the Guggenheim*, was live streamed from the Guggenheim Museum in New York on 21st October 2010

A.2.2. Interview about *eBayaday*

Interview with Rebekah Modrak, co-curator of *eBayaday*

Modrak, R., 2013. *Interview about eBayaday*. Interviewed by Marialaura Ghidini [transcript of Skype conversation] February 17, 2014, 7pm GMT, London. (see also 3.3)

M.G.: I would like to start the interview by asking if you are a curator or an artist-curator, or if you have organised any other exhibitions apart from *eBayaday*?

R.M.: I am not really a curator. I'm an artist and I also wrote a book about photography [*Reframing Photography: Theory and Practice*, 2010] and I think it's the experience of writing this book that informed my curatorial project and also informs my artwork. I don't really move away from the role of the artist for most of my work, but I use writing a lot in my practice.

M.G.: Does the *eBayaday* project come out of the research you did for your book?

R.M.: *eBayaday* came more from my work as an educator... did you ever watch the show *The Apprentice* with Donald Trump?

M.G.: No...

R.M.: Ten years ago, when reality shows started to become popular, there was one with Donald Trump and he would have a group of ten people involved in business, like MBA students or people in real estate or accounting. This was the first season, before celebrities were involved and the show projects featured brand products. In that fascinatingly unscripted, straightforward first season, Trump would give the contestants great challenges: and for one, he gave each group \$10 and ask them to open up a lemonade stand on the street in Tribeca in Manhattan (New York City). I liked this idea because it reminded me of my own lemonade stands—do you have lemonade stands?

M.G.: Not in England I think, but we do have them in Italy. Children opens up lemonade stands for fun in summer, at least I did with my cousin.

R.M.: That's what's so great about a lemonade stand—they're so simple that children can open one. They're also great problem-solving exercises: from an artist perspective, the stand involves the lemonade (the art object), and the exhibition of the lemonade stand itself, which is a kind of sculpture, and the performance around selling the lemonade. At that time, in 2004, I had just started teaching a class called *Artist as Entrepreneur*, in which we looked at ways in which there was a coupling between art and business practice, at how artists' labour related to ideas about labour in the larger economy. For one of the course projects, I asked students to work in small groups to create a lemonade stand, looking at all of the ways of being I just mentioned. We also did a project that considered work production via the assembly line. And within this course, I asked them to create an artwork on eBay in which the whole listing was the artwork. So *eBayaday* came out of that, the teaching and the works the students were doing. Also my growing interest in how commerce and art practice were related to one another.

M.G.: So is the reason why you have chosen eBay? Is it because it represents a different way of exchanging, or assigning value to an artwork?

R.M.: From an artist's perspective, the online marketplace involves many important decisions: what categories or context to use, who the audience might be, how you value and price whatever idea you're proposing through the artwork, how you describe the work ... I was fundamentally interested in it in terms of how it challenges an artist to consider all of these questions. But then I was also interested in the kind of exchange of ideas you would have once the artwork went out into the public, the kind of questions you might have from potential consumers, the correspondence between buyer and seller... There were a lot of questions throughout the process.

M.G.: What type of artworks did the *eBayaday* project display? Did they span different media, from sound, for example, to paintings? Were they site-specific to eBay? Were the artworks object-based? The project website is not browsable anymore and I am interested in knowing more about what was displayed and the process of commission.

R.M.: Yes the project website isn't there anymore, but the exhibition catalogue presents each of the works. I can describe a few of them. We tried to select artists in order to tackle the exhibition from a range of perspectives. We were thinking of artists who were already engaged with ideas about commerce, about value and how it is transferred. For example, the artist Conrad Bakker, who had used eBay prior to this exhibition, would go through eBay and look for listings of items such as the Rolex watch and would make a painting of the picture which the seller had used to sell the watch. It was often a case of individual sellers who had put the watch in funny places to take the picture, so that the watch became part of the landscape that involved their home or something like that. Conrad would make a painting of such a photograph [on *eBayaday* he showed *Rolex Submariner Black 18KT/SS 2006 **Amazing***, a set of eight oil paintings that are pictorial representations of an eBay auction of a Rolex watch]. So he was already incorporating eBay in his work, and our show was an easy transition for him. For artists like Bakker, the context was easy to understand, to grapple with the ideas and questions such as: how does my artwork become part of eBay, how do I think about value or categories? But we also tried to include artists who worked more traditionally, for example Annie Varnot, who is a sculptor. She makes intricate and elaborate sculptures with drinking straws, landscape-like with very artificial colours. When we invited her, she had to reconsider her work through the context of eBay because her work would normally be shown in a gallery where commerce is less overt and the space suggests an alleged neutrality. On eBay, she looked through all of the places you could purchase land and she ended up selling her sculpture as a scenic parcel like a wildlife sanctuary and describing it that way [on *eBayaday* she showed *Uncharted territory/Scenic parcel, Wildlife Sanctuary*]. So we were interested in this range of artists. Another experimental invitation was to John Roos, an artist/ car salesman/ coffee roaster who printed his woodcuts on his coffee bags. At the time, John was selling cars to support his art/coffee. I met him when I went to buy a car and he told me that the dealership would undervalue my used car so they could buy it and then sell me one of their own overvalued used cars. Because of his candor and entrepreneurial stance, we were curious to see what he would do in the show. He ended up selling his sales skills on eBay [on *eBayaday* he showed *sales marketing automotive business*

industrial story of an artist turned car salesman Subaru]. In a way, the show was an experiment for us to see what happens when you put an artist to work in a new environment, and also an experiment for them to see how they or the audience might understand their work differently.

M.G.: I suppose then that with the artists who were not that familiar with the context of eBay in relation to their work you had negotiations going on in terms of how the works might be presented and viewed...

R.M.: Yes, we had interesting conversations about what categories to consider, for example, ways to understand their work, especially with the ones that were more traditional artists.

M.G.: It's very interesting this idea of the categories, when I was reading your essay in the catalogue ["Artists and the Online Marketplace: Making a gesture, sharing an idea and carrying out a plan in 34 categories" (Ahuvia, Denfeld and Modrak, 2006)] you described the categories you had to work with as one of the fundamental parameters/aspects of the project. The essay stated "[a]s a site, eBay has highly specialized categories. Each category or subcategory provides a site-specific context without crossing physical barriers." Is this in relation to the fact that categories are representative of narratives/events that are specific to a certain point in time, a socio-political climate for example, and on eBay they allow the artist to work in response to them without necessarily being 'physical', but rather through their presence and migration (the buyer and seller relationship)? I also wonder if these categories have impacted your curatorial approach in the organisation of the online project?

R.M.: The categories themselves offer topical headings (i.e., "military" or "antique") that provide a context for understanding an *eBayaday* artist's listing. These could represent a particular point in time (for example, what's being sold this week in "sporting goods" may have reference to the Olympics taking place in Sochi), and they could indicate a certain socio-political climate (for example, "historical memorabilia" could indicate the presence of a particular political election, etc.). These categories aren't physical in the way that the Pentagon or a sporting goods store are physical. So it's easy for artists to contribute to them. There's no need to gather permission. We weren't thinking about site-specificity so much with the buyer-seller transaction, that is, the passage of the object from one place to another. The categories definitely affected our curatorial approach. We tried to select a group of artists that demonstrated a range of interests so that they would be dispersed throughout the eBay site, from "Kitchen and Home Appliances", to "Sports Memorabilia", to "Business and Industrial", to "Musical Instruments", to "Real Estate", to "Science and Medical". We wanted them to take advantage of the opportunities and audiences available on the online market, and (through their work) to pose a range of questions. In that sense, the curatorial effort attempted to utilise eBay as efficiently as possible—to get our hands into as many parts of the site as we could—via the artists.

M.G.: Have you ever had other displays of *eBayaday* apart the project website which at the moment is not online? I remember I saw an image of a poster when researching it...

R.M.: The catalogue includes a poster that shows the location of artists and auction "winners." That map came about in part from wanting to understand eBay both as a site that exists online and is accessible by everybody, but also recognizing that there is a [physical] geography in

place here. We wanted to understand how physical objects were passing from one hand to another, and to see the connections that were being made between particular ideas and the geography of making and consuming. eBay lives in the computer but there is also something very tangible about the show, and the objects: the objects have a home and a market, and so do the artists. The map was used as a reminder of that.

M.G.: Were most of the items/artworks sold? Were they bought by collectors, by eBay buyers?

R.M.: About half of them were purchased. I think this is in part due to pricing, how artists priced their listings, and the kind of categories that were used. It was 2006, not that long ago on the one hand but, on the other hand, before people were using social media to the extent that they are now and so most viewers of the show stumbled upon the listings accidentally when searching through a particular category. They had a meaningful or strange encounter with these ideas without necessarily realizing they were seeing a “show.” Some people found the *eBayaday* listings through our website, but most came upon one of our listings and would be confused, or intrigued, or surprised, and might ask a question, but not necessarily choose to bid.

M.G.: Did you avoid promoting the show within the contemporary art world and instead try to test the relationship with a public made of general viewers? Did you target the project to a specific audience?

R.M.: We hardly publicised the show to galleries or collectors. If I was doing it right now I might think more about an art audience. But at that time I wasn’t really interested in that kind of audience.

M.G.: What do you think would have been different about the project if you had specifically targeted an art audience rather than the eBay passerby?

R.M.: Even though eBay is such a public space, I was protective of the artists, I was concerned with them having the freedom to put out a story that they were invested in, and I was less interested in the notion of “I’m showing my work for gallerists and curators.” I think, in some ways, the benefit of the way we did the show was that most of the artists were more interested in the story rather than the publicity around that story. I think the show was successful in making the artists feel that they were going on a residency, going into a space that they created for themselves on eBay without being too concerned about the outcomes. In retrospect, maybe making connections with the art world would have been good, because it would have had an effect on the way in which other artists think about their art practice, the potential venues that are open for them.

M.G.: Were there many conversations between the artists and people looking at their work on eBay, such as the usual feedback or questions and answers?

R.M.: We had lovely questions. They’re all documented in the exhibition catalogue. One artist, Abishek Hazra, listed *Own my Voice and use it for anything* under the eBay category “Musical Instruments > Other Instrument”. He was contacted by a man who was looking for a birthday gift for his daughter who loved playing music. The man ended up purchasing Abishek’s voice and giving it to his daughter for her birthday. One of my favourite parts of the project was the

questions and conversations: buyers had to try to understand what the parameters were to own an object like that or how to use it, in what form it came... My other favourite event was the story of an Italian artist named Stefano Pasquini who saw Robin Kahn's listing on eBay in which she offered six-monthly mailings of artworks, the title was *Rare Fluxus original art mailings SIGNED*. Pasquini was so excited about the show and these artists' listings that he posted his own listing in response, *eBayaday Original Fluxus art in the post Stolen eBayaday*. He just made himself an *eBayaday* artist. So we added him as the 26th and final artist in the show. There was this wonderful potential for the project to spread in this way, for someone like Pasquini to join in, because the exhibition was democratic due to the nature of the internet and *eBay*. And there was also this potential for the boundaries of the show to expand in how our exhibition affected other, non-*eBayaday* listings. During the exhibition, I'd get emails from people asking if particular eBay listings they'd seen during that month were part of our *eBayaday* project, and they never were one of *our* listings. But people started to have a heightened awareness and regard for the beauty of eBay descriptions, or the poetry or politics inherent in all objects for sale so that, in a persistence of vision way, every listing on eBay was implicated during the month of the show.

M.G.: This is so fascinating. If now everyone exploits social media to create and engage with a public, with your project you exploited the way communication functions on an already established commercial site, extending the way the communication between a seller and buyer happens besides sales and purchases, and the possibility of creating relationships with other people not directly involved in the project... But going back to the catalogue, did you see it as something that would function as an archive for the future since the listings on eBay would disappear and with them the artists' works and the conversations? Was it something intrinsic to the show, or did you see it as an add-on?

R.M.: We made the catalogue after the show and it functioned in several ways. One was that, before *eBayaday*, it was hard to find information about artists who had worked on eBay. Throughout the show, people would write to me and ask if I knew about such-and-such work by an artist who had used eBay as a venue. So throughout the show, I started an archive of these projects and created a page on the project website where we catalogued these artworks. We tried to give them a home. I wanted to use the *eBayaday* site to capture this history and the archive of our show. This was one of the goals for the exhibition catalogue—to have a physical record. But I was also worried that a fixed document would be problematic for the show, which existed online in a transient way. So we decided to make the catalogue in the form of a Fluxus publication that honoured the historical precedent for the show. The catalogue consists of the essays and the artists' works printed in the form of postcards that can be mailed. Rather than making a static object, this format suggested that the show could have a life after being online. The map and postcards in the catalogue imply this transferring and communication. The essay booklet is the only static part. We designed the catalogue as a piece of mail art, packaged [in a postal box] so that it can be mailed directly in its case, ready to move around the world. And then, there was a gallery show, which was—paradoxically—a requirement from our funding

source.

M.G.: How did you feel about this, having to have to organise a gallery show?

R.M.: I wasn't in favour of having a gallery exhibition, because the premise of the show was to be online and also to be ephemeral, like the listings that launched and then, seven days later, didn't exist anymore. In the end, we focused the gallery show a giant mural painting of the map, showing the location of the artists when they listed items, and the home cities of buyers. We tried to put the emphasis on this movement, instead of focusing only on the objects that were listed, such as a landscape painting or a sculpture...

M.G.: So did you show any objects, were any artworks included in the show?

R.M.: No, none of them.

M.G.: That's an interesting choice...

R.M.: We showed posters of the listing postcards organized chronologically. In a sense, the gallery exhibit was more a celebration of the aftermath of the show. [...] We tried to get the website up again. But this time we had an email from eBay asking us not to use their name in the website title...

M.G.: So did you have problems with them?

R.M.: In 2006, we didn't because I don't think they were actively searching for domain names for trademark protection. But in 2014, two days after we purchased the domain name, I got an email saying "eBay must insist that you do not use the domain name for any purpose." It's a short span of time but a different world now on the Internet.

M.G.: Would you like to continue the *eBayaday* project once the website is up again, or it is more for archival purposes?

R.M.: Just for archival purposes.

M.G.: Thank you Rebekah.

R.M.: Thanks, Marialaura.

A.2.3. Interview about bubblebyte: *Secondo Anniversario / Casa del divertimento*

Interview with Paul Flannery, co-curator of bubblebyte.

Flannery, P., 2013. *Interview about bubblebyte: Secondo Anniversario / Casa del divertimento*. Interviewed by Marialaura Ghidini [transcript of conversation] June 17, 2014, 4pm GMT, London. (see also 3.4)

M.G.: You do most of the technical part of bubblebyte, right?

P.F.: Yes, and I am left with all the takeovers now...

M.G.: Are you a trained web programmer?

P.F.: No, I am self-taught really. I started to make a website for my own work, for drawings and videos. [...] Then I got obsessed with making them [websites] better and better to begin with.

And then I realised you can press a button and things can start going really weird. You can start to embrace all those mistakes. I guess websites matured over the years. They stopped being little animated GIFs, these Geocities things, and sort of entered a phase of modernism, for which everything became white and grid-like. I became really interested in breaking something that got so cool, and had adopted the language that was just that of a regular printed page. The exciting thing about early websites is that they had their own language because nothing existed before, and they were just full of crazy backgrounds, and little things.

M.G.: Yeah, they were amazing. Right now, everything is so pre-packaged.

P.F.: Exactly it is just these grids and everything is neat. It's high modernism...

M.G.: Right. OK, moving on to the questions I sent you, could you tell me more about the project *Secondo Anniversario* that bubblebyte curated at Seventeen Gallery (London) in 2013: its conception, structure and scope?

P.F.: The project followed on *Primo Anniversario*. Rhys [Coren] and Attilia [Fattori Franchini] had the idea to celebrate each year of bubblebyte's existence, just for the fact that "we have done it! And it's lasted a year and it's becoming quite successful". I think it was also a good opportunity to break out and make something physical, to try to communicate with an audience in a physical way, as well as just online. It's one thing to just be online and have hundreds/thousands people coming to the website, but it does not quite replicate what it is to have a bunch of people in a room, where you can really focus everything together. It was really a concerted, live, physical event out of the previous year's work. *Primo Anniversario* was just a group show of all the people that had a solo show on bubblebyte the year previous to that. People were just invited to either present something that was made online in a physical space or to just make something new that kept some sort of dialogue with the online presence of the work.

M.G.: Was that also for *Secondo Anniversario*?

P.F.: Yes, they had the same curatorial concept.

M.G.: Do you know which of the works that were included in the gallery show were directly related to those online?

P.F.: I had a piece in there because the year before I had a solo show on bubblebyte. I had an animated GIF. Hanna Perry made a sculpture that didn't directly relate to her show online, but reflected her kind of practice that slips in and out; it referenced it as a source material. Constant Dullaart made a sculptural piece of his YouTube project on TV monitors for example.

M.G.: How did you present it in the gallery exactly?

P.F.: Just as you came down the stairs [the basement of Seventeen Gallery] there was a big monitor and there was a big GIF playing on that. It was a rainbowed brick wall that was just kind of lifted from the show on bubblebyte.

M.G.: Was the work in the gallery contextualised, displayed as referring to what you did online? For instance, did you adopt a title that was referring to what you had online, or there was a description?

P.F.: No. I think in my case, because it was an animated GIF, you did not have to make a

distinction. And it was on a flat screen. That is something that became apparent when you read the gallery press release. I think one work that 'stayed' online was Angelo Plessas', he had one of his websites on a laptop. That was the only piece that was not able to make that disconnection between online and off. I think the point was to try to make these things exist in the physical world, to see if they could in a way.

M.G.: What's the difference for you to... better to say what did it mean for you to have your work in the gallery space? Was it meant for relating with a different audience, for extending the work...?

P.F.: I think so... I guess it was interesting to formalise a context for things. Thinking of presenting something online, it is always about framing it within the edges of your laptop or whatever [you are using], it is kind of nice to see how it can exist outside of that. I think for me it was a sort of excuse to present the work in a much larger situation, to remove it from the context of one-to-one experience, to make it larger and more communal and dominating.

M.G.: How would you define what happens with this act of removal? Would you call it a transition, an extension, a version? Would you use any of these words or not?

P.F.: I would think it is just a way of presenting; it is just a view of an object. There are only particular types of objects that can be presented online; in a way it [online] does have its limitations so it is a good way to get rid of some of those connotations for a lot of people. Yuri, [Pattison] for example—he comes from that digital focal plane, the Tumblr one, where there are images associated with one another—created this kind of digital combination of image search that breaks away with this long vertical scroll of the screen. His work was a good example of how the piece is positioned for viewing online and digital.

M.G.: You also curated *Casa Del Divertimento*, a takeover of the Seventeen Gallery website that presented works of seven different artists not included in the gallery show. How did this component of the project relate to the gallery display, and/or the bubblebyte website? For example, in your view was it an accompaniment, an element integral to the project, or something else?

P.F.: It was an extra piece within the show. Downstairs there would be the floor plan and eight pieces, and this was to be considered the ninth piece which would create the link between what was online and what was offline. It also marked the moving away from bubblebyte being a gallery space on its own, where every couple of months there was a solo show, to using the website as a gallery and having the artworks installed within that space. This was meant as something intended to bridge that gap and it released that shift: we had had two years of shows and there were going to be online shows no more on our space, but we would make work on other people's websites.

M.G.: Was this the first takeover?

P.F.: No, we have done a couple before that one.

M.G.: So this one marked the end of a specific curatorial line?

P.F.: Yes, there was a big shift in the curatorial direction of bubblebyte. *Secondo Anniversario* marked the end of bubblebyte hosting its own shows, and it becoming more like a magma-type

organisation, using websites as spaces themselves. Rather than just hosting a video or an image on its own website, we wanted to use the website as a space, manipulate other people's websites.

M.G.: Why?

P.F.: By that point all galleries had pretty mature websites and kind of decent archives in them, but all they were doing was just archiving previous shows and announcing new ones. So there would be this disconnect between the online space and the physical space, its presence was just a notice board for the physical space. Our remit was to make this more integral, or to bridge it somehow with the physical space. You can have works that exist on the website and give them a kind of equal playing field. Their [the artworks of *Casa del Divertimento*] domain name was <http://www.seventeengallery.com/> it is just as important as its physical space: you get people looking at shows from around the world and you become familiar with them, you can see what is on in New York, so you can have this familiarity with a gallery exhibition that is curated on the other side of the world. And this has started to be discussed like a property...

M.G.: Yeah... it's taking over a property...

P.F.: ...So we wanted to investigate if this was a space in itself that had equal weight and value associated with the gallery as the physical space. So you could have works that existed online within the gallery website.

M.G.: How did it look? Was it like a total takeover of the website, or something more similar to infiltrating a website, an architecture, that was already existing?

P.F.: *Casa del Divertimento* was a complete takeover; for it we totally took over and hijacked the gallery website.

M.G.: So there was nothing of Seventeen Gallery in there, a part from the domain name...?

P.F.: We completely... it was just like if we were having an installation in there.

M.G.: Do you have screenshots?

P.F.: Yeah... I could send you the whole thing. It is backed up as an archive, as a folder that you can launch and play on your computer. [laughter] So, yes, the first two takeovers we did were just about this idea of hacking into because it was so unfamiliar with an art audience, and it [the Seventeen Gallery website] was such a pristine kind of website as well.

M.G.: How did you commission the artists? Did you ask them to respond to the theme, and/or also to respond to the structure of the website? Also did you give them parameters to work with?

P.F.: Originally Rhys and myself talked about this idea, looking for these different elements that could have been assigned and distributed. For example, for the first two takeovers we had someone producing a background image, sound, a favicon – the little thing that goes on a tab. Then I made it animated, using CSS, and dancing around, putting everything together and going crazy. We tried to tie these different elements together.

M.G.: So it was a kind of online artwork of other artworks...

P.F.: ...Just to ingrain it within the fabric of what the existing site was and then have everything really distractive and moving around.

M.G.: Do you keep doing this for the other ones?

P.F.: That is our default fallback position, the starting idea, not to say that this is a kind of cop out. Now we have done enough of those and we are looking at new ways of doing it. We also now know it works to an extent but there is lots of possibilities and variables that could go into it.

M.G.: It is almost like finding different strategies for hijacking?

P.F.: Yeah, it is trying to not to make it too formulaic, because part of the fun is that it looks like a sort of hijack and if it starts to look too formulaic it kind of starts to look very polite. You know, we have permission but that would take away some of the shock of it...

M.G.: Was *Casa del Divertimento* launched before the gallery show?

P.F.: No, it was launched at the same time, at 6pm on the 11th April.

M.G.: Maybe also because bubblebyte has always had opening times?

P.F.: Yes... also because it was the time of the gallery opening.

M.G.: Did you have a computer in the space to show the takeover?

P.F.: The takeover was on the [web]site for only a week...

M.G.: ...because they wanted it back right?!

P.F.: [laughter] Yeah... we set up a laptop in the space, and it was running on it like a regular video piece, running on the background. I think, going back to one of your earlier questions, this was the bridge. That was the only time we have done that, we have not incorporated it in a show in that way before.

M.G.: Do you see a website like an architectural space?

P.F.: Yes, absolutely. This is exactly how it works. It has this HTML code at the back which is a kind of architecture. I always try to manipulate that. Each take-over has its own character based on the website it's taking over, so we have to respond to what is there.

M.G.: How?

P.F.: The original structure of the website is there as it is for an installation in a space, so you have to work with that space. We have these parameters to work with. We can add things in like a little bit of audio, we can add in a flourish where we have things spinning around. But essentially we respond to the website with the sense of command that we give to it. We cannot take the same script or code for Seventeen and use it for another website. It would be the same piece of work, but it would behave in a totally different way. We try, then, to make everything custom to the other space, to what the space of the website would facilitate.

M.G.: I am trying to think of a parallel, a similar artistic attitude in a gallery space... what would that be?

P.F.: I don't know... maybe like a Sol Lewitt, like a set of instructions. Essentially, I don't know how specific Sol Lewitt's instructions are, but you have got the fact that each gallery has a different size and walls, and those are kind of a fixed element. So you have to adapt Lewitt's lines, drawings, to fit into that. But essentially you are dealing with the same set of instructions, which are interpreted differently for each space.

M.G.: Yeah... there are so many connecting points with these kinds of practices, with conceptual art practices breaking with the gallery space and online approaches... even in

curatorial practices. The dealing with instructions, text and language, distributed sites. It's amazing... Anyway, back to the questions: what did you have on the bubblebyte website?

P.F.: I am trying to think. We had information about the gallery exhibition and then a link at the bottom of the page. I think we just played low key.

M.G.: Like a placeholder...

P.F.: Yes.

M.G.: Do you know how the audience responded to the distributed nature of *Secondo Anniversario*: the Seventeen Gallery space, its website and the *bubblebyte* website?

P.F.: I don't know. It is kind of difficult to gauge, because everyone experiences it privately and remotely. But Dave at Seventeen sent us emails that he got—he sent us the good ones!—in which people were very enthusiastic and said that it was nice to see the web used as a creative expression. I think it is not really the kind of compliment we were looking for though...

M.G.: [laughter] Was there anyone from those emails who *did not* get it?

P.F.: I don't know... Seventeen was really accommodating and they let us run wild, maybe that was to protect us from the bad ones, like: "Hey, I don't know how to get to your gallery anymore! The map is gone!" [...] We did one for Cell [a project space in London], and that was only a twenty-four hour thing. When we spoke to the gallerist she was happy, the website was still there and people just had to chase things around. We don't have direct feedback from people really, but we got lots of good institutional feedback.

M.G.: In fact you started to do it with lots of other places right?

P.F.: When we did one for Royal Standard [Liverpool], we had to go back to it because they had lots of complaints of people saying "We can't see where the opening times are" and so on. So we had to put a switch that you could turn on and off, in the top corner. We had to be a bit diplomatic about it.

M.G.: I guess it is about being part of that structure...

P.F.: Well, I always fight against this. If we do this we should do this properly and take over...

M.G.: This is your artistic side coming out, right?! I guess the curatorial voice would sound more compromising than this... [laughter].

P.F.: If it's going to be a short thing, we should just completely take it over and have the website experienced in that way. But if it has to be longer, it would be different. For the one we are doing for *Paddle ON!* [Phillips and Tumblr auction], we need to be able to turn it on and off, for example. We have to filter things and make them friendlier to the visitors and have the options to revert to a saner environment. It kind of makes me sad but we have to do it sometimes! [laughter]

M.G.: How would you describe the relationship between online and offline sites of display in your curatorial practice? Do you see such relationship as hybrid, complementary or relational, for example? If none of these terms apply to your work, you can discuss it in your own words.

P.F.: It is kind of curious, because if you were asking Rhys or Attilia they might give you a different answer. I think that that distinction is becoming more and more sort of meaningless. Online is just a way of presenting something on a screen, essentially. Very little online work

actually now has that initial relationship with the first generation of net-dot-art, where was all about the communication between the point A and the point B, that whole “the-art-happens-here” kind of diagram. It is a culture, people are going to grow up online, people experience and consume so much media online through its aesthetics – the Internet’s various memes, Tumblrs, unicorns or whatever it is – that it has just become a screen to consume things on. It is difficult to see it as different to a video or something like that. But the beauty of it is that it has that extra dimension that you can manipulate from a position behind the stage, you can evolve it, and it can be this accumulative process. It is not this *fait accompli*, in the same way a video piece can be where it is just constantly stuck and trapped in this endless loop. It has also a kind of ephemerality, there is always the danger that the code you do is going to become, be made, redundant.

M.G.: What is best practice in terms of curating online? And what role has curating offline within it?

P.F.: I think curating online is a very difficult thing to do, which is why it is very important that we wanted to do the *Primo* and *Secondo Anniversario*. It is very difficult to present work in an online gallery space and give it the uniqueness, the volume. If you are going to present a video, how is that different than seeing a video being blogged on a Tumblr or somewhere else? What kind of thing gives the site that you are viewing a particular authority to it? I guess you have to build up this sort of critical mass behind the URL itself, the value is in the address and that is, maybe, the initial kind of thinking behind the takeovers. The value is in the address of the gallery, which already exists, and that is a very important URL, that is where the space is. It is difficult to just kind of show an image online because you can make a really wonderful JPEG but it looks the same on your site as it does in everyone else’s, there is no subtle install.

M.G.: I guess you have replied to the second question by stressing the importance of the gallery space, the physical context.

P.F.: I think it is really important to operate in both. Existing online only is detrimental; it causes more problems than it is worth. You kind of experience life in both kind of forms. Even Travess Smalley’s work, where the pieces are so digital – they are all about that – and are made with Photoshop and incorporate various online content, exists and glows so much more in real life and printed out onto very big, bright canvas. But then, at the same time, you get pieces that don’t necessarily translate, that cannot be just blown up and projected on a wall. That is something I have experienced with the piece I have done for *Secondo Anniversario*. I thought it would be really cool and at the end it was something that probably worked better in its little context online. Harm Van der Dorpel can talk about this much better than I can, such as the disappointment he felt when he saw some of his pieces, maybe the *Ethereal Self*, blown up and just presented in a physical space. That is something that exists online and is made specifically for that and does not translate offline.

M.G.: What do you think of people that show web-based art on monitors? Well, I think this might be interesting when thinking about the transition in approaches from the nineties to now...

P.F.: I don’t think there is a one-size fits all answer because it’s all down to the individual work,

on how you want it to be distributed. I think there has to be some thought on the part of the artists and you cannot just make a direct translation. I always press the issue that the internet is a space and you kind of have to, if you are making a translation from a virtual space to a physical space, you cannot just put it from one screen to another one, because the piece might benefit to be reworked in a different context. You do have three dimensions... and it is good to use them.

M.G.: Maybe there is also a fourth one that might be interesting to think about... [laughter] OK, last question, how would you position what you do within the ecology of the museum, gallery and festival system of display and distribution of contemporary art?

P.F.: Museums really make me think of archives, old stuff. It is hard to imagine this stuff just being that old, being archived. I know there are ways of doing it but it seems so transient. It would be fun to see how it can be archived. And I think if it were, especially for the takeovers, it will have to be like a set of instructions, in the same way like a Sol Lewitt piece. There will be a set of instructions that would appear differently, like a reiteration of stuff. Hopefully, though, lots of galleries seem to take their web presence more seriously, giving it some thought, using it as a space, as means of distributing works, commissioning projects. They are becoming more than just newsletters.

M.G.: Do you think that the way you have been working, you *are* working, creates something that is different, a different ecology, different ways of supporting artists' practices? Does it break with where-the-money-is system within the art world?

P.F.: We have had a couple of instances in which we have been able to pay people, but most of the time it's all been for free. You do create these little social networks of artists you can work with, and you can call and ask if they could make a sound piece for something, etc. It is always interesting looking back at people's CV and look at how they have referenced the takeovers they have been on; some put them down as a sort of group show, other as solos or other sections... so in a lot of ways the artists don't always know how to refer to it...

M.G.: ...Sometimes they don't even refer to them...

P.F.: ...Yeah, sometimes they are just missed off entirely. They kind of think this was a side project: "I just did a thing". I think artists, as long as there have been institutions, have been looking to push against institutions and that is the rise of the artist-run space. So many artists-run spaces have this sort of online element because it is a way of distributing what they have been doing just further and further. I guess in that sense people are becoming more receptive to it, they don't see it as an enormous disconnect with what they have been doing. I think when we started we definitely tried to link with people whose work had some kind of association with the Internet, or Internet relevance. Now we just feel comfortable to approach people who have never considered working or presenting work online because it is a platform for people more and more. When we opened we had to go through long explanations of how and why, etc. So, yeah, I think it creates that kind of ecology for artists to work in, just as part of that tradition of self-initiated projects, I suppose.

A.2.4. Interview about >get >put

Interview with Kelani Nichole, curator of >get >put.

Nichole, K., 2013. *Interview about >get >put*. Interviewed by Marialaura Ghidini [transcript of Skype conversation] April 6, 2014, 3pm GMT, London. (see also 3.5)

M.G.: [after greetings and a brief intro about my research I ask Kelani:] Have you done a Ph.D too?

K.N.: I only have an undergraduate degree, then I went to work and I now have a senior level career in digital.

M.G.: What's your weekly job, you said that you have a full-time job besides your work with *TRANSFER* Gallery?

K.N.: It's a design job. I am a media user experience strategist. I build applications and digital experiences for companies, and I have been doing it for ten years. I came back to curating after six years of professional experience. I have studied art and philosophy and then promptly got a job in the digital. It's a different side of the same job and it's proved to be very useful in getting back to the art world, in a business sense. My partner and I have lots of skills that are very useful towards supporting the gallery.

M.G.: Is *TRANSFER* a commercial gallery or a not-for-profit space?

K.N.: Sure that is a commercial gallery! [laughter]

M.G.: This is why you say you have the right skills...

K.N.: It's a passion project right now. It is definitely an experimental space, and we want it to remain that way in many ways. But we have started to engage with the market and art fairs in traditional ways. Obviously artists want to sell their work, everyone want to sell work... it's a great thing to get paid for your artworks. But we work full-time to support it, we both have other jobs, and it is our second life where we pour all of this money into it. It's not really paying for itself yet [laughter].

M.G.: Moving onto the first question of the set I prepared for you, why did you start curating online – what are your reasons behind it— and why did you initiate the project >get >put?

K.N.: I discovered net art after I started to reengage with the art world through the collective little berlin in Philadelphia and I came across this type of work through different shows that were happening there. I became a member of little berlin, which meant that I had a month to produce a show. It was a natural space for me to start connecting with artists working on the Internet, and I was already working online full-time. My first show was called *Distributed Collectives* and it included Computer Club, F.A.T. and Manifest.A.R. So I had the excuse to curate and I found the Internet the right space to start from. In the course of curating that show I dug deeply into the tensions between the network and the physical that existed in the artists' practices of the three collectives. >get >put probably started when I had a studio visit with Travess Smalley. He did a studio visit with me on his computer. In physical space, we were both sitting in front of his computer. I was watching how he moved in between the different spaces, hearing about his

work, how collaboration played a key role and the network was this sort of feedback mechanism for him. I really think that it was with that studio visit, in retrospect, that the tensions between the digital practices and the physical space became evident. *>get >put* took another year of research. There is also a fun premise. I started coming to New York from Philadelphia, just visiting— my partner was also living here towards the end of that project—and I had this sort of prop with me, the book *The sound of downloading makes me want to upload*.²⁹ It is a very poetic... amazing book... a tangible poetic encounter with network culture and what that means for all of us; some of it is really cynical, some silly, some more positive and futuristic. For me it was this tangible thing, a way of thinking about the web that I wanted to explore. So I started to give the book to people. I would just carry it with me, and when going to talks and shows in New York I would give the book to the right people I would meet and to artists who I had selected for the exhibition, asking them to react to it. It was a sort of loose premise: the exhibition was not about the book but in some way the book was a way of getting all our heads in the same space. Everyone I gave the book to, who also ended up being a participant in the show, was really moved by it in the same way I was – we were not reading it linearly because it was almost like being on the web, flipping through pages and sections. So the book was an initiator for the exhibition in a lot of ways.

M.G.: Can you tell me more about the exhibition? You described *>get >put* as “an exhibition download”, “an installation of digital compositions produced by the artists in tandem with their physical pieces for the exhibition” (Nichole, 2012). Can you describe the specificities of the project, structurally in terms of the platform— you appropriated an already existing curatorial platform online, *The Download*³⁰—and conceptually in terms of its mission? I am interested in the online element of the show and the role *The Download* had in the organisation of the show.

K.N.: *The Download* portion of the exhibition became a really crucial part of the show but it wasn't initially part of the conceit,³¹ it was something that happened along the journey in the course of the year. We did have a website (which is still online) but it was a sort of placeholder of the exhibition. When this online component became part of the project, the exhibition just made more sense. Zoe Salditch, the woman that started *The Download* on Rhizome, and myself met in New York City. I gave her the book, in a beer garden in Queens, the first time we ever met. I was halfway through organising the exhibition, Zoe loved the book and we started a dialogue and realised we had a lot of overlaps in interests. We started talking about how *The Download* could become part of the exhibition, how the exhibition could have a component that would be suitable for it and so we came up with this idea of producing a sort of package of

²⁹ AAVV, 2010. *Sound of Downloading Makes Me Want to Upload*. Paris: The Institute of Social Hypocrisy.

³⁰ *The Download* is a program through which Rhizome shares one work per month for free downloads. “Part curatorial platform, part incentive to budding digital art collectors, the Download highlights new works and encourages display at home-on any screen, computer, or suitable device”. (Salditch, 2011)

³¹ See <http://rhizome.org/the-download/2012/nov/>

multiple artworks instead of just a single contained artworks. Also the artists I was working with, as they started to produce works for the show, were all working with digital artefacts. And this took a ton different forms: one artist had a piece of code sample, another a series of JPEGs, a video fragment, 3D models. Everyone was working in such a way. I think it was because it was part of the premise of the exhibition and because the reason I selected the artists was because they worked digitally first and at the same time were interested in coming together to produce a gallery show. It made sense then to think about those artefacts, those works, in relation to what was being produced for the physical gallery show...

M.G.: To clarify, when you commissioned the artists did you ask them to make a digital work to be shown in the gallery space?

K.N.: No, I asked for a physical work...

M.G.: So the commissions were for the gallery space at little berlin?

K.N.: I wanted to commission the artists to make a physical work but, for the way their practices are, they started to work digitally. It is the same with the TRANSFER artists I am working with right now, for example. They all want to make a physical work, they want to address space, but they work naturally in digital... this became more concrete with me when organising *>get >put*, and I thought this [characteristic of the artistic process] should be on view and exposed somehow. When I met with Zoe and discussed this, it became evident that we would take these artefacts and challenge the artists to think about them also as digital versions of their piece, something that was referencing their physical pieces. So the exhibition download was largely composed of these artefacts, with some differences, for example, an artist would take this a little bit further than others and produce a piece. For example Alexandra Gorczynski created two new videos, which was almost her responding, retrospectively, to the physical pieces into the digital space, her projecting back into the digital space. For the exhibition download, we created just a very simple HTML page and installed all the different artefacts in the HTML. And that was the package.

M.G.: What did Gorczynski make for the gallery space?

K.N.: She made two works, two large pieces which are digital prints. They are really beautiful, two painterly digital prints mounted on board with cut outs at various places and a digital screen embedded in each of them, a photo frame—now, for her work with TRANSFER, we use tablets instead. The photo frames show a video which interacts seamlessly with the edge of the print. She made new pieces for the download show: a sculptural video piece called *tidal wave* and a blurb piece which was then remade for the Phillips Digital Art Auction, *Paddle ON!*, which was way over what we expected then. So the work that showed in Philadelphia a couple of years ago has a lot of history!

M.G.: To wrap up the curatorial process, you worked with six artists, all of them usually working digitally or online, and you commissioned them to create a work for the gallery space and the download platform. Was it all commissioned at the same time?

K.N.: The gallery show came first, then I met Zoe about six months into organising the project, so we had another six months to work on *The Download*. At that time, the digital artefact had

already started to come together. The idea to take the digital work as an accompaniment to the gallery space and install, to package and distribute it, kind of grew out of the physical show. You were also asking if it was on a website at all?

M.G.: Yes...

K.N.: We just randomly put up the website because we thought that to distribute the package through *Rhizome* was a better node. But there is no reason why it could have not been on the web... it just made more sense to put it out through the Rhizome channel, they had more audience.

M.G.: What was your interest in Rhizome, just the fact that they had more audience? Or also the opportunity to create a system of having downloadable artworks in relation to the themes the project explored?

K.N.: Their platform was ideologically aligned with what we were doing with the exhibition so it made a lot of sense for us to work with it.

M.G.: You use very interesting terminology... what do you mean by 'digital compositions', which is a definition you use in the introductory text of *>get >put* on *The Download*? And how about 'artefacts' which you have used throughout our conversation in relation to the gallery show?

K.N.: I use 'artefacts' because the artworks in the exhibition feel like the primary, the work. And I feel that the 'compositions' were a representation of the work. In the case of Gorczynski, the compositions were in response to, or referenced, the work in the gallery. Some of the compositions felt like they were necessary components of the piece, depending on what the piece was about and the artist's intent there. I guess I used the word 'digital compositions' because it seems a little bit looser. Composition means some sort of intent in putting it together, but it does not necessarily mean it is the artwork. It is largely depended on the physical piece.

M.G.: So as you mentioned before, you see them more like an accompaniment of the gallery pieces?

K.N.: Yeah...

M.G.: When I prepared the questions for you I thought this project started online, but it did start offline in the gallery space. So more generally, could you tell me more about your curatorial role, how the gallery exhibition was organised and the way you reflected on the relationship between the online context (the way the artists practices operated online) and the physical space, in terms of the works of the artists included and the audience engagement, for example, the mode in which the artworks would be experienced? And also, how did your role change from working in the space to working on the Rhizome platform?

K.N.: I mentioned that the artworks started to come together in digital form during the email exchange with the artists. From there, I started to think of them in relation to the physical show, such as understanding the size and the scope and to think about the layout of the show. It was really awesome for me to be part of little berlin, I feel that it was a sort of crash course because *>get >put* was only my second exhibition. But I have to say that in between my first and second show I was part of the process of eleven other exhibitions, because we did a show with a different curator every month. Each curator would have a different level of experience and work

with different media. This was a chance for me to see how two pieces are put in relation to each other, what that means, what the flow of the space is, and I got this just watching people at the exhibitions, where they would stand to view, where the traffic would flow, where the beer was... the whole social thing, the sociable space. I had a lot of time in the space. Also some of the artists were local and that was great because they were able to come to the space and think about it with me. So the decision to put works in certain places was all about the flow, and the relationships between them. There is one piece that illustrates the process really well. It is the piece by Giselle Zatonyl, who has also curated many shows and thus has a lot of background references. Her piece, titled *The Internet* (2012), was this kind of ready-made sculptural piece. She drafted the sculpture in a 3D space; she had a 3D model of it, so that it was this sort of idealised perfect digital sculpture. But when she started to make it as ready made in the real world, in the gallery, she made this horrible messy construction, it was rusty in some places after she tried to have water running through it—as happened in the idealised piece. So she started to make a video from the digital model, which you can see it in *The Download*. When we had the sculpture together on a pedestal in the space it was hideous and beautiful at the same time, and it was leaking! We started to think how the idealised version of it could be used to address the differences between the digital and the physical space, like uploading a vision into digital space and then downloading a messy physical contraction. So we worked through how it could take shape in the physical space, to then think about that digital piece that was so much part of it. And we decided to build a screen, a little screen that was hanging horizontally above the sculptural piece, where you could see the idealised version. This created a sort of back and forth between the two [the physical and the digital]. We did it for the other ones too but this is the one that best represents the process. A. Bill Miller did his first vinyl piece for *>get >put*. He is another artist who does these hasty digital compositions that get animated, and now, for the show, he had a giant wall and decided to use cutouts. Getting back to the digital space: so we had these artefacts now, and we had to install them/upload them to make them browsable and viewable. My partner and I worked on a simple HTML framework where you flip between the works. We didn't want it to be overly ornate or anything that feels too much like an online space with an intention. We wanted it to be just a series of flipping-through artefacts. The works ranged from videos to static JPEGs and for us the right way to view them was to keep the framework very basic. But this is somehow funny because this is what lives well beyond the exhibition, which was so confined, to space.

M.G.: I think that this package actually functions as an exhibition. It is an exhibition in the way it is layered out, with an intro, a list of the artists, arrows that leads you to view the single artworks, is there a difference for you between this HTML show and a web-based show?

K.N.: No, I don't think so. This is probably the closest I got to curate an online exhibition. Most of my efforts are on the other side of the screen, in the physical space. There are people who do online exhibitions incredibly well and they are the experts in that space. But I am sort of the one that holds their hands and help them to come to the other side of the screen.

M.G.: I like this definition...

K.N. I have never curated any other online exhibition... actually my artists at TRANSFER curate a lot of online exhibitions, Lorna Mills and Anthony Antonellis, for example. And I have to tell you that I look at online gallery spaces all the time, I look at more work online than in galleries, which is crazy because I live in NYC and I should be going to see shows all the time.

M.G.: Do you? Because last week, during another interview with Robert Sakrowski of curatingYouTube, we came to the conclusions that there are few people looking at shows online, spending enough time browsing them.....

K.N.: I do it all the time... that's how I find my artists; I see them online first, always.

M.G.: When you created the HTML framework for *The Download*, did you work closely with the artists to think about how the work would translate from the physical exhibition space to *The Download* package?

K.N.: Yeah, it was an all other task. As soon as they started to work on their physical pieces, I was already asking them to do a digital piece as well!

M.G.: How did you feel about working on this double bill?

K.N.: I was working with them to think what would be the right representation for that. As far as the framework that is what I do professionally with my partner and for my job on user experience online. It's crazy we don't do it more building galleries online...

M.G.: Why not... actually?

K.N.: I think we like to apply our knowledge to think of how people would experience that in physical space. For *The Download* we tried to make it simple and let the works shine because each piece is very unique.

M.G.: Yes, the artworks have lot of space because of the simplicity of the HTML framework. I think it does not happen very often, rather it seems to be about the exhibition most of the time, what do you think?

K.N.: Yes. Do you know about *The Wrong*, the New Digital Art Biennale? Whenever I think about this, I think about Giselle's work, which about this connectivity in a 3D environment, she is very good at thinking of digital representations of browsing.

M.G.: In what way did you conceive the process of migration between online and offline, the latter intended both as a gallery space but also as a computer download? Did you have any feedback from your audience in terms of the way you brought the two displays together? Did you actually promote them together, or did you promote the download component in the gallery space and vice versa? I think I am hinting at how you created your curatorial narrative across the two spaces...

K.N.: It got really deep with this project and I think it is what propelled us to start TRANSFER by playing a couple of different roles. *The Download* came out just two days before the show; we wanted to tease people, they saw the digital compositions and then they were invited to see the gallery show. But because we were in Philadelphia many people did not go through this flow. What happened in reality is that people would hear about *The Download* after having seen the show, and that was really the access point into the works, into the artistic ideas. But then there is also another layer, which I think is not just through those two components. What happened

with the show is that people came to me and said how it was important for them to be here in the space with me, and see people in relation to their work and how that changes their way to see their work. That conversation started with the show and then we organised an event, which was called *INTERNET AB/USERS ANONYMOUS*. I brought together people in the physical space but also initiated a dialogue that was live-streamed, one of the participants, Nicholas O'Brien, was streamed into the gallery...

M.G.: Was he giving a talk?

K.N.: Yes, there was a round-table discussion. It was a sort of closing reception, Hans Bernhard from Ubermorgen came, and the conversation was very casual, because I like to connect the audience online with the space. At TRANSFER we do it a lot: we just turn on a computer during the opening and people just wave at it, or talk etc. It is about opening up that [online] space and layering it with the physical space. This is not just about the download component; it is the context of the work of which the download is part too anyway. This is the living and breathing part of the web and not just an artefact. That event really solidified the richness of those two spaces and the way they are in conversation, and in conflict, with each other. That was a very important component. There is a component in which you can install work online and there is also a component through which you can engage an entire community network, of people online, with the existing one [in the space].

M.G.: What is the relationship between online and offline, not just in terms of display but audience engagement then? It seems for me that for you it is really about the flow, the way in which they complement each other, the live broadcast with the online audience in the gallery space for example. Could you describe this relationship better, these points of contact? Do you consider them as separated, so that you need to find a way of connecting them?

K.N.: I used to use IRL and I have definitely moved to AFK [Away From Keyboard] because it is absolutely one space. There are different forms, factors, concerns and ways of engagement, but they are one space. In fact you know that everyone who is trying to do anything that engages net art without addressing the digital space is just missing the point. It just came naturally that they are two spaces. But there is definitely a friction here because they are removed from each other: the digital space is mediated, this is the new way that my partner and I have been talking about this—I have just written a statement about it on the TRANSFER website. One of the things we are thinking about right now is the difference between rigid and mediated works, or ways of seeing, communicating. Rigid is like when Giselle's works come to life and mediated is a beautiful, idealised work that needs a screen, it needs mediation, a way to be seen. And so it is for the digital space, even though it is one and the same—it needs mediation. The ways it happens at TRANSFER is to put the laptop on a pedestal to live stream of course, but it is mainly through the mediated devices everyone has in their pockets—their tweeting and taking pictures—that they are connected to the digital space. They are connected through this distributed mediation, and this activity is very powerful. It means a lot to me after the show to see people who have engaged with it and give it back to the network. I love watching the live stream, it all happens at the same time, in the same space. That is obviously

still evolving.

M.G.: You said that for *>get >put* you were working artists whose main activity is online but were very happy to have the opportunity to work in a gallery space. That was in 2012 and things move fast in this field of work, so my question is: do you think it is still important to give artists, artists working online, the possibly to show in gallery spaces? I mean, do you still believe there are not enough opportunities of this kind for them... it seems that many galleries are now interested in showing web-based work?

K.N.: We think it is hugely important: the walls are the reason we exist. We don't run online exhibitions, I chose to focus on the wall because there is something empowering when you give someone the walls, you give them a reason to address those walls and that is what each exhibition at TRANSFER is about. It is really important for us to not be about: "what we put up is gonna sell". First we were about continuing this idea from *>get >put*: we started with a space without knowing what would happen. Then it started to work and people began to collect; all of a sudden people started to come to us and this is why we are now making these considerations. Collaboration with artists is the first thing; what we do is to offer our walls and say "how can these walls activate your practice?", "what is it that would be interesting for you do to with these walls?" For example Anthony Antonellis built his own walls: he could not even use ours, he had to put his walls in there to hang his paintings. It is really important to have a space. When we started we realised that many of the opportunities artists had where within large group shows, this is was what 319 Scholes did along with other places. This is awesome, because being in dialogue with other works and having that conversation is super important. However, even an opportunity to just come into a space, think about it, and confront the audience in a physical way is very important for an artist. That is what we started to do and people love it. We work with emerging artists who have never had a gallery show, but we also work with artists who have been working for thirty years and only now are bringing this new element of their practice into the physical space. Doing totally different things is a fun mission and I think it is an important time to do this, and we spend all of our money on it... [laughter].

M.G.: With this you just answered to my next question, which was about what brought you to work cross-formats and bridging online and offline modes of display and distribution...

K.N.: Yes, we did with the rigid and mediated.

M.G.: You said that you never curated online shows...

K.N.: ...Yeah...

M.G.: ...because my next question was supposed to be: what is best practice in terms of curating online? And what role has curating offline within it?

K.N.: I can tell you what to look at online! For galleries online, I really like Domain Gallery and fa-g.org. On Google+ there is a really rich GIF community online so I go there to look at GIFs. And... so many more.

M.G.: So what role has curating online within offline practices? I suppose you replied to this when stressing the importance of the walls right?

K.N.: Yeah...

M.G.: Do you want to add anything about this in relation to your work with TRANSFER Gallery?

K.N.: I guess this feeds into your next question, which is about our role as curators/gallerists [“How would you position/define what you do as curator within the ecology of the museum, gallery and festival system of display and distribution of contemporary art? Do you think you have explored different models of practice also in an economic and political sense?”]. So what's up with being a gallerist? This is what our new role has become and I mentioned earlier how our professional practice brings lot of skills to the table: we communicate really well online, for example, so we can support practice that way, but also we are business people, we are professionals, and are able to navigate economies and institutions in the art world in a way that is proving to be very valuable for both us and the artists. We have gone to a number of art fairs and we are actively pushing the bounds of what that means. For example: how do you take a GIF at an art fair? We did it; we put them on tablets! We have been doing lot of work to present things into the market and for the vernacular they are used to: we have been doing certificates, owner's rights and obligations, we have been putting together inventories and describing the works in new and different ways. We have done a couple of funny things in the way we are offering work too; we have one coming up that is really exciting for Clement Valla's solo show,³² who used to be an archaeologist and has this practice in digital archaeology. Valla's pieces are prints, they are ostensibly prints, but they are not sold as such with a signature at the back; they are sold as digital files, as a high-resolution TIFF. The print is just a mediation of the art object which is the digital file. The collector is given the digital file, he is also given the print, but he can burn it, tear it up, and re-print it if he wants to. So we, as gallerists, provide parameters on how to produce the printed version and the print to the collector. It is with different things like this that we play with. We have done this another time with LaTurbo Avedon, and then with Lorna Mills, with whom we created a unique GIF installation, an installation composed by seven GIFs on digital photo frames. So again, the GIF, the digital file, is the art object but it is installed in a frame, is framed on a tablet, and thus is a mediation; the package for the collector. And this is about accessibility, it has nothing to do with the work: for Lorna the online space is the native space and GIFs float there, on the web, which is where they are supposed to be seen. Thinking about how to frame them, how to produce and prepare them to first be encountered by a viewer in physical space and second be collected and potentially displayed in someone's home or travel to a museum is a way to package and format them. We do lot of work in this area. As I said before, the gallery shows are not about “how are we gonna sell this thing?” rather, “how are we gonna create the encounter with the work in the physical space?”

So as far as economic, which is another part of your question; we have also just launched our store...

M.G.: ...online?

K.N.: Yes. The point of the store is very specific; it includes works that are under a thousand dollars. So this is not representative of a full inventory— we have a traditional inventory that is

³² *Surface Survey*, solo exhibition, 19 April-10 May 2014.

available to collectors for acquisitions and is not public—because the items are higher editions, have a lower price point, and are meant to reach an international audience of supporters and maybe even young collectors. We have many collectors who sustain us, who give us the strength to pursue the market and collect for a thousand dollars to support emerging artists. These collectors want to get in early but they also want something that is accessible to them because they are not big dollar collectors. So this is a little experiment into a new economy. We have also done other work, one of which is sort of outside the economy and along the same line of thinking of how we push digital work and we prepare it for that encounter. For the Rick Silva show we wanted to show its *enpleinair* series,³³ which is really beautiful. When we started to talk to him for the show, we made a giant JPEG print which was fifty inches and we put it on the wall. But it did not feel right, it did not feel it was getting to the point of how this work was thriving as a series and the viewership going continuously on Tumblr where one can scroll through it, which is a very web, serial way of viewing. Instead we decided to make large stacks of prints—Rick decided on the scale which is still crazy for me!—of posters which people could take away by pulling them out from the stack in a way that it was referencing the serial viewership of the web, the online space of Tumblr which the work needed. The prints were 24x46 inches posters in a stack of one thousand prints. It was very physical and... we still have them in store!

M.G.: You sold them as stacks?

K.N.: No, there was nothing for sale in that show. They were free to be taken away, they were there for the masses as the web series is.

M.G.: So this was just a mode of showing the work offline, a strategy then?

K.N.: Yes, but as the collection object we offered a unique print of each of the pieces. So the idea was that if the collector bought one he would actually fund the distribution of a thousand versions of the same images through the gallery exhibition... no one has bought it yet though!

M.G.: This is a very interesting process, since I am looking at how people work online and how works migrate from there into the physical space. What you are doing as a gallerist is to find a way of packaging them. But it seems you really work closely with the artists to think about the workings of the platform they use for their work online, like Tumblr in the case of Rick Silva, to then work out how to translate that for a gallery space and a form in which it could be collected. Do you have another example you can give me?

K.N.: It's every show! [laughter] One important sub-point there—which I think is what makes us unique—is that we see them as two packages. In other words, there is a way of putting the work into the space that both activates the artists practice and puts the artwork in confrontation with the viewer in an interesting and unique way, a way that is different from the way we need to package it for collectors, who have different needs and concerns. So we do see that as an exercise of moving in between, from practices online in the digital space to the physical space, and this is about you as an artist, your practice, your work and how it encounters the viewer.

³³ See <http://enpleinair.org/>.

Then if the artist is interested, if their work is suitable for it, we package it for the market and we start doing market-oriented things with it. When you go to the market you have to make compromises and this is something that not many artists want to do, for example, and is also not right for everyone. Another great example is our work with Daniel Temkin,³⁴ a nerdy artist-programmer whose work is super conceptual. When we were doing a studio visit with him we were interested in a specific project of his that uses an esoteric coding language, and we were thinking how we could bring it to the gallery. He needed more time than the timescale we were looking at for the show and, at the same time, he had a residency where he produced these beautiful prints from a series he was doing called *Glitchometry*, which starts off as hacking a sound editing software to force visual outputs from it, including colours. So the work has visual properties, the properties of the shape of sound, the waves and frequencies. It's a collaborative work Temkin makes with the machine, but the outcome is so beautiful, so painterly, that is very art world acceptable— this is the only show where we had collectors pointing at works and saying “I want that one”. It was the first time we were hanging frames on the wall, well, they were light-boxes, so not really that traditional, like framed objects. We are also going to do another show with him and Bill Miller that is going to be totally conceptual and you will not be able to collect anything from the show itself, but at the same time the artist is asking us if we can take some of his work to an art fair—Temkin knows that with his work he hits something that is potentially market-ready. So we are going to take some of his light-boxes to the Pulse in New York during the Frieze week in May this year. This is to say that although we are all oriented to this mission of exploring the works, and we are all open to the web, to distribution, and we don't want to adopt a conventional model, when there is an output that seems right and ready then we are going pursue it, we put together a catalogue and go for an art fair.

M.G.: So essentially you work like a project space and then you also combine a strategy for sales, such as packaging artworks for collectors...

K.N.: ...and then we also have the third layer now, which is the store that is about mass distribution and larger reach, and this is what we bring from our professional experience: trying to understand the audience and their need to then shape experiences around them...

M.G.: Thank you very much!

A.2.5. Interview about *Accidentally on Purpose / Accidental Purpose*

Interview with Candice Jacobs, co-curator of *Accidentally on Purpose / Accidental Purpose*
Jacobs, C., 2013. *Interview about Accidentally on Purpose / Accidental Purpose*. Interviewed by Marialaura Ghidini [transcript of Skype conversation] June 14, 2014, 5pm GMT, London. (see also 3.6)

³⁴ *Glitchometry*, solo exhibition, 16 November- 14 December 2013.

M.G.: On a general note to start off the conversation, what brought you to curate exhibitions online?

C.J.: As an artist, everything that I curate, everything that I have been involved in in terms of exhibition-making, is another element of my practice, a tool for me to explore the wider concerns that I am interested in. In my practice I am particularly interested in the meaninglessness of aspiration within cognitive capitalism, specifically looking at ideas of collectivity within that. I am thinking of collectivity in terms of advertising and marketing strategies and how they can create a mass audience and an interest in particular things, such as the television, and how certain soap operas or sit-coms have this kind of cult following or a structure in place that creates a cohort, a group of people that are engaged in similar conversations, and supporting one another. I think the internet is another place where this kind of collective body, this collective voice, can be found. I am also looking at how governmental and political strategies integrate within these systems in order to create a sense of control or as way of utilising power, networks of power, in order to control society in certain ways. For example, [using them] to influence the kind of need of the consumer—whether that is a consumer of capitalism in the information economy or in the service economy. [I am looking at] the way in which this manipulation is cognitive and there is this kind of subconscious or subtle integration of systems and strategies, and the way that as a consumer you are unaware of engaging with it.

M.G.: So have you found that sometimes your curating online has explored some of these issues in relation to the platform you are adopting?

C.J.: I see the Internet as this space that creates this collective voice. But also a lot of my interest lies in how that voice is shaped through the workplace, the space between work and leisure. So the Internet for me is a place that merges work and leisure, seamlessly as well as being the system that is very influential over our habitual patterns and repetitious behaviours. As someone that has curated lots of exhibitions over the years—since 2005 I was involved in running galleries and making exhibitions—it felt like a natural progression for me to move into the online space as a way of creating a curatorial strategy that would allow me to collaborate with artists, many of whom I would have not worked with before and many of whom would have not worked online before. There are a couple of things that I use to explore my interests further, I guess my own strategies, and that is looking at repetition and patters which are formed through our behaviours and the platforms like advertising things on television and what not. The other is looking at electronic music and how repetition is brought into that to create a pattern that would manipulate the mood and take the collective consumer on this journey.

M.G.: Was the fact that you started to curate exhibitions related to this idea of exploring collaboration, collaborative labour...

C.J.: Yeah, collaboration and collective action. So I created these curatorial strategies for *Sleeping Upright*,³⁵ starting just from the name of the project. *Sleeping Upright* alluding to this numbness that comes through integrating with the Internet and with the political strategies that are implied within it, the controlling of behaviour through these platforms, also looking at repetition, boredom, futility. We approached artists that I have an affiliation with in terms of their practice and gave them this curatorial remit to respond to. Each online exhibition would be given an exhibition title that would also link back to the workplace in some way. I was thinking of people using their computers on a daily basis in various different guises. At the workplace you are engaging in a relationship between the employee and the screen, you have to utilise this relationship in order to be productive for their employer, but also sometime you would try to escape that reality through [the same relationship by] looking at Facebook, or the newspaper website. So the being able to remove yourself from your work environment, and to put yourself into a collective social environment, this is something that it would have to happen discreetly at work and quickly. You brought up in some of the questions that you sent earlier this idea of interruption. I was thinking about how artists can use the Internet in terms of infiltrating this routine that lot of people have and just interrupt it, and maybe just become like... you know when you are watching something on TV and it is broken up with advertising breaks, and it is frustrating, it is annoying, there is a sense of disruption there. I wanted to harness these feelings, these ideas, within the online project *Sleeping Upright*. This project was a response to the *Accidental Purpose* project that came just before.

M.G.: I see...

C.J.: The *Accidental Purpose* website was a collaborative project that was curated between myself and artist Fay Nicholson, who had also curated online exhibitions such as the project *Re-Run*. She was already engaging in this dialogue of how the internet has shifted and how curators can utilise this new space for displaying work and bringing it out of the gallery space and into people's regular day-to-day lives.

M.G.: As a bit of a going back to the start: when you conceived the project *Accidental Purpose*, did you start from the website, like the website was the starting point that then brought to the gallery exhibition, *Accidentally on Purpose*, at Derby QUAD?

C.J.: *Accidentally on Purpose* was a gallery exhibition that we were invited to curate for QUAD and they wanted us to look at a specific theme, which they change quarterly, which was failure. We wanted it to reflect our own work and artistic research, so we were looking at repetition processes as a way for alleviating success and failure. We were also looking at authorship and looking at the framework that we use to judge success and failure, and to create value or meaning. We were curating an exhibition for a gallery space but we also wanted to combine that with various other platforms that we had used in the past as artists and curators. One of them was that of creating a series of soundtracks for the viewer to try to interrupt the navigation or

³⁵ *Sleeping Upright* is an online project designed to interrupt and punctuate the somewhat personal space between you and your computer. See <http://www.sleepingupright.com/>

they understanding of the exhibition and trying to distract them from a preconceived set of rules that you are meant to have heard of when you are going to look at the exhibition.

M.G.: Did you have audio guides?

C.J.: No, it was more musical, like soundtracks that were put together by four artists in the show [Karen Cunningham, Jonathan Monk, Ryszard Wasko and Rose O’Gallivan].

M.G.: How would you listen to them then?

C.J.: With headphones.

M.G.: And then you could choose the one you wanted to listen to...

C.J.: ...yes, and then you would look at the exhibition with the selected soundtrack. And again it is this idea of distraction that we were kind of playing with the online project as well. This idea of interrupting some kind of routine is present in the *Sleeping Upright* project. The online project was a way for us to work with a large number of artists that we were interesting, but also to try to challenge what it means to curate, and what value the curator has within the gallery or the institution. We were passing on the responsibility of curating an exhibition to the audience with the online project because every time you visited the site you would get a different collection of works. Sometimes you would get a lot of works and sometime you would get very few on the screen. We were inviting the viewer or the consumer of the project to move things around the screen and to curate their own exhibition...

M.G.: Was that formally and/or conceptually related to any sort of Tumblr aesthetics/discourses?

C.J.: Not at all really. We did use Tumblr to practically integrate things into the site but we were more interested in looking at the role of authority and the control we could have over creating an exhibition as curators; what would happen if that control or power shifted to the audience?

M.G.: So you created an algorithm to create randomness?

C.J.: I guess this idea of randomness was also related to that of chance encounter with something that you might have online, in this kind of daily routine that you might have with your computer.

M.G.: Can we talk about your curatorial role in terms of production? Did you commission new work for the gallery exhibition, for example?

C.J.: Yes. Online each artist responded to the context of the exhibition and created something that would sit online but would extend the content of the exhibition out from its physical space. Like with the soundtracks, which was another way of interpreting things, like an oral response. We considered the online space as another sensorial experience of engaging with artists’ practices.

M.G.: Did you commission works for the website or you selected existing one, or is it a mixture of the two? I am asking this because you have worked with a huge number of artists online, one hundred...

C.J.: Most of them were new works...

M.G.: How did you work with the artists? How did you commission them? I am interested in the process of commission, for example: did you give the artists parameters to work with or they

just responded to the theme, for example?

C.J.: We definitely created a framework for them to consider when they would create the work for us. In the letter we used as an invitation, we presented the theme of the exhibition and listed the other artists involved then we went on as follows: “*Accidental Purpose* is an online compendium of over one-hundred writers, artists and curators to respond to the idea touched upon in the gallery exhibition. For *Accidental Purpose* we would like to invite you to submit an image, video, or GIF animation, or a few words that relate to *Accidental Purpose* in terms of our outlined ideas and your association with this title. Responses can be made, found or manipulated. The website itself will explore incidental strategies of display and the coincidental generation of visual and conceptual relationships in the way it presents the responses.” And then we gave them a deadline, they had to submit their work remotely, online, to us through Tumblr. We said: “The images should be no larger than a 1000 pixels, video should be submitted as Quicktime files and less than 10MB, or uploaded via Vimeo or YouTube, text posts of less than a one hundred words, and GIFs smaller than 10MB.”

M.G.: The website was also showed in the gallery. How?

C.J.: It was outside of the gallery space, in the Resource Area. There were two screens, one showed an interview with Fay and me about our curatorial approach, and the other one showed the online project. We wanted the visitors to the exhibition to engage with this project in the building. But I think that what happened is that most people connected with it remotely. So the people in various different cities and in different countries that did not actually come to see the exhibition were engaged with this online project more than the gallery visitors.

M.G.: Have you had any feedback from the gallery visitors in terms of their experience of an exhibition project that was divided in two different components? Do you have any idea of how they were interacting with it?

C.J.: It was quite challenging for audiences that were used to seeing exhibitions in that building. They were challenged by this project that was just not a gallery exhibition, but had lots of other things as well. I think it was very fifty-fifty in the response, with people either loving it or hating it. They did not understand why the exhibition crossed over so many different platforms, they did not necessary understand why it was doing that. But then, on the other hand, people really enjoyed being able to lose the sense of authority that big gallery spaces have over the way the viewer is meant to ‘interpret’ an exhibition. There was a sense of freedom that lot of people felt about it, the rules were broken for once and the viewers were on the same level as the artists, the curators and the gallery. They were able to utilise their own approach and opinions, and there was this hierarchy, or different levels of power, that were broken through, bringing the viewer into the presentation process.

M.G.: Do you think that what you have been doing with *Accidental Purpose* could become a method, a curatorial method of creating multiple narratives, like a strategy that you would like to use again?

C.J.: Yes, for sure. It was hugely successful for both me and Fay in the way that we as artists and not curators were able to engage in the process of exhibition-making. I think this is an

important point, we were the senior curators of an institution, but we were artists.

M.G.: But you did act as curators. I think you have an interesting approach that is very much curatorial. What I mean is that there are a lot of artists organising exhibitions that very often become their own artworks, while I would say that you have a curatorial approach to curating exhibitions.

C.J.: Well, the way I curate things is not to create an artwork but to make an exhibition and to collaborate with other people in that process. Creating curatorial strategies, like the online platform for instance, allows you to collaborate with artists in a way that they would not normally work. There is a dual conversation taking place, rather than being egotistical and it being my idea. It becomes collaborative and a joint exploration of those ideas.

M.G.: No one that was in the gallery show made a work for the website, right?

C.J.: For the website no, for the soundtracks yes.

M.G.: Was there any specific reason you did not ask the artists involved in the exhibition to be involved in the online project?

C.J.: We must have had a conversation about that at some point... Maybe it was just the idea of the exhibition being about 'accidental purpose', the way in which chance encounters create meaning. Maybe if we had put all the focus on the artists which were in the exhibition it would have become too elitist and too much about them. While it was not just about them, they were just an example of people that were exploring this idea. And Fay and I saw so many people that could engage with this way of working that maybe it was important for us to be very democratic. And also, I think, to bring in a big audience, so that lots of people were engaging with the project and were communicating about that project. Maybe it was a kind of marketing strategy for the project as well.

M.G.: Yes, because when you are online and you have one hundred artists from all over the world it means that you get an enormous amount of people looking at the project and then wanting to know more about the gallery one, right? But let me go back to your relationship with the artists that produced a work for the exhibition: you also worked with artists who would not necessarily work online or produce a work for an online context/display. Do you remember specific situations in which you had conversations with the artists about the idea of migrating or translating their practices for the web context, or specifically for you platform?

C.J.: For *Accidental Purpose* no, not so much. Everybody seemed to get it, maybe because there was such a broad range of submissions that we were taking from them, like text, video, images, GIFs...

M.G.: Although it might seem broad, the way of commissioning was quite specific—you provided them with a set of limitations, right?

C.J.: I think that artists respond quite well to having limitations when making new work. With the *Sleeping Upright* project I had more discussions about how I personally see their work translating into the online space, and some artists have struggled to understand the relevance of their work to be placed, displayed online. With the *Accidental Purpose* website, because we were taking still images, as well as videos, and we were not asking people to think about coding

and the interaction with an audience clicking through things, it was a visual presentation rather than a structured journey that takes you through different levels of web content. With *Sleeping Upright* I have adopted a way of working for which the viewers would go to the website and they would not have to do anything, or clicking anything. It would just come up automatically with something that visually would interrupt the day. And I guess that still images don't necessarily work well in this sort of platform...

M.G.: I am browsing the website while we talk...

C.J.: Oh, the *Sleeping Upright* website does not really work...

M.G.: Ah yes, I cannot see the works...

C.J.: ...we need to work on it a bit more...

M.G.: You need some digital preservation action... [laughter]

C.J.: It's quite a concern of mine. But I have not had the time and I am not a web developer. So I do find it challenging to keep on top of that kind of thing.

M.G.: Did you work with a web programmer for *Accidental Purpose*?

C.J.: Yes.

M.G.: And for *Sleeping Upright*?

C.J.: I built that myself. The reason that the artworks aren't live anymore is because my original intention was to curate online group exhibitions that would then become collections of works that would be sold as a collection. However, that has not come into fruition yet because I have not had the time or finances behind me to really concentrate on that. But I thought that if that was going to be something that I really wanted to pursue the artworks should not be online all of the time. Because then there needs to be something unique about that collection to give value for someone who wants to invest in that collection.

M.G.: We are talking about economic value here?

C.J.: Yes. And also, a lot of people have found difficult to understand the value of artworks that exist online in terms of wanting to buy that work or collect it. I think more so now there's an understanding of the value attributed to that type of work, but back then, a couple of years ago, I really struggled to convince people that this type of work was worth investing in.

M.G.: What do you personally think?

C.J.: I think it is a very difficult environment. If an artwork is just online anyway then I can understand why people find difficult to attribute value to that. Like you said earlier, digital preservation, there is a need for someone that wants to care for these works that exist online and maybe is more of... less of a financial investment in terms of being sold on the market and making money from, someone like...

M.G.: ...a conservator?

C.J.: Exactly, someone that understands the value and wants to look after it...

M.G.: Well there are only a few places doing it...

C.J.: The project *Opening Times* that Attilia [Fattori Franchini], Rhys Coren and Dave Hoyland are involved in, I think is looking at that, in terms of conservation and being a charity and attributing value to this way of working, but also supporting collecting.

M.G.: Yes. Let me check where we are at in terms of my questions. What do you think about this idea of migrating artworks, migrating practices, to an online context? Do you think that there is still a need to commission site-specific works for web spaces, especially for artists whose practices would not necessarily engage with the Internet, with an online exhibition space?

C.J.: Yes, I think it is really important. I think it is important to challenge artists in that way as well. It is all too often through the market that artists explore, but then they become stuck in having to produce like they were a factory because there is this expectation to produce to sell. And sometimes it is really nice to be asked to do something that you would not necessarily do, and to think how your practice could integrate within that. So, yeah, I am working on a few projects at the moment with institutions who are suddenly thinking to integrate the online with what they do. I think that if done in a critical way, new commissions of work from artists that normally would not work online can be very interesting, and can allow different audiences to engage in the practice of an artist in a new way. It allows the audience to be surprised.

M.G.: Being surprised is an interesting concept. Related again to what you were saying before about the exhibition at QUAD, and the fact that the audience would not feel comfortable viewing artworks online, I think it is still quite widespread and people can be easily surprised. Even though we spend most of our time online, when it comes down to engaging with an artwork or even an exhibition online, it is still problematic for the viewer.

C.J.: I think this is related to certain kind of online practices that look at coding, the whole net-dot-art scene, and needing to be this geeky elite that understand what the Internet really is. I think more and more people are using things like Tumblr to curate and understanding their own position in the world around them...

[detour about Tumblr and Pinterest]

C.J.: You would have thought because of that connection that people have with representing themselves, their needs and their wants online, that they could connect with online projects much easier. What I am interested in in terms of an artwork existing online it is the value and the meaning that it has for a mass audience that might not see the distinction from an artists' work and the Google image.

M.G.: Perhaps is also because of a lack in experimentation in the form of curatorial frameworks and providing new opportunities through implementing strategies...

C.J.: F.A.T. Lab made a sort of activist project, for which animated characters would take over your screen when you were working online. And they would appear and hold banners hijacking your screen. The *Field Broadcast* project—you have download a piece of software first—created a screen that pops up over your existing screen. And I think those ways of hijacking your daily routing between you and your screen through the Internet and during the internet journey you take every day can be a way of allowing [the understanding of] this separation between the mass images and artist's work.

M.G.: I love that project. You think it is a moment where audience needs to be educated, and curators too, I don't mean educated in a literal and patronising way, more in the sense of familiarity?

C.J.: I think we need technologists to help us to do that. This is why I enjoy working with Near Now; I enjoy working with people that have skills in the area of technology that we can never know because we have 10-15 years' worth of experience in working in the art world. But those people have the same amount of time in working developing these technologies. We can push maybe those people to do things in a new way because we have the ideas. I think the Rhizome "Seven on Seven" conference is another way of pairing artists with technologists, and the amazing things that they come up with just after one day of working with one another is great.

M.G.: I think it was more common in the nineties... What is best practice in terms of curating online? And what role has curating offline within it? Maybe we have already touched upon this but I am interested in knowing what you think it is important to do when curating online.

C.J.: Well, I think it goes with any curatorial projects. The best curatorial projects are the ones that understand how an artist's practice works and how the content and the context of the approach of the artist and the curator come together. I personally don't really like curating shows where you pick existing works and you hang them in the gallery, that is what a museum does, what a big institution can do. Some of the curatorial projects that I really enjoy have a framework that allows artists to work within. Like Eastside Projects in Birmingham, that has this curatorial framework that is continually added to and so artworks exist in the gallery space after those exhibitions are finished becoming permanent fixtures in the gallery. I think for curating online, the idea of preservation again is something to think about, and maybe the idea of the curating online in the future is a better way of talking about it now: thinking about preservation, thinking about pairing up artists with technologists and maybe thinking about a longer duration, maybe a residency that exists online with the technologists, so that it can be mentorship and push the development of the work. [...] I think the way that the *Sleeping Upright* project will be developed, and has been developed, is using this idea of hijacking existing institutions' websites and becoming the homepage of those website, like [we did] for the Nottingham Contemporary project, When you logged in online, in the building, instead of getting their website you would get the *Sleeping Upright* project. For the PAMI festival in London last year, when you visited the PAMI website the *Sleeping Upright* project was the first thing you saw and then you clicked through. And I like this idea of it being instantaneous and coming without the audience having to find it, it just appears. It is slightly confusing, it is slightly disorientating.

M.G.: Have you ever thought of making *Sleeping Upright* more like an organisation?

C.J.: Yes, it needs a lot of work. It could be a charity as well. I like the idea of curating a collection online. It is a bit like what you do with *or-bits* as well: group exhibitions that sit as a collection of works that respond to a curatorial idea that you have established. And I think there should be more work done to put online work into collections.

M.G.: Lastly, how would you position/define what you do within the ecology of the museum, gallery and festival system of the display and distribution of contemporary art?

C.J.: In terms of its position, or defining what it is, it is just a new venue. It is another environment. It is not a brand new exhibition building like Wakefield or Nottingham Contemporary. It does not have thirty million pounds' worth of money to create this white

cathedral for elevating artists' practices. It is an existing system, it is an existing media system like the television, the newspapers, the magazines that we read every day. It is just a space to display.

M.G.: Thanks. That's a great reply!

A.2.6. Interview about Xcult: *Beam Me Up*

Interview with Reinhard Storz, founder of *Beam Me Up*, and Sarah Cook (A.2.6a) and Gitanjali Dang (A.2.6.b), guest curators of *Beam Me Up*.

Storz, R., 2013. *Interview about Xcult and Beam Me Up*. Interviewed by Marialaura Ghidini [email conversation] May 10, 2014. (see also 3.6)

M.G.: In the online discussion we had on the CRUMB list (see A.3.4), you said that your curatorial practice online is a sort of extension of your work in publishing, specifically a magazine you produced in the eighties. You also mentioned that as soon as you “became familiar with the WWW as a publishing medium in 1995 and began working on it as a curator/editor” you were “immediately won over by its advantages” such as the economic independence coming with it and the intermedia aspects of the web medium. Can you tell me what the reasons behind starting Xcult were and how you locate it within the fast-growing field of curating exhibitions online?

R.S.: Right from the start, there was contact with the New York network The Thing and its offshoots in Vienna and Amsterdam. I was involved in developing the Swiss hub, *The Swiss Thing* in 1995; we were still working with Bulletin Board System (BBS) software, followed by WWW from 1996. In 1997, I moved and edited the web content of *thing.ch* for the location Xcult. This was also a time when we were doing activities in Basel, where we organized lectures and workshops on digital culture and artistic networking, in which artists and musicians got involved. A section of the website was also dedicated to art and publishing critical theory. At its inception, Xcult was intended to function as a common platform for the close-knit Swiss art community to share their networked projects and writing. However, from 2000, the participation became increasingly international. We modelled our approach, which was based on linking art practice and theory/writing, on that of other websites such as the *thing.net* and *thing.at*, and other online exhibitions such as *äda'web*, *art.teleportacia.org*, *Turbulence* and the web projects of *Documenta X* (1997)³⁶. At the time, I was astonished by the lack of websites adopting a concept similar to our own, which was that of establishing a common curated address for interesting online art projects and writing in European countries. Oliver Laric's timeline maps some online projects from that period.³⁷

³⁶ In the research project, *Owning Online Art* (2010), Storz prepared a source of key exhibitions online organised by museums and galleries. See <http://www.oart.ch/publikation/02.php?m=1&m2=1&lang=e&dirid=81>

³⁷ See <http://archive.rhizome.org/artbase/56398/timeline.html>

M.G.: Can you tell me more about your project *Beam Me Up*? For example, how does it fit with the overall activity of Xcult? What are its specificities, conceptually in terms of its mission and structurally in terms of the platform—which, for example, has its own website? How was the project organised?

R.S.: Since 1998, we have developed four thematic online art projects featuring contributions from international artists and authors, and a fifth one, titled *Digital Abstractions*, is in the pipeline. They all are sub-projects of Xcult and have their unique web address (URL). As we did for earlier projects, we fundraised to pay production fees to artists and royalties to authors (75,000 Swiss francs). In the projects preceding *Beam Me Up*, the artists often got involved in conceiving the Index pages, which often would resemble artworks. For *Beam Me Up* instead we decided to use the structure and aesthetics of the database, so that the contributors would have direct access to it and publish their own content. This structure also facilitated ‘comments’ by the users. *The Beam Me Up* interface includes a list of forty pieces of writing, artworks and essays [and Guided Tours], which can be selected individually and found according search criteria in the form of categories.

M.G.: *Beam Me Up* was made of a combination of artists’ and curators’ contributions. How did it operate exactly, how did you work with the six guest curators? What did you commission them to do and what are the curators’ Guided Tours?

R.S.: *Beam Me Up* includes thirty-two commissioned artworks/text pieces. There are sixteen artworks, along with written contributions from scientists and other authors, amongst whom there are two astronomers, two anthropologists, one opera director, two literary figures and many culture and media professionals. If for earlier projects I invited artists and authors on the basis of my own research, for *Beam Me Up* I worked with guest curators. They helped with shaping the project, and responded to it by proposing their own theme and a selection of three artists and authors with whom they worked directly—an invitation letter to guest curator Sarah Cook is included as example. The guest curators included Annette Schindler (CH), Stefan Riekeles (GE), Sarah Cook (CA/GB), Gitanjali Dang (IN) and Lansheng Zhang (CN). The possibility to work with curators from India and China was due to the fact that for earlier projects I worked with artists from Asia and thanks to funding from the Swiss cultural foundation, Pro Helvetia. Since not all the guest curators invited six contributors each, I ended up working with eleven contributors myself. I communicated with the curators via email and phone, Gitanjali Dang visited me in Basel and I met Lansheng Zhang in Shanghai. The concept of Guided Tours was originally based on the idea that each guest curator would compile a selection of contributions from *Beam Me Up* into a tour in the form of a list, which would include both already-existing and personally-curated content. The outcome would have been six Guided Tours with commentaries, which would have provided a different perspective on the project and its overall theme. The idea is that because of knowing that the list of contributions for the overall project was long, I thought it would have been a good idea to offer shorter ‘tours’ of the project. Eventually, only Gitanjali Dang and Sarah Cook did it, and I also compiled two Guided Tours for lectures in Switzerland and China, which proved to be a well-suited format for the public

presentation of the project. The database structure of *Beam Me Up* helped with the act of selecting, allowing the user to filter the contributions through categories, such as art, field study, natural science and essay.

M.G.: Some time ago I talked to Gitanjali Dang, who curated the project *Scotty's Back*, which included new commissions by Abhishek Harza, *#cloudrumble56*, and Vishal Rawley, *hauz-i-shamsi*, and I discovered that the works had both an offline and offline component. Do you know how they related to each other in terms of the audience engagement on the website?

R.S.: The Twitter project, *#cloudrumble56*, by Abhishek Hazra took place in Delhi and did not leave behind any traces documented on the website, the only visible remnant of it being the concept description. I was hoping that Abhishek's work would make a permanent impression on the online audience, at least by presenting some traces of the event. But as it turned out, only one group of people in Bombay had experience of this short event. Even if I think this work was not fully successful, such failed expectations are part of the experimental nature of my online projects, which are particularly experimental for curators and artists lacking experience in working with Internet-based art projects. Similar problems were encountered with the *Pixel Collider* by Agnes Meyer-Brandis. With Vishal Rawley's *hauz-i-shamsi*, the aim was to include audience interaction within the work through Skype. I personally did join in on Skype connecting with the work that was taking place in India, but there is no indication whether other visitors of *Beam Me Up* did the same. The remnants of the live work include several documentary photos and videos.

M.G.: Are there any other examples of interventions that included online and offline modes of production and engagement within this project?

R.S.: Many of the artistic contributions to *Beam Me Up* focused on alternating between the real and virtual worlds. One that struck me was the online performance, *The Nowhere Dance*, by Alan Sondheim which took place in Second Life on 25th February 2009. It involved people from the USA, Europe and India who logged into Second Life on the same day but each at different times because of their respective time zones. What was both touching and disconcerting for me was the simultaneous presence of real people or their respective avatars within the fantastic and abstract pictorial space that Sondheim constructed in Second Life, their physical presence on Earth differed in time and position, like the longitude lines. Portions of this online performance, which I filmed on screen, were displayed on the *Beam Me Up* website—this is precisely that element of documentation which was missing in Abhishek Hazra's Twitter Project. The *Shrine to the Martyred Phoenix Lander* contribution by Jamie O'Shea ran live from June 2009 to June 2010 [as part of the commissions curated by Sarah Cook]. It was a webcam livestream, changing every 12.5 minutes, that was broadcast from a freezer in the New York studio of the artist. There a toaster was put to signify a NASA robotic probe, which was simultaneously in deep freeze on Mars. The contribution, *Empire-A Virtual Tour*, by Jieming Hu was an online film documentary of experiments that involved real and virtual spaces and were performed by Hu's students as part of an urban study in Shanghai. Another example is HOIO's *Mission Kaki - a travel adventure in episodes*, which was a travel diary of a fictional journey in

diverse regions of the globe, covering all continents of the world. Travelogues, in the form of written reports and videos, were published regularly between 2008 and 2010, and each of them also included a regional recipe, which the reader could cook in person as an individual culinary journey. In all the three contributions, the efforts made to scrutinise the borders between what is virtual and real were primarily focused on the conceptual domain—namely beyond the screen. Moreover, all the three projects had a temporal structure: there were links or updates at regular intervals throughout the *Beam Me Up* project. Another relationship between real and virtual worlds emerged in the form of interactive artworks, such as *Mouse Music*, by the Japanese musician, Keiichiro Shibuya, or *Archaeology of the Daily Life*, by the Columbian twins, Jaime Andres and Tania Ruiz Gutiérrez. They all raise issues related to the origin [of the exhibition], the 'interface'. In Shibuya's work, the actual hand movements of users are used to create sounds which are graphically visualised with the mouse, whereas in Andres and Gutiérrez's they are used—in the manner of hard work in cleaning windows!—to reveal an animated tapestry on screen. The latter to me poses questions concerning the virtual space of the screen and the space of the real body with plentiful and sly humour, as long as one gets involved with the scratching work. The strongest performative element—apart from the online performance in *Second Life* by Alan Sondheim— was related to the *Macghillie - just a void* contribution by Knowbotic Research. During the exhibition of *Beam Me Up* at Plug.in Gallery, visitors could wear the actual costume of the character named *Macghillie* and then proceed to spook out the entire exhibition venue.

M.G.: *Beam Me Up* was presented as a gallery exhibition at Plug.in in 2010. Could you tell me more about this project, how you developed and delivered it? What brought you to work across formats and bridging online and offline modes of display and distribution?

R.S.: The exhibition featured eight contributions on interactive online stations, three additional contributions in video format on screens and one contribution in the form of a cinematic room installation in the basement. The latter was the *T.R.I.P.* project by Monica Studer and Christoph van den Berg, an immersive installation which filled a room in the basement; the visitor was literally sucked into an animated corridor of colour. As part of the research project, *Owning Online Art*, which we organised simultaneously to *Beam Me Up* at the Basel Art Academy, we developed the prototype of a wall computer for interactive network-based artworks, which could be operated via trackpad. So we displayed six artworks in the Plug.in exhibition on them. The *PIC-ME.COM* search engine by Marc Lee was shown as part of a large, interactive projection, which people could use to look at others visiting the exhibition. Other components of the exhibition included the *Macghillie* costume and the project catalogue, which included the essays and texts published on the *Beam Me Up* website, both German and English. Over the course of the exhibition, we organised six lectures with the *Beam Me Up* participants, starting with the Berlin philosopher, Christina Vagt and the Zürich-based artist group called Knowbotic Research. While the exhibition was on, the so-called Basel Museum Day was on and for it we put on ten different project presentations between 8pm and midnight which attracted numerous visitors.

M.G.: What were the points of contacts between the *Beam Me Up* project online and the gallery

show? I know you worked with Morger + Dettli Architects for the design of the show, and that they wrote a sort of manifesto, *Rethinking Space*, about their approach to the installation—what was your experience of collaborating with them?

R.S.: Apart from the interaction occurring through the acts of viewing and reading in the exhibition, the interactivity was established through using the *PIC-ME.COM* search engine. This work allowed the visitors to enter their names (and also those of others) and learn a little more about search algorithms and their ‘odd’ results. Another contact point ‘cross-border’ was the *Macghillie* costume, which the visitors could put on while walking around. The architects, Morger and Dettli, who we invited to make a spatio-symbolic comment on the exhibition, implemented the concepts of networking and cyberspace. Both Meinrad Morger and Fortunat Dettli were personally involved in the making of their illustrative concept within the exhibition space, which entailed stretching ropes connecting different elements in and outside the room. They also decided to paint the gallery in white, which proved to be particularly successful, from the ceiling to the walls and right down to the floor. Already on the evening of the official exhibition opening, the white floor revealed marks of dirt from the shoe soles of all the visitors. Simultaneously drastic and subtle, this intervention showed the differing embodiments of dirt both on and offline, and how terms like footprint and trace, which are increasingly used metaphorically [for online activities], originate instead from a physical space.

M.G.: There is also a catalogue of the gallery show, could you tell me what role it had in the project? Was it for documentation purposes or you see it as a project on its own?

R.S.: Only two copies of the catalogue were available in the exhibition, one in English and one in German. This was primarily to ensure that the articles of the exhibition would be easily accessible to the visitors. The catalogue had solely a documentary role.

M.G.: What is best practice in terms of curating online? And what role has curating offline within it?

R.S.: There are a variety of good practices in online curating. These might differ from each other, for instance, in relation to how many of the project’s participants the curator knows personally, if he or she has met them, or whether some of them are even friends of the curator. There were thirty-four artists and authors involved in *Beam Me Up*: five of these were friends with whom I was able to discuss the project, seven I met in person during the course of the project, and there were four more with whom our only contact was via email. Guest curators managed the relationships with the remaining eighteen. As far as I know, they were personally acquainted with all of the artists and authors they commissioned. That said, even if curators, artists and authors are only in contact via emails and online when working on a joint project, good relationships can still emerge. With my curating online, the ability to offer the contributors a good project concept, interesting fellow participants and payment in return for their collaboration is something that’s important to me. After all, money is a form of recognition, too. This is why fundraising has always been a key element in the development of my projects. Some companies are known to make a great deal of money on the Internet. But for many others, and particularly for artists, the web has no market value—which is why one of my

priorities is to have a beneficial impact on the participants' material lives (using online money transfers). As for curating offline, on the occasion of my last four online projects, I also looked for opportunities to exhibit in physical venues and they were presented as installations of various sizes at festivals and in galleries. I always felt that it is important to showcase the projects internationally, such as in lectures with projections because this allows me to publicly present selections of original artwork, along with my comments around the project's themes. This is a type of live show that is more reminiscent of musical projects on tour than the format of traditional art exhibitions, there is a speaker contributing to the performance element of the project. The focus of my past five projects (*Shop*, *Ramshow*, *shrink to fit*, *56kTV – bastard channel* and *Beam Me Up*) was primarily on their online form. To a certain extent, presenting the projects as exhibitions and in lectures was secondary; it was an offline representation of the online project. For the project I am currently organising for 2014-2016, *Digital Abstractions*, the exhibition, which will take place at the House of Electronic Arts, Basel, will be just as important as the website and blog from the very beginning. The project will be accompanied by research carried out at the Art Academy where I work, and there will be three conferences taking place in addition to the exhibition. These will feature lectures and presentations of various works. A printed catalogue is also planned. Thus *Digital Abstractions* will comprise a mixture of online and offline elements: digital art installations and Internet-based artwork, a large historical online catalogue mostly containing cinematic examples of 'digital and analog abstractions' and a regularly-updated blog on the subject. Offline elements will be: the exhibition at the House of Electronic Arts, lectures/conferences, sound and visual concerts and a printed catalogue containing research material and literature. Extensive reviews of *56kTV* and *Beam Me Up*, which featured in the *Rhizome* newsletter and in the *Turbulence* blog, were very important for online distribution. With online art projects, you are reliant on reviews and mentions in prominent blogs etc., which are then quoted in other blogs. I increasingly feel that it is becoming more difficult to generate a positive response to online projects in newspapers, on the radio and on television. Newspapers tend to write about offline exhibitions of online projects, rather than about the online original itself.

M.G.: How would you position/define what you do as curator within the ecology of the museum, gallery and festival system of display and distribution of contemporary art? Do you think you have explored different models of practice also in an economic and political sense?

R.S.: When you investigate interesting, newer exhibition spaces for contemporary art and how they operate, you understand them by trying out mixed forms of exhibitions, performances, lectures, concerts, etc. The curators of these new types of exhibition spaces also make an effort to ensure that their events have a good web presence—and various formats have evolved from here. Good web presence for an institution, or even for a single exhibition, only occurs if those responsible for it understand the use that a younger public has of the media/resources they invest in to create such presence. True assessment of online projects only occurs when comparing them with leading practices in contemporary exhibition spaces. Our curatorial projects begin with a concept for an Internet-based show. All works are intended to be viewed

on a screen (with speakers), with some interactive works needing a mouse or a keyboard. To a certain extent, this is 'art within reach', on a worldwide level. When, in a second stage, we organise a gallery exhibition for these digital works, we develop a suitable installation around the computer screen display to suit the [nature of] project. What differs, then, is the order. In a curated web-based project, the exhibition begins on the Internet—in other words, on a website with artworks created for the Internet. This online exhibition can be viewed (worldwide) as an art project. When you show this project in an exhibition space, which is/has always been the case for our recent projects, you must provide interactive, Internet-based image displays for the viewers in the room, whether on a screen or as a large-scale projection.

M.G.: I wonder what were the criteria according to which you chose the artworks for the exhibition at Plug.in? Did you collaborate with any of the guest curators, such as Dang or Cook, for the inclusion of some of the works presented in their Guided Tours, for example, in relation to finding the way of best representing them offline?

R.S.: For the exhibition, I worked with Annette Schindler. She was the director of the Plug.in exhibition space and also a guest curator in the *Beam Me Up* project. Gitanjali Dang attended the opening of our show, but the Indian artworks that she curated were not ready until a few months after the exhibition. The same was true for the three pieces curated by Stefan Riekeles. The artworks by Jamie O'Shea and Joe Winter that Sarah Cook commissioned were shown in the form of wall installations, while the texts by Alec Finlay, Jayanne English and Guillaume Bélanger were included in the exhibition book. The three Chinese pieces were also featured in the show. Out of all the works that were completed at that time, the piece contributed by Agnes Meyer-Brandis was the only one we did not include in the exhibition, because it didn't work properly. Artists included in the show were: Jieming Hu (Shanghai), Genxiong Tan (Shanghai), Alan Sondheim (NYC), Martin Brauen (NYC), Esther Hunziker (Basel), Samuel Herzog (Zurich), Knowbotic Research (Zurich), Carlo Zanni (Milano), Marc Lee (Zurich), Li Zhenhua (Peking), Joe Winter (NYC), Jamie O'Shea (NYC) and Monica Studer and Christoph van den Berg (Basel).

M.G.: I would also be very interested in knowing what was the role of the gallery exhibition for you? For example, was it an experiment in how to present web-based works offline, and/or reach new audiences, and/or playing with transposing an "internet magazine" into the physical space?

R.S.: The points you mention are all important. As I said earlier, we developed a prototype for a wall-mounted computer as part of our research project *Owning Online Art* and we were able to use this for the show. At the time of the *Beam Me Up* exhibition, we had already experimented with offline exhibitions for four online art projects, starting in 1995. The *Beam Me Up* exhibition at Plug.in space was the largest show to date. Our next exhibition for the Digital Abstractions project in 2016 will be even bigger.

A.2.6a

Cook, S., 2013. *Interview about Beam Me Up*. Interviewed by Marialaura Ghidini [email

conversation] June 12, 2014. (see also 3.6)

M.G.: For the *Beam Me Up* project, you produced the Guided Tour representing/re-enacting/simulating outer space, what did your curatorial role entail exactly? Did you have the freedom to respond to the subject proposed in any way you wanted to, with new site-specific commissions for the web for example?

S.C.: I was initially invited as a curator to commission new works, by artists and scientists, for the platform. The Guided Tour was, in my memory, something which I did later (after the projects were online), and which I could have used to highlight other works in the database commissioned from other artists, but I saw it as a way of tying together the contributions I had added to the project (Jamie O'Shea, Alec Finlay, Guillaume Belanger, Joe Winter, Jayanne English). Perhaps that part of the invitation to me wasn't clear. I had complete freedom to respond to the subject; I guided the conversations with the contributors around their work to best fit the platform. I recall having more difficulty with the scientists than with the artists in terms of a 'cut off' or completion date for their works, as they kept revising and changing their contributions, which was impacting upon the translation schedule that required the text to be fixed and finished. Both Jamie and Joe made work that was specifically about the web and about the audience reaching the work through a browser window.

M.G.: *Beam Me Up* operates as a sort of expanded magazine that hosts a series of editorials which seem to serve as triggers for the commission of artworks. What was your experience of adopting this format of curatorial production online? Did the database nature of the project (for which each contributor publishes him/herself following guidelines) impact on the way you commissioned the work or presented them online? How?

S.C.: I would suggest that the editorials came later, and the commission of the works for the database structure came first. I was invited by artists I had worked with before, who knew my curatorial practice, and they were very clear that my role as curator was to seek out and commission new work, not seen on the web before. The database did not impact too strongly—the general practice of the artists I chose led the way in which those works were realised, and I tried to be as open as possible within a format of an illustrated 'paper' for the scientists. I wanted the scientists to create a piece which ordinarily their scientific journals might not publish (to allow the scientists to exhibit their artistic side); and I wanted the artists to take work which for them is usually output in material form (as sculpture/installation) and bring it to the conditions of the web. This was the case with Alec Finlay also, who works in printed word form, but had not usually published on the web, so it was an existing piece brought to the new condition of the database online.

M.G.: One of the underlying features of the *Beam Me Up* website is the fact each artist/writer/thinker's contributions can be reassembled by entering the database and creating new tours for example, suggesting the possibility to create a magazine within a magazine, did you work with this feature and if so how?

S.C.: As answered above, I initially used the tour to write a text which tied together my own

contributions/commissions. That is perhaps a boringly traditional way for a curator to work, but I had the feeling that colleagues of mine were not entirely understanding of the commissions I was undertaking, and this was a way of making it seem more like I was working on 'a show' than on just some web-stuff on someone else's platform. It also facilitated the press and marketing, to have a launch date. I sent a copy of the essay to the contributors to check before it was uploaded and they sent suggestions and comments back. One of the scientists used the commenting function under each of the works to try and initiate further conversation with the other contributors, I think as it was a more apt place to have those discussions than in the private email thread used to create the works.

M.G.: Where you involved in the gallery exhibition at Plug.in? If so, did you have any saying in the format chosen for displaying the artworks you commissioned, such as that of Joe Winter? Also, what do you think about the choice of adopting computer screens hanging on the wall?

S.C.: I was not involved and I did not get to see the show. I received notice about the show on New Year's Eve for the opening two weeks later, and I was not able to arrange my schedule to attend. I had no choice but to trust that the curators at Plug.in had worked with the artists directly about how their works were shown, and which were chosen to be highlighted. It was a bit of a missed opportunity for me, but I'm very glad they did it. I never managed to get or download one of the books on demand that accompanied the show. :-)

M.G.: How would you describe the relationship between the online display and the gallery one?

S.C.: I can only judge this from the photos and I can see, for instance, that Joe Winter's work was rescaled for the monitor on the wall, when it appeared differently in the browser window. I think that Jayanne's work (her animation) was not exhibited as an art work but as an illustrated text (it could have been projected). In both cases, for at least the work of Jamie O'Shea, there was a time-limit which defined the work. The online display could have continue to morph/change etc. but I chose to try and launch all the projects at one time, because of my schedule, the artists' schedule (they needed a deadline!), because of the need for translation of the texts and because of the time-based nature of Jamie's project (as determined by NASA). The exhibition, as an after-effect of the online project, also had a deadline to open, and to close, and this probably affected how the works were understood.

A.2.6b

Dang, G., 2013. *Interview about Beam Me Up*. Interviewed by Marialaura Ghidini [transcript of Skype conversation] June 13, 2014, 9am GTM London (see also 3.6)

M.G.: What was your curatorial role in the *Beam Me Up* project?

G.D.: *Beam Me Up* was already running when I was invited and they wanted to have an India chapter. So I was not involved with the broad overarching curatorial idea or any other part of the project, I was mostly invested in my bit of the project. The invitation was very open, because the thematic was very open, like the Internet. I think that was a bit of a problem, but I took this invite

as the opportunity to be able to do whatever I wanted.

M.G.: What did you commission as part of your contribution? Was *Scotty's Back* the title of your project?

G.D.: No, that was the title of my essay.

M.G.: I see, what sometime confuses me when browsing the *Beam Me Up* website is the relationship between the actual commissions and the curator's Guided Tours. *Scotty's Back* is also the title of your Guided Tour. Let's move onto the second question, which I think might clarify things: *Beam Me Up* operates as a sort of expanded magazine; it hosts a series of editorials which seem to have served as triggers for the commission of artworks. This was the approach suggested by the platform, how did you go about it? How did you work with this format?

G.D.: Of course within the project there are things that should have been done differently, for example there should have been more interaction and there was none of that. So I have just worked on my India chapter. I only briefly visited Reinhard here in Switzerland at Plug.in and he told me that I had a free hand and I could do whatever I wanted to, and that was it. I was excited that I could do whatever I wanted to, but of course there were other things that were problematic. For example it would have been nice if there were events like a conference, where people could come together and share experiences so there would have been a better understanding of what was going on, etc.

M.G.: Can you tell me exactly what you commissioned for the project?

G.D.: One of the challenges of the project is that there are not too many artists working with the Internet here, partly because there are not opportunities for this kind of activity. For example if it wasn't for Pro Helvetia funding we could have not done such a project. Apart from Shilpa Gupta, there were not many artists practically working online. Abhishek Harza and myself had been working together for a long time, we have worked together on several, three/four, projects, and we have similar interests in exploring 'third spaces', so Abhishek was an easy decision for me. And then there was Vishal Rawley, whose work I had not seen that much, but we met and we found common ideas and interests. Both projects were so completely different in their approaches, and the artists had completely divergent views on how they wanted to go about it, that I thought this was exciting for the possibilities that it could open up. The project was also about questioning the online and why stuff should be online—a lot of things were happening there.

M.G.: Did your text come after the artists' commissions so you treated it like an artistic contribution, or did you use it as a trigger to inspire the artists in the creation of their work?

G.D.: I have to admit that I don't know if I would be happy with the text if I looked at it right now. There was a note-type of text that was shared with the artists, but a lot of it was through conversations. The essay as such, in its current form, came later, I think. [...] This was the first time I organised an exhibition like this and it's something I would do again in the future. For example, at the moment I am working on a project that is called Khanabadosh, which is an itinerant arts lab, a space without a space. It is a collaboration with the Institute for

Contemporary Art Research (IFCAR) led by Christoph Schenker. So in the future I would like to explore this idea of the third space with Khanabadosh, which I think started with the *Beam Me Up* project.

M.G.: Did the database nature of the project (for which each contributor publishes him/herself following guidelines) have impact on the way you commissioned the artworks or presented them online, or on your relationship with the artists? If so, how?

G.D.: No.

M.G.: I asked this because most of the commissions of *Beam Me Up* were strictly related to the networked space and often conceived for being presented and experience online on the *Beam Me Up* website, whereas your contributions started and actually took place in specific locations, actually in the public space...

G.D.: Abhishek's project took place in Delhi, even if I wasn't there. This was a decision we made together. We thought it would be interesting to see what happens when I, as curator, see of the artwork only what the viewer sees of the artwork. Its performative work [a Twitter-performance entitled #cloudrumble56] happened at the German Book Office. Abhishek is interested in the history of science and colonial India. He performed gestures and actions around his life and these were tweeted by observers that we invited to be there. We looked for people who would be in the position to observe his performance and respond to it, so we spoke to various people in Delhi and we got together half a dozen that tweeted about the project. This was also my only access to the work, apart from the discussions I had with the artist. Abhishek was clear that he did not want to have anything more than this because he wanted to play with this tension. And the tweets thread was the only residue of the work that he wanted. Vishal's work was again a play between the online and offline, but it took it to another level because it was really about creating some sort of deliberate dissonance with Abhishek. His work was about how these two things spill into each other, quite literally. There were so many things around his project that happened. Also, a very important aspect [of the dissonance between the two works] was in terms of time. Abhishek's project was really ephemeral, there was the performative bit [in the form of an event on 20th March 2010], and the online tweeting around it and then the essays and the conversations and that was it. Vishal's project went on for a fair bit of time [March 2010 to May 2011], so it was more like a durational project. I now remember that one of the things that really struck me immediately was that Vishal's project had a greater visibility for obvious reasons related to its physical presence. In fact, there were specific icons you were dealing with, such as the Burak [a floating sculpture]. That [dealing with icons] did not exist in Abhishek's work as it was down to the text. So the interest from the people I interacted with was diminished because of this. And this element related to the idea of icons in a literal way, and how they are everywhere, and what is our relationship to them, was very interesting to me. Curatorially and theoretically, there was a total distance between the two projects; one was really noticed and people responded to it...

M.G.: ...because Vishal's work was in the public space of the reservoir...

G.D.: Yes, because it was physical but also because it was a project that was combining many

things, and especially it had an object. I was interested in the fact that, although we always talk about moving away from the object etc. etc., we are inescapably attached to them, and I think because this icon/object was there in Vishal's project, it became the attraction.

M.G.: I am going to go back to something, because I want to understand more your curatorial approach, also in relation to other *Beam Me Up* guest curators, like Sarah Cook. Do you feel that your work as curator was that of a commissioner, primarily commissioning new work, or creating an exhibition framework? Did you curate an exhibition or did you enable artists to work with a new platform?

G.D.: I have to ask...what is an exhibition? I am also thinking about my current project *Khanabadosh*, because everything is kind of linked in my practice. I am interested in working in the expanded curatorial field, which is working outside the exhibition making, looking at the curator outside this mere exhibition making. And in any case I just prefer to call them 'projects'. I just looked at it as a project and as an expanded curating project. Of course there were a lot of loopholes, but everything has its kind of problems, especially if it is a sprawling project like this one. They might also be related to funding. In relation to what I have mentioned earlier it might just be that they did not have funding to bring all curators together for example. As you said, you might also be sympathetic with what you might not be familiar of, or what might have already happened.

M.G.: For me, in relationship to the *Beam Me Up* project and the fact that it had several guest curators working with/on it, is interesting to understand how each of them has dealt with the platform and the way the project it was conceived by his initiator. For instance, your curatorial approach, rather than, let's say, transposing a gallery exhibition format to that of the website—which could have entailed writing a press release, defining a specific opening time and so on—has been that of commissioning works that took place at different times and were not launched at the same time, and writing a text that was not meant to operate as a press release. I wonder then, how do you see this approach of yours?

G.D.: I think there are just different approaches to curating; there is no right or wrong. I am still all in favour of things that are more organic and just move more organically. I don't like things that are too structured, this I think, tells you why the commissions did not happen at the same time, like in a synchronised whole where there is an opening and a closing event. Vishal's project took a lot, it took a lot out of him and it was complicated to do. At one point we were even asking ourselves: is this even going to happen? [laughter] This is because there were technical bits offline that were just problematic, in the sense of the coming together. We just decided to keep on moving at the pace required; we did not push anything. And this is nice. This was also possible because of the funds we had, Pro Helvetia was not asking us to deliver something at a specific time—I keep mentioning Pro Helvetia because it was my link to *Beam Me Up*, they put me in touch with Reinhard. Even what I am working on right now is a sort of decentralised project. It is also slightly ambitious: it takes place across seven different cities across the world, we are talking to different curators, and each of the projects will take place in public spaces. For instance, one of the things that I mentioned earlier when I said it would have

been nice to organise something to get everyone together for *Beam Me Up* is something that we are trying to do as a first step with this project. We are trying to bring all the agents together and collaborate. And again the project happens in a sort of decentralised way, the project can be tailored for the milieus in which it happen, the events don't have to open together, they will just happen at their own pace, organically. So I think this is just how I work. But also I think that working online just put into question the act of exhibition making, in the sense of how do you make an exhibition online? It turns something around its head, in the sense that you are dealing with something else already, you are not dealing with an actual space, and this is already there, it is part of the medium.

M.G.: Going back to the commissions again, what's the relationship between the work of Vishal Rawley and the essay *Buraq and the Hauz-E Shamsi? Or, the residue of dreams* by Anand Vivek Taneja?

G.D.: Anand is an historian. Because we were dealing with history, a specific one, that of the pond, Anand came in as an expert in the history of Delhi. And I took this opportunity, because for my intervention I had complete freedom, also to bring in people not working in the arts.

M.G.: Something similar was done for the work of Abhishek, right?

G.D.: Yes, but the writer Nilanjana [Roy] was there, present at the performance. It's interesting because both of the writers we had invited— we chose them in conversation with the artists— were not from within the arts. Nilanjana is a fiction writer, for example. We did not want these essays to be sort of representations, or immediately from the arts. This is an ongoing thing for me as well, and it was nice that this resonated with the artists as well. We wanted to look outside of the pool to work with writers that might think in a different way, which we don't often see within the arts because there is always a certain kind of language which comes with art writing. We wanted to look at a different language because already online adopts a different kind of language, so this was an opportunity to explore different kinds of languages. Anand's text has a great deal of creative licence and Nilanjana's one is very much a response to what she saw there. Also when I say they are not from the arts, it is not to say that they are completely out of the debate, they are part of the debate because these issues are part of all the other disciplines, just with a different register. It was a different threshold from which to explore art, and they are very different between them: Anand's narratives are very historical and the text takes off from that history and Nilanjana focuses on the performative bit of Abhishek's work.

M.G.: There was the gallery exhibition at Plug.in, and I already know you were not involved in it because your commissions had already to be produced. But you saw the show, and I wonder if you can tell me your position regarding the relationship they wanted to create between the online element of the project and the gallery show? Or what would have done, what your response would have been, if your works had been ready at that time?

G.D.: I wasn't really fussed about a physical space exhibition. It never crossed my mind to do one. It was also the way we were commissioned to do the project, I must say. We were invited to contribute to the website but it was never part of our discussion that we would have had an

exhibition around it. I think there was some talk about doing something in India, but we decided against it because we did not want to give the projects a physical location. There was the possibility of doing something small. Had it been that we had to do it because it was part of the project commission, we would have done it of course. But the project was really not about that, it was about the memory that the artworks would create and the response these projects might evoke, which as I have already mentioned made me really amazed about how we are all susceptible to objects, possessions and so on. We thought that had the projects been sucked into oblivion, we would have been fine with that. We wanted it to be part of this project, getting lost into the glut of material online, as a kind of land art project. So if it was going to disintegrate in the memory of people and not be around anymore, we were enthusiastically open to that.

M.G.: Lastly, in the light of this experience, what is best practice in terms of curating online? And what role has curating offline within it?

G.D.: Curating online... I need to ask again, what does this mean? For example, we opened an exhibition of Ana Mendieta's work just now in India, and I think [the following story] has something to do with online curation. Her work was never been shown in India before. I had the works, because I was on a Pro Helvetia residence here in Zurich last year, and while here I researched the Daros Collection, mainly their video archive and library. They were open for me to show the works in their collection in India, which went into Mendieta's exhibition. In the meanwhile, on *UbuWeb* I have found a collection of her video works in a half-hour-long videos. I told the people I was working with about it and they asked me: can you send us a link? And I said: it's just there; you can access it on your own! They did not know about it, or *UbuWeb*. So I just extracted the video from the website, I put it on a loop and on a laptop, that's all I did. And bringing it into a space, in an exhibition space, gave it visibility. Internet has opened up sheer possibilities; many libraries like the Wellcome, the Getty, etc. are putting their material online for open access. *UbuWeb* has this huge collection of material for which they don't even necessarily have permission, and no one really says anything about it. So with *Kanabadosh* we hope to do more of this, because there is this huge repository of stuff around us now—and it is accessible to us as it has not been before—and this could be a form of curating online. This is also why we did not want many residues [of the artworks] on the *Beam Me Up* website; there is so much stuff that you need to pinpoint, to locate and to extract from this glut to be able to draw attention to it and make it visible. So I think this is something about curating online and also *Kanabadosh* in the future. We would like to work with these [online] archives and pull stuff out to use offline and online as well, just simply. Again this is not curating net art but a form of curating online I think. I am just working right now on the *Kanabadosh* website, it is a preoccupation...

M.G.: Do you work with a web programmer?

G.D.: No, we don't have any money. [laughter] So I just bought a theme from WordPress and paid a little fee to someone who is going to help me and guide me a little bit. But it is quite simple, at the end it is like uploading pictures on Facebook or Twitter. So it is nice. I also want the website to become a sort of project, outside the other projects. Through it wants to dwell on the ideas and the philosophy that is behind *Kanabadosh*. So I am using some images and

material from the Wellcome library that we will now use for the context of the website to create a narrative around *Kanabadosh*. So that is also curating online, no?

M.G.: Yes definitely...

G.D.: So there are these different ways of curating online. This project [for *Beam Me Up*] is the most traditional in terms of curating. It's like here is the curator, and there are two artists, it is very much like an exhibition set-up in that sense, although it is online. There is the curator and the commission, and then you invite the artists. But the possibilities with curating online right now are more immense than we have done so far. It has always been but now the sheer access that is increasing each day makes things more complicated.

M.G.: Thank you very much!

G.D.: Oh also, this just struck me, curating online is also about creating the infrastructure to curate online. Even though access to the Internet is not such a problem, let's say, in the UK, there are places where access is limited. It is also a question of what would you do without those service providers, how would create something which is not entirely independent but a space which is more democratic, like a mesh network. Using the idea of the mesh network, which has been done in India, it's been done in the north. Creating free net access that could not be immediately interfered by any kind of the big server providers, an access without relying on existing lines but functioning through things put by individuals on roofs. By this I mean really curating for creating access, access which is not buried under protocols. Mesh is already present in small towns, like in Greece, not just in India, and it is easy. In the US, the *Occupy* movement has done it; it is just a briefcase.

M.G.: Very true. Thanks!

Appendix A: Curatorial Practice

A.3. Curatorial Practice: Supporting Research Material

The exhibition programme of or-bits-dot-com, from 2009 to 2014, which includes the projects discussed in this dissertation, *128kbps objects* (see 4.2), *(On) Accordance* (see 4.3) and *On the Upgrade WYSIWYG* (see 4.4), can be fully accessed at <http://www.or-bits.com>.

The commissioned critical writing related to the three exhibition projects that was published on the or-bits-dot-com blog, *From other spaces*, can be accessed at <http://www.or-bits.com/blog/>. Extra documentation of the 'offsite projects' of or-bits-dot-com is also available on the blog at <http://www.or-bits.com/blog/category/offsite-projects/>.

All projects have been directed and organised by the author of this dissertation (Marialaura Ghidini) with the valuable work and advice of the web designer and programmer, Sara Nunes Fernandes (aka Vyvienne Fernando). The artists and guest curators of each of the three exhibitions are listed in the section Curators and Artists of the Analysis tables in sections A.3.1, A.3.2 and A.3.3. Specific acknowledgments are listed as Production Acknowledgements at the end of each table.

A.3.1. or-bits-dot-com: 128kbps objects

Curator's Editorial. Written by the author of this dissertation and published on or-bits-dot-com.

“There are many varied discourses about the relationship between object-hood, medium and site, starting from Walter Benjamin's observations on mechanical reproduction: from looking at base materiality to social interaction, from the aura of the work of art to the disappearance of medium-specificity. For Maurice Merleau-Ponty “to turn an object upside-down is to deprive it of its meaning” because when confronted with the viewer it loses its spatial coordinates; it loses its “natural position”. (in “Phenomenology of Perception”, 1945). Rosalind Krauss discusses spatiality through looking at the relationship between the object and the viewer's field. When writing about Robert Smithson's mirrors in “Enantiomorphic Chambers” (1964), Krauss states “it is not just the viewer's body that cannot occupy this space, then, it is the beholder's visual logic as well; Chambers explores what must be called a kind of ‘structural blindness’” (in “Formless. A User's Guide”, 2007). Others, such as writers and critics more concerned with the status of the digital object or those allied with the so-called Post-Internet art, write about objects in connection to current “Internet-users tactics” employed by artists (Artie Vierkant, “The Image Object Post-Internet”, 2010). They focus upon information dispersal, multiplicity of formats and convergence of mediums. “Objects have lost exclusive singular spatial properties. They exist and manifest in fluid forms through different media. In this, there is no moral hierarchy or pure differentiation in authenticity”, as artist Harm van den Dorpel states in the press release of his exhibition (in “Rhododendron”, 2011).” Marialaura Ghidini, Excerpt from exhibition invite, 2012.

128kbps objects presents newly commissioned and already existing artworks in the form of sound works, live performances and recordings, interviews, readings, thematic playlists and music. These works contemplate and expand on notions of object-hood, looking at the potentials of displaying objects sonically, such as exploring ideas related to the erasure of visual language and the loss of direct interaction with artistic content. They also reflect on the characteristics inherent in the medium employed for the exhibition, an internet radio, interrogating the relationship between speed and quality in the transmission of information on the web, where all the sonic data above a quality threshold of 128 kilo bytes per second is cancelled out.

How would an object manifest itself, be described or narrated when its inherent material quality is taken away, when the viewer is not confronted with its visual appearance?

How can an art object be thought of in relation to the nature of its reception and social presence within the context of an internet radio broadcast?

These were the two questions proposed to the artists, curators and writers contributing to *128kbps objects*.

What the audience will be listening to throughout the week are explorations of the malleable and fluctuating relationship between object-hood, medium and site, and their possible impact on the listener. This broadcast is an exploration of ideas of objects in transformation that stretches the often rigid borders created by definitions of materiality and immateriality, interrogating a terrain which is, perhaps, that of a “realism without materialism” (Graham Harman, 2011).*

* In his essay “On the undermining of objects: Grant, Bruno, and Radical Philosophy” Graham

Harman defines his philosophical position as one which “amounts to a realism without materialism” (in *The Speculative Turn*, 2011. Melbourne: re.press).

Analysis table

	TITLE(S)	DATE
	<i>or-bits-dot-com presents 128kbps objects / 128kbps objects EDITED / (Sound Writing Workshop)</i>	22 to 28 October 2012; 10 hours a day / 28 February 2013; eight-hour mix as re-broadcast / (25 October 2012)
	STATUS	FUNDERS
	Archive of contextual information available on <i>basic.fm</i> Blog; basic exhibition information available on or-bits-dot-com website.	Arts Council England, in partnership with Tyneside Cinema.
	CURATOR(S) (occupation)	
	Marialaura Ghidini and three guest curators: Tim Dixon (artist and curator), Anne Duffau (curator), Robert Sakrowski (art historian, curator and funder of CuratingYouTube); one workshop leader: Daniela Cascella (curator, researcher and writer).	
	EXHIBITION FORMATS	
	Online radio broadcast of new commissioned works, playlists and sonic version of web-based artworks previously produced for or-bits-dot-com / Exhibition archive on <i>basic.fm</i> Blog and or-bits-dot-com and printed radio schedule.	
	PATTERN of MIGRATION	
	Broadcast of artworks on <i>basic.fm</i> online radio, including a number of translated web-based artworks / Workshop event.	
	ONLINE	OFFLINE
SITE(S)	<i>Basic.fm</i> broadcast channel and blog.	Meter Room, Coventry (The Northern Charter, Newcastle)
ARTISTS	(New Commissions) Jamie Allen, André Avelãs, Victoria Bradbury, Helen Brown, Ellie and Oliver, Claudia Fonti, Juneau Projects and Sara Nunes Fernandes. (Previously featured on or-bits-dot-com) Angus Braithwaite and Beth Collar, Erik Bünger, Rob Canning, Patrick Coyle, Benedict Drew, Extra-conjugale, Jamie George and Richard Whitby, Emma Hart, David Horvitz, Irimi Karayannopoulou and Yannis Saxonis, IOCOSE, Tamarin Norwood, Radiomentale, Adam	A—Z, Angus Braithwaite, Helen Brown, Rob Canning, Daniela Cascella, Osvaldo Cibils, Patrick Coyle, Beth Collar, CuratingYouTube.net [CYT], Tim Dixon, Steven Dickie, Benedict Drew, Anne Duffau, Extra-Conjugale, Claudia Fonti, Jamie George, Graham Harman, Emma Hart, IOCOSE, Juneau Projects, Irimi Karayannopoulou, Scott Mason, Tamarin Norwood, Sara Nunes Fernandes, Ciarán Ó Dochartaigh, Chiara Passa,

	Rompel, Richard Sides and Simon Werner, Maria Theodoraki, Tonylight and Nathan Witt. (Open Call) A—Z, Sol Archer, Steven Ball, Sarah Boothroyd, Paul Carr, Osvaldo Cibils, Ami Clarke, Richard Crow/Institution of Rot, Steven Dickie, Ciarán Ó Dochartaigh, Adam Knight, Haydn Jones, Scott Mason, Material Studies Group, Chiara Passa, James Prevett, Stuart Pound, Erica Scourti, Andy Weir, Tom White and Mark Peter Wright.	Radiomentale, Yannis Saxonis, Salvatore Sciarrino, Richard Sides, Maria Theodoraki, Simon Werner and Richard Whitby (Daniela Cascella and workshops participants).
CURATORIAL: Intent	To explore contemporary notions of object-hood across a variety of mediums, sites and practices, in connection to the relationship between a web-based visual interface and the framework of an online radio broadcast. The invitation to artists that previously worked on the or-bits-dot-com website was aimed at facilitating processes of translation of web-based artworks into sound pieces for broadcasts.	To recirculate some of the content of the original broadcast paired with a gallery listening environment. (The workshop was aimed at explore the not-visibility of sonic content through a different medium, writing, as well as engaging local audience)
CURATORIAL: Approach	The artist and curator's commissions combined different curatorial approaches. All participants were invited to respond to the themes of the exhibitions and given a series of technical parameters. Seven artists were commissioned to produce a new work along with three curators who were invited to develop a guest-curated sonic project. One of the seven artists produced the jingle for the exhibition. A series of artists previously featured on or-bits-dot-com were invited to submit an already existing work or a version of their web-based work—where appropriate. An open call was also organised for artists to submit work to be included in the exhibition.	The Meter Room, in collaboration with Grand Union, invited me to broadcast the project in occasion of the exhibition <i>Floor Plan for an Institution: The Gallery</i> at The Metre Room. After obtaining artists' permission, I created a mix of eight hours length, which was broadcast on basic.fm and played in the gallery space. The curators of the show devised the gallery display and I collaborated with the remotely / (The workshop was devised by Cascella, in response to the themes and nature of the exhibition)
ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE: The Site	The radio broadcast was streamed from a player available on the <i>basic.fm</i> website, and also iPlayer via a web app. Behind the scenes, the broadcast was played from the AirTimePro software which resembled a database sheet and was also used for the production of the show. The website has a basic blog structure: a top menu and content displayed in the middle as	Presented in the main gallery space—along with other works—the broadcast had a dedicated listening station with headphones and printed contextual information about the exhibition, along with a reduced version of the radio schedule. / (The workshop was organised in the main space of The Northern Charter, which is an artists' studio complex. The setting

	<p>blog posts. The menu includes and Home, About, New Shows, Get Involved, Archive, Meet Our Curators, How to Listen. The posts related to the exhibition, such as details about the artworks, were presented in the New Shows section at the time of the broadcast. Afterwards it was moved into the section Archive. Contextual information was available on the <i>or-bits-dot-com</i> website under the Programmes section and with a link to the <i>basic.fm</i> website.</p>	<p>was very simple: a table with chairs and a sound system and material for writing)</p>
<p>ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE: The Exhibition</p>	<p>Being an online broadcast, the content was presented as a sound stream via a dedicated area on the <i>basic.fm</i> website, which contained a play/pause button, live information about the piece broadcast at the time of listening and a chat. The structure of the exhibition was given by the arrangement of artistic material created on the AirTimePro database, taking the form of a visual mosaic of sound pieces only accessible to the curators of the show. Contextual information about the show and each of the artworks was available on the <i>basic.fm</i> website as blog posts that were aggregated through using bespoke tags to enable search. Each artwork was presented with: title, name of the artist, date and time of broadcast, along with a 200-word description of the piece, and artist's bio and a link to the artist's website. A printed and PDF radio schedule also functioned as an aggregator of the information related to the show and a device to guide the listener through the programme.</p>	<p>See The Site above. / The radio schedule, designed by Studio Hato, had the format of a four-page colour newspaper providing the full programme of the exhibition as a conventional radio schedule. It also included the curatorial text, and details about the main commissions and strands of the programme. The content was colour-coded so that the reader could straightforwardly distinguish between the various strands of the material presented in the programme: New Commissioned Artists, Artists From Past <i>or-bits-dot-com</i> projects, Artists Selected from the Open Call, Guest Curators and the Daily Playlist.</p>
<p>ARTISTIC CONTENT: Site and Mode of Production</p>	<p>All artworks were sound pieces responding to the themes and nature of the exhibition. They took the form of readings, music playlists, sound works and recorded instructional pieces. Some were single sound files and other a series of files to be played at different and specific times, such as Jamie Allen's work (see below) They had to comply to basic parameters: to be digital sound files and compressed at the quality/rate of 128kbps. Some of the artworks</p>	<p>The <i>EDITED</i> version of the show was created by myself and presented in the gallery by the curators of the Meter Room and Grand Union. (The workshop lasted five hours and looked at the distance between listening to sound and writing in order to bridge it).</p>

	<p>underwent a layered process of production, such as Helen Brown's <i>There's no story</i>, which entailed working with an actor reading a script created by the artist, or André Avelãs's <i>substance hardening as a feedback loop</i>, which entailed placing microphones in an hardening substance in the artist' studio. With curator Duffau we curated the Daily Playlist, <i>This Is Not a Pipe. Neither is this</i>, which included an array of sonic forms, from artworks to films and music, and was organised according to sub-themes related to the seven main commissions, such as <i>Other Corpses</i> and <i>Faster, Stronger, Louder</i>.</p>	
<p>ARTISTIC CONTENT: Description of Representative Artworks</p>	<p>Jamie Allen's <i>Is This Thing On?</i> was a set of prepared Fluxus scores written for specific performers that were notified a-priori of a time and date when their own score was aired. Claudia Fonti's <i>128kbps Ident</i> was a response to radio RAI's tuning signal, which was played during breaks in their radio transmission and was the bird song of a nightingale. Brown's work was a monologue constructed from words and phrases taken from reviews of other artist's works. Curator Tim Dixon presented <i>Words Concerning Some of the Objects on my Work-Table</i> which was a series of four conversations about four work-tables conducted with Georges Perec's 1976 essay about the objects on his in mind. Emma Hart proposed a series of lectures that responded to the themes of the exhibition and moving images, such as a talk about Plato's Cave.</p>	<p>Same.</p>
<p>ENGAGEMENT: Type and Navigation Patterns</p>	<p>The audience had various entry point to the broadcast, such as the <i>basic.fm</i> website and web app for mobile devices. The broadcast itself provided little contextual information during the live stream. Social networks were used to direct listeners both to the link to the livestream and that of the <i>basic.fm</i> blog posts, which had detailed information about the artworks. The print and PDF radio schedule had the role of a functional aggregator</p>	<p>Same. The audience at the Meter Room had the opportunity to engage with the show in a public environment surrounded by other visitors listening to the same show.</p>

	of information about the exhibition that would have been otherwise difficult to gather together. Listeners were interacting with each other through the basic.fm live chat and social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter, specifically the event page on Facebook.	
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Figure 61: or-bits-dot-com: *128kbps objects*, 2012. Analysis table.

Production acknowledgments:

- Co-organisation and marketing: Dominic Smith and Andrea MacDonald at basic.fm
- Sound post-production and announcements: Kieran Rafferty and Jennifer Hodgson
- Identity and radio schedule design: Ken Kirton and Ross Bennett at Studio Hato
- Venue facilitators for ‘Sound Writing’ workshop: Sam Watson and The Northern Charter
- Organisation of *128knps objects EDITED*: Cheryl Jones at Grand Union and the Meter Room

A.3.2. or-bits-dot-com: (On) Accordance

Curator’s Editorial. Written by the author of this dissertation and published on or-bits-dot-com.

“In the morning I walked to the bank. I went to the automated teller machine to check my balance. I inserted my card, entered my secret code, tapped out my request. The figure on the screen roughly corresponded to my independent estimate, feebly arrived at after long searches through documents, tormented arithmetic. Waves of relief and gratitude flowed over me. The system had blessed my life. I felt its support and approval. The system hardware, the mainframe sitting in a locked room in some distant city. What a pleasing interaction. I sensed that something of deep personal value, but not money, not that at all, had been authenticated and confirmed. A deranged person was escorted from the bank by two armed guards. The system was invisible, which made it all the more impressive, all the more disquieting to deal with. But we were in accord, at least for now. The networks, the circuits, the streams, the harmonies.” Don DeLillo, *White Noise*, 1985. New York: Viking Press; p.46.

In the *Waves and Radiations* chapter of DeLillo's *White Noise*, one morning, Jack, the novel's protagonist, walks to the bank to check his balance. The image suggested by DeLillo is one which sees a man, a machine and hidden flows of data which had been retrieved and organised to appear, in a readable form, on a screen. In this scenario, the man and the machine are physical entities, the data flow and its rearrangement are instead part of an invisible system which becomes visible, or perhaps less distant, when Jack's expectations match with the data on screen, that is their new visual reconfiguration. They are in accordance.

DeLillo's book is a story about consumerism and the socio-cultural structure behind it. It is a story that points at what lies in the background of society in a specific point in time – the 80s –,

a mechanically-generated mythology of signs and symbols operating as a constant sound with no pitch which goes on and on, even if scattered across different sites. The persistent reiteration of 'this sound' happens through the mass media of that time, the television for example, with its advertising slogans; through inhabiting semi-public places, such as supermarkets with their carefully arranged products with carefully designed packages; through interacting with mechanical apparatuses, such as the “automated teller machines” with its ability to reshape data.

Specifically, the interaction between men and a mythology of signs and symbols happens through passages, and DeLillo's excerpt well depicts this: from “a room in some distant city” to the cash machine at Jack's bank in a September's morning, just at the start of a new school year, in North America. And this interaction, this movement of signs across spaces, becomes understandable to the human mind (or eye) when a sense of correspondence occurs, when one grasps their (visual) essence through “being in accord[ance]” with them. Thus this correspondence seems to happen more on a personal and mental level, rather than a tangible one. The visual appearance of the reconfigured signs and symbols remains somewhat different and distant from its distributive channels, “the networks, the circuits, the streams, the harmonies”. There are the flow of data which remains hidden and part of the invisible system, the final figure, which is the visible outcome, the machine and card which are the objects that make the transaction possible. But this feels somewhat removed from Jack's actions, almost disconnected as happening like a moment in which it all magically comes together.

What would this “pleasing interaction” now be? How does our contemporary mythology of signs and symbols occur and manifest itself?

Thirty-odd years after *White Noise* was written, there are new modes of interaction between men and invisible data flows, men and systems of reorganisation. These modes seem to be less about disconnection and magic comings together of disparate formal elements, and more about active involvement and reception. Flows of data have become a rather normal way in which cultural material, factual accounts and stories reach us, who consequently have begun to act as prime and direct 're-configurers' rather than inactive observers.

The contemporary setting of consumerism might be described as that of information consumption which we promptly seek out through our web journeys, journeys during which we experience moments of reiteration, processes of transformation, modulation and re-arrangement. In these journeys we interact not via enacting physical gestures, but via moving through material spatially configured for being displayed on specific web-based platforms. And this interaction seems to happen under the aegis of convergence, rather than magic correspondences between given data forms and our expectations.

Media scholar Henry Jenkins* defines convergence as “the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behaviour of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experience [consumer experience] they want”. Comparing this to Jack’s idea of fortuitous coming together brings about two differences: a flattening of the distance (or difference) between the forms in which flows of content (or data) reach us and a new characteristic in the behaviour of the receiver, pro-activity. We are currently seeing a standardization of forms for which signs and symbols almost translate seamlessly from one medium to another, even when scattered across different sites, and this is often understood as “a pleasing interaction” between a flow of data, a machine and a man’s action. As a consequence of this, there has been an array of discourses, from artistic to economic and technological ones, discussing correspondence (or accordance) in relation to the idea of seamless transformations from one medium to another, and also from one site to another; discourses which encompass notions of the end of medium specificity, as well as changes in socio-economical patterns, all of which have risen in the past twenty years.

Because it all appears to be converging (or, better still, has to be converging) – thanks to the perpetual interconnection of our devices – then it seems that all is translatable, and produceable as an endless loop of transformations and comings together. But this is probably only an impression, the superficial (and economically-induced) consequence of current times.

Things exist in accordance to their site, and even though they might often seem to seamlessly translate from one medium to the other – let’s think of books and the mutations the publishing industry has been undergoing since the inception of Amazon for example –, things do undergo changes. This is because of the processes of translation inherent in transmitting information – let’s think for example of popular story-telling and the variations on a theme that are inherent to this ‘older’ form of distribution – and because of the specificity of the ‘situation’ which brings such things into being.

One question remains: how in a time which praises convergence and translatability as the essence of contemporary consumption of information, one might understand the “being in accordance” with the invisible system generating our contemporary mythologies? How might one re-think the possibilities inherent to the passages between sites and the meanings which lay between them?

* Henry Jenkins, 2008. *Convergence Culture*. New York: New York University Press.

Analysis table

	TITLE(S)	DATE
	<i>Accordance / (On) Accordance (Hashfail)</i>	1 December 2012–ongoing / 1 December 2012–19 January 2013 (14 December 2012)
	STATUS	FUNDERS
	Fully accessible on or-bits-dot-com / Gallery exhibition archived on or-bits-dot-com and Grand Union websites / <i>(Hashfail)</i> archived on Open File website.	Arts Council England and Grand Union
	CURATOR(S) (occupation)	
	Marialaura Ghidini, Cheryl Jones and Open File (Tim Dixon and Jack Brindley).	
	EXHIBITION FORMATS	
	Web-based exhibition of newly commissioned works on or-bits-dot-com / Gallery exhibitions of translations of web-based artworks, sound playlist and event of performances with publication and torrent file.	
	PATTERN of MIGRATION	
	Artworks produced for display on or-bits-dot-com (IN PARALLEL TO) Gallery exhibition of translated content from <i>or-bits-dot-com's</i> previous exhibitions (COMBINED WITH) Gallery event.	
	ONLINE	OFFLINE
SITE(S)	or-bits-dot-com	Grand Union, Birmingham
ARTISTS	Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme, Renee Carmichael, Constant Dullaart, Lucy Pawlak, Ashok Sukumaran, Julia Tcharfas and Ben Vickers.	<i>(On)Accordance:</i> Irini Karayannopoulou, M+M (Marc Weis and Martin De Mattia), Rosa Menkman, Damien Roach and Richard Sides. <i>Hashfail:</i> Rhys Coren, Polly Fibre, Joey Holder, JK Keller, Yuri Pattison, Pil & Galia Kollektiv and Oliver Sutherland.
CURATORIAL: Intent	To explore the notion of platform and media convergence across sites of production and distribution via commissioning new web-based works online and offline versions of web-based artworks. The intent was to explore collaboration between exhibition sites in the form of a collaborative project between	Same. <i>Hashfail:</i> through expanding on the existing gallery display the intent was to consider the characteristics of the transition between physical and digital sites and content.

	two organisations, an online curatorial project and a gallery.	
CURATORIAL: Approach	Seven artists were invited to respond to the themes of the exhibition through creating new web-based works. A curator's editorial acted as the starting point for the collaboration with the artists and that with Grand Union and Open File. The latter two approached the organisation of their component of the project according to their own interests and methods of work.	Starting from the curator's editorial, Grand Union curators selected five artworks already featured on the <i>orbits-dot-com</i> website and invited the artists to "adapt their works to translate into the physical gallery space" (Jones, A.4.3). Open File curators were invited to create an event in response to the themes of the project and in relation to their ongoing exploration into the "the role that dispersion and dissemination play within contemporary art practice" (Dixon, A.4.2). The Grand Union curator invited all the artists participating in the project to choose a sound piece to be included in a sound playlist published on YouTube, (<i>On Accordance</i> playlist).
ORGANISATION AL STRUCTURE: The Site	The website is structured around two main sections: Programmes, with a list of the web-based exhibitions, on the right-hand side and a series of sections on the right-hand side: About, On the Upgrade, Links and Supporters, Blog, and the latest Offsite Projects, which takes the viewer to the documentation of the offsite exhibitions and events on the blog. (see a more detailed description in 4.1.3.1)	The gallery project space consists of one main rectangular open space, with a short corridor separating it from the entrance, and a series of industrial windows on one of the main long walls.
ORGANISATION AL STRUCTURE: The Exhibition	Upon clicking on the exhibition title under Programmes, an introductory environment opens in a new page. It presents the title of the show, a quotation and the curator's editorial also available as a downloadable PDF. Below the quotations there is information about the exhibition at Grand Union, offering a short description, list of participants, dates and a link to the gallery's website. At the top of the editorial there is a list of the artists included in the show in alphabetical order. Upon clicking on one of them an exhibition environment opens in a pop-up window. Each work has a dedicated page within this window. (see a more detailed description in 4.1.3.1)	The display, which included projections and sculptural installation, followed that of a conventional gallery exhibition / The artworks presented during the <i>Hashfail</i> event, specifically the performative pieces, were conceived to intermingle with the existing display.
THE ARTISTIC	Each of the selected artists, chosen	Each of the artists, in conversation

<p>CONTENT:</p> <p>Site and Mode of Production</p>	<p>because their practices resonated with the themes of the exhibition, produced new work in response to the curator's editorial, which was site-specific to the web page in which they were displayed. The web designer acted as a mediator between the artist's idea and its display on the website. A film editor also worked in the post-production of the video work of Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme.</p>	<p>with Cheryl Jones, "adapted the work for this display mechanism, realising that the viewer's encounter would be entirely different from that through a website". Some artists sent the curator digital files with instructions for the display, such as Damien Roach, others, such as Richard Sides, went to the gallery to make and install his work site-specifically, using the material available in the gallery and in the Grand Union studios and wood workshop.</p>
<p>THE ARTISTIC CONTENT:</p> <p>Description of Representative Artworks</p>	<p>Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme's <i>Contingency</i> is a moving image work exploring the "sonic fabric of colonial structures as embodied in the experience of the Ramallah-Jerusalem checkpoint Qalandia" and it was a further development of a sound installation with LED tickers they produced in 2010. Lucy Pawlak's <i>I glove u</i> is an interactive piece presented as 'layered' content, which explores the relationship between the artist and the computer interface through using speech recognition and visualisation software.</p>	<p>M+M's <i>Autobahnschleife (Motorway-Loop)</i>, an official proposal for a looped motorway, by being an ongoing work, had already physical elements related to it. They were chosen by the curator to be displayed in the gallery and included a mural, the technical drawing of the motorway and a 3D animation of driving through it. Rosa Menkman's <i>Most Likely You Go Your Way (And I'll Go Into the Tully Woods)</i> is a video that resulted directly out of <i>Acceleration vs. Compression</i> previously presented on <i>or-bits-dot-com</i> which toys with type of video compression, in this case the now obsolete AVI Cinepak.</p>
<p>THE ENGAGEMENT:</p> <p>Type and Navigation Patterns</p>	<p>The audience, especially already existing audience, had a straightforward experience of navigating the artworks, with the option of accessing the Grand Union website to see more detailed information about the gallery component of the exhibition. (see 4.1.3.1. for more details).</p>	<p>The navigation of the exhibition was also straightforward, with additional information about the collaborative exhibition project, such as reading material used for the curators' conversations in the corridor at the entrance. Further connection with the web-based component of the project was provided in the gallery floor plan, where the artworks were listed with short descriptions describing the relationship with the web-based piece and the flyer.</p>

Figure 62: or-bits-dot-com: (*On*) *Accordance*, 2012. Analysis table.

Production acknowledgments:

- Online videos post-production: Kuba Novak
- Identity and marketing material: Endless Supply

A.3.3. or-bits-dot-com: *On the Upgrade WYSIWYG*

Book Foreword. Written by the author of this dissertation and published in *On the Upgrade WYSIWYG*.

On the Upgrade is a publishing series that launched in September 2011 with a customised A3 postal box containing a collection of unbound printed artworks. These works were produced by six artists in response to their online counterparts,* that is the artworks featured in the online exhibitions at or-bits.com.** It is with that postal box that our exploration of print publishing, of other modes of production and distribution across the online and offline, began. With *On the Upgrade – September 2011*, we looked at the concept of moving from the online mode of display to that of the print support—specifically from the web page to the loose printed page—as sites of production and presentation. This led to the creation of six artworks encompassing different print processes and formats, simulating the richness of mediums which can be simultaneously employed when working with a webpage: the folded poster, the oddly-sized digital print, the postcard pad, the booklet, the multi-layered print and the stickers on a square page—all to fit and be contained into one shippable cardboard box. The note, *Dear Reader*, of *On the Upgrade – September 2011* stated: ‘But this space [the postal box] is different: it’s physical and tangible – you can hold it in your hands – it is not programmed to respond to one’s action, and it does not have hyper-links and pages that open within pages. It is not a medium comprised of [all] media, an all-embracing medium: it is a site that hosts a collection of mixed printed works which have moved between different spaces and formats. Yet, there are some similarities or commonalities of intention between the two [the web page and the printed page], or, better to say, possibilities, that offer a reflection on the relationship between the idiosyncratic characteristics of a medium (or, medium comprised of all media) and a site.’ We did so with the aim of suggesting a way of engaging with an artwork that would combine a physical interaction, with a support in the present, with the act of browsing a website as an extension of that interaction, as a complication in the reading of the artwork itself. This is why we stressed the concepts of coupling sites, of a dual mode of engagement and of ‘works [existing] in response to their online counterparts’: ‘You are going to be looking through this collection of works and, ostensibly, link back to the site from which *On the Upgrade* has originated: or-bits.com. You will not be doing that by using hyper-links, but you will most probably be physically moving between sites and formats: between a box and a website, between the offline and the online. You will be shifting to and from these two spaces hosting artworks, two sites that have had an impact on the conception and production of these very same artworks, modifying their inherent “condition”.’ This time, with *On the Upgrade WYSIWYG*, our exploration has taken a different route. The starting point was that of conceiving the book format as an interface and reflecting upon the tensions that might exist between this holdable interface and the web interface along with that of the computer. Thinking about reading patterns, the specificity of engagement with the material presented in a book and about what site-specificity might be when moving between

online and offline modes of presentation are some of the aspects we considered. Also deliberated upon was how to devise a method for arranging material which came from various exhibitions on display on or-bits.com: from *Superposition*, which was launched in September 2009, to *Accordance*, the latest show featured on the website at the time of the making this publication. All this has led to the nine artworks by Jamie Allen, Renee Carmichael, David Horvitz, IOCOSE, Michael Kargl, Sara Nunes Fernandes, Julia Tcharfas, Maria Theodoraki and Richard Sides featured in this publication. Furthermore, a reflection upon Soren Pold's definition of interface (*Interface Realism: The Interface as Aesthetic Form*, 2005) seemed necessary in order to set a common starting point from which to explore the correspondences and divergences between these two sites of display, presentation and consumption: 'What is an interface? The purpose of the interface is to represent the data, the data flow, and data structure of the computer to the human sense, while simultaneously setting up a frame for human input and interaction and translating this input back into the machine. Interfaces have many different manifestations and the interface is generally a dynamic form, a dynamic representation of the changing states of the data or software and of the user's interaction. Consequently, the interface, is not a static material object. Still it is materialised, visualized, and has the effect of a dynamic representational form. [...] Instead of focusing only on functionality and effects, digital art explores the materiality and cultural effects of the interface's representationality. What are the representational languages of the interface? How does it work as text, image, sound, space and so forth, and what are the cultural effects, for instance of the way it reconfigures the visual, textual or auditory?' From here we moved on to thinking about some of the characteristics that a book might have when conceived as an interface, namely in terms of its structure in comparison with that of an online exhibition display. Some of these characteristics can be simply summarised as: the linear reading that a bound book might offer rather than the hyper-linked organisation; the support itself which is made of fixed size, margins and binding, for example; the print processes available, such as the number of colours or the type of print; the kind of relationship with the material, which is often that of flicking pages rather than clicking on links leading somewhere else. These are just some of the structural aspects that have been taken into account and employed to provide the artists with a specific context, or better still, site, to work with. Because each of the artists featured here had worked with different mediums on the website or for the online radio broadcast,^{***} and very often with the merging of text, sound, HTML code, found images and video, they have been invited to 'follow' a set of guidelines when rethinking their work for this new display:

- The book will be an A5 size bound book
- The work should take up five consecutive pages
- The work should be presented as material that spreads linearly across five pages
- The work should be monochrome or black and white with the option to include one full-colour page out of the five.

The responses gathered in the following pages are varied and multiform, which in part might hint at the 'struggle' with following the guidelines in the process of translating the artworks while keeping to their original intentions. From this comes our decision to accompany each artwork with a brief introduction, outlining the relationship between that which is presented here and its online counterpart, and also the decision to publish short interviews with each of the featured artists, with the intention of contextualising their artistic processes, and what the movement from the online to the offline might have entailed for them in terms of production and choices of presentation. *On the Upgrade WYSIWYG* is a book exhibition, or an exhibition in a book. It is a new configuration of selected material that was first presented online or for web broadcast, and it ranges from artworks to excerpts of editorials and interviews. It operates as an artistic, 9 curatorial and design re-alignment of material originally compiled for online consumption for the book interface. And as for *WYSIWYG*, it stands for What You See is What You Get, the slogan for the GUI (graphical user interface) that was widely distributed on the computer market in the 80s, a product of the experiments conducted by Ivan Sunderland (SketchPad) and by Douglas Engelbart (Online System NLS) at the Stanford Research Institute in Menlo Park California, USA, in the 60s. These experiments were made with the idea(l) of offering a more 'real' and user friendly interface for computer users; an interface that would not be too intrusive, moving away from command line interfaces (CLI) which required users to type commands on the computer in order to 'get to something'. The clickable icons, the progressive 'hiding' of the limitations and the control exerted by interfaces started from there.

* *On the Upgrade* – September 2011 contains works by Patrick Coyle, Benedict Drew, Jamie George, Tamarin Norwood, Damien Roach and David Rule. More details available on our website.

** All artists featured in the *On the Upgrade* publishing series (now on its second instalment) have taken part to previous or-bits.com shows by responding to the themes of the exhibition they are in, and engaging with the aesthetic and structural characteristics of the web page within a group exhibition online, or of the web streaming within an online radio exhibition. All exhibitions since or-bits.com inception in 2009 are archived and browsable on our website.

*** In October 2012, or-bits.com presented a week-long radio exhibition, *128kbps objects*, in partnership with the online radio basic.fm (Pixel Palace programme at Tyneside Cinema, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK); an exhibition which was also presented as an edited version at The Metre Room project space, Coventry, UK, in February 2013. More details available on our website.

Analysis table

	TITLE(S)	DATE
	<i>On the Upgrade WYSIWYG</i>	May 2013 (Book launches: 26 and 28 June 2013)
	STATUS	FUNDERS
	Book available for purchase online and in selected bookshops, and for consultation at UK national libraries.	Arts Council England, with the support of The Northern Charter and Banner Repeater (Book Launches).
	CURATOR(S) (occupation)	
	Marialaura Ghidini / Designer: Studio Hato / Proofreader: Jennifer Hodgson	
	EXHIBITION FORMATS	
	POD colour A5 book of translated web-based artworks already produced for <i>or-bits-dot-com</i> exhibitions / Events with performances and readings of the featured artworks.	
	PATTERN of MIGRATION	
	Artworks produced for display on <i>or-bits-dot-com</i> were presented for the book format (FOLLOWED BY) Gallery launch events.	
	ONLINE	OFFLINE
SITE(S)	<i>or-bits-dot-com</i>	Book
ARTISTS	Jamie Allen, Renee Carmichael, David Horvitz, IOCOSE, Michael Kargl, Sara Nunes Fernandes, Julia Tcharfas, Maria Theodoraki and Richard Sides.	Same. Launch events: Jamie Allen with Addie Wagenknecht, Alexander Shakhovskoy, Inbal Lieblich, Jeff Crouse, Lorah Pierre, Michael Chiaramonte; Ken Kirton, Sara Nunes Fernandes and Eva Weinmayr (AND Publishing).
CURATORIAL: Intent	Web-based artworks produced for various web-based exhibitions on <i>or-bits-dot-com</i> , from <i>Superposition</i> (2009) and <i>Accordance</i> (2012)	To explore the relationship between artistic production and distribution on the web and in print, specifically between the web interface and the book interface through the mediation of an online print-on-demand service. (To present the book to local audiences maintaining some of the specificities of the format of the content, either online or in print).

<p>CURATORIAL: Approach</p>	<p>(Artworks had already been produced)</p>	<p>Nine artists were selected in relation to the their connections with the themes explored by the exhibition and invited to propose a print version of their web-based works taking into consideration a series of parameters and instructions related to the different exhibition mediums. Interviews were conducted with each of the artists to contextualise their work in the migration for the book reader. The graphic designer had a key role, and broad freedom within the parameters, in devising the book layout.</p>
<p>ORGANISATION AL STRUCTURE: The Site</p>	<p>The website is structured around two main sections: Programmes, with a list of the web-based exhibitions, on the right-hand side and a series of sections on the right-hand side: About, On the Upgrade, Links and Supporters, Blog, and the latest Offsite Projects, which takes the viewer to the documentation of the offsite exhibitions and events on the blog. (see a more detailed description in 4.1.3.1)</p>	<p>A perfect-bound, colour A5 paperback book, 14.8 x 21 cm, pp.116, within which each artist was given up to five pages.</p>
<p>ORGANISATION AL STRUCTURE: The Exhibition</p>	<p>Upon clicking on the exhibition title under Programmes, an introductory environment opens in a new page. It presents the title of the show, a quotation and the curator's editorial also available as a downloadable PDF. At the top of the editorial there is a list of the artists included in the show, in alphabetical order. Upon clicking on one of them an exhibition environment opens in a pop-up window. Each work has a dedicated page within this window. (see a more detailed description in 4.1.3.1)</p>	<p>The book opens with a project foreword and then presents the artworks followed by the interviews. Each artwork is preceded by two introductory pages: the first presenting a quotation from the curator's editorial of the online exhibition in which the original web-based work was shown, and the second, detailed information about the artwork. Both adopt a horizontal layout to interrupt the reading patterns of the viewer, the former adopts a web-blue colour background with white text, while the latter uses them reversed. The artwork's introduction includes: the name of the artist, title of the work and date. At the top there is a short description of the work and its relationship to the web-based original, mid-page there is the actual reference to the web-based work as "Re: [Name of the artists, Title of the work, Date]" and at the bottom there is the title and link to the online exhibition in which it was featured.</p>

<p>ARTISTIC CONTENT: Site and Mode of Production</p>	<p>(Artworks had already been produced)</p>	<p>The artists had to produce a work that would be A5 in size and presented across three to five pages and respond to the characteristics differentiating the web interface and the book interface, such as the fixed size of a page, the reading patterns generated by pages in succession, the materiality of the page and the one-to-one mode of engagement. The designer of the book also had to take such observations in consideration. (The book launches included a talk, a display of the book and a video of browsing the artworks on the <i>or-bits-dot-com</i> website, as well as internet performances at Banner Repeater.)</p>
<p>ARTISTIC CONTENT: Description of Representative Artworks</p>	<p>The artworks selected for presentation in the book are: Michael Kargl's <i>Orbitals</i>, 2012(INFORMAL), Renee Carmichael's <i>An Homage to the Death of Print</i>, 2012 (ACCORDANCE), Maria Theodoraki's <i>Here</i>, 2009 (SUPERPOSITION), David Horvitz's <i>make_your_own_MFA.pdf</i>, 2012 (INFORMAL), Sara Nunes Fernandez's <i>The sideways boy and the levitating granny, the frontal man and the backside woman, the upside-down man and his wife who had her feet on the ground</i>, 2012 (128kbps objects), Jamie Allen's <i>Is This Thing On?</i>, 2012 (128kbps objects), Richard Sides' <i>The Joyful System 2.0</i>, 2011 (<i>Your pre-approved for a Wire Transfer</i>), (TRUTH), IOCOSE's <i>A Crowded Apocalypse – On Air</i>, 2012 (128kbps objects), Julia Tcharfas' <i>The morning of Ezra Folkman's death, the house switched on and went about its routine just as he had programmed it to do (A Plot Schematic)</i>, 2012 (ACCORDANCE).</p>	<p>Kargl's <i>Orbitals</i> is a 'straightforward' print-out version of the work he previously produced for <i>Informal</i>, in that it was initially conceived as a series of graphic placeholders of the curator's editorials published on the website and had already a downloadable PDF version. David Horvitz's <i>An Informal Conversation</i>, is an edited transcript of the email conversation we had during the development of his work for the web-based exhibition, mirroring the notion of dissemination inherent to his research. IOCOSE's <i>A Crowded Apocalypse – STEPS</i> displays the stages in the generation of the conspiracies theories they worked with in their web-based work <i>A Crowded Apocalypse</i>, which was not displayed on the <i>or-bits-dot-com</i> website.</p>

ENGAGEMENT: Type and Navigation Patterns	The audience, especially the already existing audience, had a straightforward experience of navigating the artworks, with the option of accessing the Grand Union website and view more detailed information about the gallery component of the exhibition. (see 4.1.3.1. for more details).	See Organisational Structure.
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Figure 63: or-bits-dot-com: *On the Upgrade WYSIWYG*, 2012. Analysis table.

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- Book design and marketing material: Studio Hato
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A.3.4. New-Media Curating Discussion List: Edits

Curating on and through web-based platforms online discussion on New-Media Curating Discussion List, November 2012.

Invited correspondents: Mark Amerika, Susan Collins, Amber van den Eeden and Kalle Mattsson, Candice Jacobs, Fay Nicolson, Anna Ramos, Zoë Salditch, Reinhard Storz

A selection of the correspondent’s interventions has been grouped thematically and excerpted from below.

The whole discussion is accessible at <https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A2=ind1211&L=NEW-MEDIA-CURATING&F=&S=&P=15574> (AA.VV., 2012)

INTRODUCTION (excerpt):

In her introduction to the book *Curating with Light Luggage* (2005), curator Maria Lind writes ‘the amnesia surrounding curatorial practice is astounding, as if the spatial and time-related contextualisation of an artwork in exhibitions and their formats were not relevant.’ Most of Lind’s curatorial practice centres around institutional spaces and the possibility to break with classic forms of display within their structural and organisational framework (the museum solo or group exhibition as conceived in the 19th century) in favour of a mode of ‘communicating art’ through working towards creating a ‘museum that would function simultaneously as a production site, a distribution channel and as a venue for conversations’ (*Learning from Art and Artists*, 2001). The reason I am quoting Maria Lind as a starting point for this discussion is that she touches upon some curatorial questions and concerns which I find helpful to ground a discussion about curating online in the broader context of curatorial practice. Lind talks about “creating contexts in relation to and in combination with other existing contexts”—chiming with the curator as editor, filter-feeder, etc. – simultaneous site of production and distribution—see

the web-based platform as both a medium of production and distribution—and she discusses her curatorial practice in relation to site-specificity, in her words 'context-sensitivity'—for which curatorial work affect and is affected by the site in which it takes place seen as both a physical space and intellectual landscape—in our case the web-based platform or the online context.

How does curating online differ from organising gallery exhibitions?

What are current examples of the tensions or complementarity existing between the online (web display and publishing, radio, streaming) and offline (physical exhibition, paper publishing, event) dimensions when curating on and through web-based platforms? Also, is there a difference, for instance, between web as exhibition and web as broadcast and/or publishing?

How does adopting web-based platforms have an impact on the contextualisation of a work, the creation of a curatorial narrative, and communication with an audience?

In what ways does this change the artist-curator relationship and the processes of curatorial production?

ON: <curating web-based platforms; exhibition as platform; interface; hybridity>

FROM: Sarah Cook

I think it is very important that we, as curators working in today's digitally transformed culture, know the ins and outs of the platforms we are using for our curatorial projects—and the differences between them structurally, aesthetically, philosophically!

FROM: Marialaura Ghidini

What I feel is necessary to reflect upon, 'structurally, aesthetically, philosophically' (Sarah), are the what, how and whys of curatorial practice in relation to online work, its various modes of being and workings in relation to a platform and the larger context of artistic/curatorial disciplines.

FROM: Reinhard Storz

Online exhibitions—a unique (hybrid?) media form.

FROM: Simon Biggs

I'm with Heidegger on how we should understand the relationship between humans and things. They are ontologically fluid and of one another. We cannot exist separate to our tools and media and what we do, and why, is an inescapable function of those relations—just as we are ourselves.

FROM: Mark America

The MOGA (glitchmuseum.com) project which is, after all, a net art work but also an experimental form of curation. It's also been identified as a work of electronic literature (or transmedia narrative) which would probably make sense to anyone who is familiar with my work.

FROM: Marc Garrett

A natural shift has evolved redefining how we experience art now, and it has pushed the traditional concept of exhibiting 'art' off its axis. When viewing an exhibition (especially when involving media art), the experience and meaning of an exhibition is different now. It's no longer

an exhibition that we are asked to view or be part of, but an 'interface'. This interface, even if it is within an exhibiting framework can still possess the behaviours and qualities of an interface.

FROM: Reinhard Storz

The fact that, as an author/artist/curator you have a cost-effective means of production and a distribution channel at your disposal and that it has the same technical quality as when it is used by any established institution—that independence is one of the big advantages of working as a curator on the net.

ON: <in-between online and offline; forms and formats of presentation; audience engagement>

FROM: Reinhard Storz

With our online projects we have frequently been invited to festivals and galleries to stage physical installations. The curating solutions have moved from the PC on to a desk and from there to detailed, three-dimensional exhibition concepts. (...) All three presentation formats—the "original" on line, its physical manifestation and its presentation in a lecture—seem equally valid to me.

FROM: Marc Garrett

Does it matter whether it is on-line, can we bring about an understanding via a kind of networked consciousness 'after the net' into the physical realm, but with added sensibilities learnt from our uses of technology with others which add new experiences, values and playful awkwardness?

FROM: Mark America

I should say that both *MOGA* (*glitchmuseum.com*) and *remixthebook* (Univ. of Minnesota, 2011 and *remixthebook.com*) are expandable hybrids that are open to remix / reconfiguration in a variety of exhibition, publication, and performance contexts.

FROM: Susan Collins

Where is the work?—is it on the street, on the net or in the gallery (in two or three of the installations there was a gallery installation showing a live—cinema verité—feed also). Who (and where) is the viewer? Is it the person on the street encountering the (disembodied) voice, the viewer on the net interacting with the street or a third person/position, an observer watching the action and the conversation/s (perhaps from elsewhere in the street or in the gallery) unfold [reference to her work in *Conversation*, 1997]

FROM: Axel Lapp

Having also experienced this piece in Berlin at the time I can see why we are now placing historic value on its imperfections, e.g. the time-lag through the slow internet connection, and the warbling of the sounds through the computer reading in a language that made German, the language of most passers-by, almost impossible to understand. It was the state of technology and it was a new experience. [reference to her work in *Conversation*, 1997]

FROM: Marialaura Ghidini

How do we address the viewer? How do we envisage his/her role in an exhibition, or artwork, scattered through different sites/adopting different forms in relation to the medium used? Are there new issues that should be taken into consideration, or these issues are just the same as for any contemporary artwork, e.g. I could mention the Musée de l'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles by Marcel Broodthaers which could be seen as a sort of precedent, a work that encompassed different mediums and technologies of its time

FROM: Anna Ramos

Or how can we insert the radio into the four walls of the Museum Galleries?

I find this issue problematic and challenging. I may sound conservative, since we are all talking about transversal experiences, the diffusion of frontiers, etc., but my argument goes in the following direction: if there's not a proper space/context for that I ask myself: why should we? We live in this bulimic culture (a term by the Catalan poet Eduard Escoffet) where we expect physical experiences to be as hypertextual and rhizomatic as the online ones, and we feel the urge to facilitate this somehow. [...] I'm very interested in bringing the discursive lines of the radio back to the Museum, but I'm more interested in creating synergies than replicating or adapting experiences.

FROM: Mark America

Omar Kholeif, Cornerhouse, and I, and we began formally developing a strategy for what would be the first remix of the website [glitchmuseum.com] in a gallery context.

FROM: Marc Garrett

In respect of showing works on-line and off-line. We present both, which works well. In the end it's up to the art itself to stand up for itself to initiate dialogue and interest, whatever the medium.

FROM: Amber van den Eeden and Kalle Mattsson

What we found interesting (in order to create a space in the context of the computer where the audience understood that they were visiting an exhibition) is that net art says something about how people respond to the digital, the Internet, the computer. It says something about how our digital environment shapes us and how we give shape to it.

ON: <online production and presentation; web as medium>

FROM: Reinhard Storz

Over the last 15 years, the multimedia capacities of the web have developed in particular. In addition to images and texts, you can include audio and video in streaming mode in your publications, while software-based concepts make interactive, participatory work forms possible. You cannot show originals of paintings, sculptures and installations on the net, and even performances can at best be shown in the form of a video performance or in virtual reality on a platform like Second Life. But net-based art exhibitions do show original works using a broad spectrum of media, and not reproductions of them, as the classic print publications (catalogs, etc.) do.

FROM: Marialaura Ghidini

I would like to quote what Vito Campanelli wrote in his book *Web Aesthetics* in which he

discusses the relationship between form and content in relation to web aesthetics and says that in order to answer to the question 'what does form mean in relation to the web?' it is necessary to introduce the concept of interface; "the interface is a fiction, a form that pretends that data can be held steady [...] the interface given to the subject's senses is nothing but a contingent, momentary form, a form that in that very moment seems to fix a more or less well-defined set of data [...] data that in actuality are always flowing".

FROM: Amber van den Eeden and Kalle Mattsson

For us the challenge was to find a form, a translation into an exhibition, to show net art online to an online audience. We created a space (a virtual stage) in the context of the computer (online) where the audience understood they were going to see art, that they were visiting an exhibition (this happened by using the name of the most significant contemporary art museum of the Netherlands).

FROM: Reinhard Storz

In recent years, I have preferred using the term *Internet magazine*. I said this myself in 2008: The publication form of an Internet magazine with specifically produced art contributions is hardly known yet, so far. Actually, our Internet magazine integrates all qualities of the digital and networked media technology.

FROM: Amber van den Eeden and Kalle Mattsson

To make the exhibition work we had to find a balance in the combination of various elements: concept & form becomes content & aesthetics. This resulted in a virtual exhibition in which net art artworks interact with each other, and become a whole, a unity in one show.

FROM: Candice Jacobs

As an artist I am very interested in modes of display via the manipulation and control of an audience within an exhibition context, and in a way this is something I was also thinking about with the online project Sleeping Upright, where online exhibitions were perhaps less about curation and more about gathering artworks together to create online collections. (...) I should also point out that the artworks on the Accidental Purpose website can also be moved around and re-arranged on the screen by the viewer.

FROM: Zoë Salditch

The works exhibited on The Download are made with the intention to be displayed on any screen or suitable device (i.e. anywhere), but the vast majority of viewers see these works at home sitting at their desks, or on the couch, or lying in bed. I like to imagine that there are viewers sitting in a coffee shop somewhere, it's in the realm of possibility but I don't have the anecdotal evidence to prove it just yet. (...) The opportunity to view works in the safety of your own home certainly provides a different way experience art that you typically* *don't get when in public spaces.

A.4. Curatorial Practice: Interviews with Artists and Collaborators

A.4.1. Interview with Gaia Tedone

Email interview with Gaia Tedone, guest curator of the *Truth* exhibition on or-bits-dot-com.
Tedone, G., 2014. *Interview about Is Seeing Believing?* Interviewed by Marialaura Ghidini [email conversation] June 24, 2014.

M.G.: What was your curatorial role in the project *Truth*?

G.T.: I was a guest curator for the project. I was invited by Marialaura Ghidini to collaborate with her and Christine Takengny on the autumn issue of or-bits-dot-com. Marialaura had some preliminary thoughts on how she wanted to develop the programme, and after few Skype meetings we established a common ground upon which we built three parallel projects. *Is Seeing Believing?* was my first curatorial work online. The theme *Truth* developed out of several conversations inspired from Žižek's text *Good Manners in the age of Wikileaks* and a shared interest in somehow questioning the democratic claim of the web as a space of freedom, in light of the recent developments of Wikileaks and of the role that social media played during the Arab Spring. The opening questions of my contributions were: in a world in which everyone can be the author of his/her own news, how do we assess what is true or false? And how is this shifting power's relationships and individual agency?

M.G.: How did you approach organising the exhibitions? I know that it was your first experience of curating an online show but you presented a quite ambitious project commissioning eleven artists and choosing to use your web page as if it was a multimedia magazine made of many layers of content, could you tell me more about your choices?

G.T.: I took quite a strong 'editorial' stand in this project, approaching a number of artists whose practices I found compelling and asking them to respond to a specific curatorial brief, which consisted in a short text and two images: first, the image of Caravaggio's iconic painting *The Incredulity of Saint Thomas* (1601-1603), depicting Apostle Saint Thomas' unwillingness to believe without direct, physical and personal evidence in Jesus Christ's resurrection. Second, the image published in the news showing President Obama, Hilary Clinton, Joe Biden, along with members of the national security team, watching Bin Laden's death live. The idea of the magazine came at a later stage once I began to receive the contributions and it was pretty much content-driven. It felt like the most appropriate format to collide the different types of responses while giving to the project an aesthetic and conceptual cohesiveness. or-bits-dot-com provided me with technical support in terms of coding and web-design, while I was left totally free to develop my own curatorial strategy.

M.G.: Were the artworks commissioned to be site-specific to the platform? How did you go about this? What were the challenges and perhaps the unexpected benefits?

G.T.: Some of the contributors, like for instance Jon Rafman, Nate Harrison, Alterazioni Video,

The International Errorist and Foundand, have used the web extensively as the source and context of their works. Others, as in the instance Azin Feizabadi and Oliver Ressler & Martin Krenn, brought to the project their experiences of artists working within specific public spaces. A couple of interventions, such as the ones of MDR, Sadia Shirazi and Alessandro Sambini were specially conceptualised and produced for or-bits-dot-com. I was positively surprised by the artists' responsiveness and their willingness to contribute to such an open brief. It was interesting to see how certain projects translated into the online as documentation of off-line instances, while other emerged as new original projects.

M.G.: Do you have any memory of the conversations you had with the artists, perhaps some of the problems that you encountered when organising the show or some of the parts that were easier?

G.T.: I remember that there was a question of protecting the privacy of a person who was part of one of the artist's contribution. It made me think about the relationship between vulnerability and exposure on the web. The technical aspect of the project was quite challenging. The webpage attempted to create a visual cohesiveness to the project, but it also asked the viewer to be actively engaged with the navigation. It was an attempt to fix in time the volatility of the web, maintaining in its content the associative and eclectic character of a browsing session, yet proposing a specific vantage point. In a sense it was like an exhibition, in which the works are in dialogue with each other, but have their own space and are framed by the specificity of the context.

M.G.: In the light of this experience, what do you think is best practice in terms of curating online? Did it impact your curatorial practice offline?

G.T.: I found the context of the web extremely challenging from a curatorial perspective, as it required the ability to work simultaneously on different elements, from the editing of content to the formalization of a coherent visual output, employing an approach both flexible and rigorous. It felt like a condensed version of a 'traditional' show, yet faster in pace and with a different degree of curatorial control. It came together fairly organically. The Web I think poses a number of important questions, especially in relation to the short attention span we generally dedicate to what we read or look at when surfing the net. Would the type of art being produced have to play or interject with this? How would it change the public's experience or engagement? These are all open questions for me. The project with or-bits was an occasion, or rather a space, to critically reflect on a number of issues I was interested in: it evolved into a conference and led to further research which is still on-going and it was an important step in my curatorial practice.

A.4.2. Interview with Tim Dixon of Open File

Email interview with Tim Dixon (excerpt), guest curator of (On) Accordance exhibition on or-bits-dot-com and Grand Union.

Dixon, T., 2014. *Interview about Hashfail*. Interviewed by Marialaura Ghidini [email conversation] July 1, 2014.

M.G.: I wonder if you could describe how the *Hashfail* event, intermingled with the (*On*) *Accordance* exhibition project, specifically in relation to the mission of your own project Open File and your curatorial role within it? I am referring both to the process of conceiving it and as a reflection after its delivery.

T.D.: Open File exists across the three platforms of live events, printed publications and online content and exists to explore the interactions between these platforms, so being invited to produce a live event alongside (*On*) *Accordance* was very apt. *Hashfail* acted as the first in a series of three events that explored physical/digital relations and took its name from the glitches that can occur when transferring data via peer-to-peer networks using torrent files; as we put it at the time: “A Hashfail occurs when ‘seeded’ files have become corrupt and therefore certain ‘bits’ of data cannot be received. Numerous Hashfails lead to the loss of quality and gradual decomposition of a file, shifting it ever-further from its origin, subjecting it to a new type of physicality and texturing.” The metaphors of ‘texturing’, translation and transfer provided fertile conceptual ground for a series of newly commissioned works that were presented over an evening alongside the exhibition, as well as a curated torrent file made available alongside the event and a printed publication.

M.G.: What does the exploration of this interaction do to your curatorial work?

T.D.: A central concern in the Open File project is the role that dispersion and dissemination play within contemporary art practice. When we develop events and series we try to develop themes and curatorial contexts that reflexively consider our own conditions of operation. The project began life as blog—we made use of a conversational format where we would take it in turns to post an artwork, essay or some other found content, each in response to what the other had posted. This was initially a device that created an open-ended structure that would mean we could keep posting and not run out of ways to go. Eventually we came to discussing how to make the project appear in physical space and initially wanted to consider what it meant to occupy a physical space, which ended up being the theme for our first series. This was followed by a series examining the idea of temporary occupations of space and the creation of ‘virtual’ spaces (in the old fashioned sense of this word). When it came to our third series—the *Hashfail* event alongside (*On*) *Accordance* being the first of this series—we had been thinking through the relationships between the physical and digital aspects of our project a lot and wanted to explore this thematically. The context of the exhibition and its relationship to the or-bits-dot-com project was apt for this conversation to grow from. Taking cues from essays we’d been reading—*Dispersion* by Seth Price, Hito Steyerl’s *In Defence of The Poor Image* and Artie Vierkant’s *Image Object Post-internet*—we wanted to consider the specificities of transitioning between the physical and the digital more closely and try to examine the implications of transitions going both ways [physical-digital/digital-physical]. It was around this time that we were working with designers An Endless Supply to create our new website too—we were very aware of the fact that when we work in the physical realm we can exercise quite close control over the context in which work appears, whereas online it’s not so much like that. We wanted to build a non-linear, unpredictable mode of viewing work on our website where connections we

wouldn't anticipate or control could occur and arise out of the content we put up there. I should probably mention that the website contains versions of works presented at live events reiterated for online circulation. Working in this way and repeatedly engaging with this way of working means the lines between what we do online and what we do in the gallery space can become variously more or less blurred or more or less distinct. We're able to examine the specificities and the similarities of working in digital or physical space, and find productive transitions between the two.

A.4.3. Interview with Cheryl Jones of Grand Union

Email interview with Cheryl Jones (excerpt), co-curator of *(On) Accordance* exhibition at Grand Union.

Jones, C., 2014. *Interview about (On) Accordance*. Interviewed by Marialaura Ghidini [email conversation] July 1, 2014.

M.G.: What was your curatorial role in the project *(On) Accordance*?

C.J.: I was co-curator, selecting artists from or-bits-dot-com's previous projects in collaboration with Tim Dixon and Marialaura Ghidini in order to translate works from the online space for a physical exhibition at Grand Union. My main role was in co-ordinating the exhibition element of the project at Grand Union.

M.G.: Can you tell me how you went about migrating and perhaps translating the artworks on display on the or-bits-dot-com website for the gallery exhibition? I am interested in your curatorial approach as well as in the way you structured the exhibition for example.

C.J.: As a starting point each curator selected works they felt would be appropriate for this exhibition. We brought these shortlists together in order to find connections between works and approaches that could create a coherent exhibition. After this process of discursive decision making, we contacted the selected artists in order to let them think about how they would adapt their works to translate into the physical gallery space.

M.G.: Do you have any memory of the conversations you had with the artists, perhaps some of the problems that you encountered when organising the show or some of the easiest part of it? If you have some practical examples it would be great.

C.J.: The works in video formats were very straightforward as the artists (e.g. Damien Roach, Irini Karayannopoulou, Rosa Menkman) created files which they wanted displayed as projections or on screens. Each artist adapted the work for this display mechanism, realising that the viewer's encounter would be entirely different from that through a website. M+M's work, although more difficult to install, was also a straightforward process as they had already displayed elements as a physical work previously to this exhibition. Richard Sides created an almost entirely new work, although it was a re-mix of images and ideas from previous works, thinking through the ideas in his online artwork for or-bits-dot-com. He created a more rough and ready-looking work that used materials found in the gallery and studio workshop, so it sort

of grew out of what he had to hand. This for me was the most interesting encounter as it was my only physical encounter with any of the artists. We talked at some length about the elements making up the work during the process of making.

M.G.: If you were to describe the relationship between the or-bits-dot-com website and the gallery exhibition, what do you think were the points of contacts, and perhaps of distance?

C.J.: For me the works on or-bits-dot-com (for the *(On) Accordance* project) specifically explore the notion of platform in their content, whilst the works at Grand Union did this in a more tangential way—i.e. the works had been created in response to other themes, but the process of their translation provided the link to this notion, rather than the content of the work itself. This made the project much more interesting for me—if the two elements approached the exhibition concept in the same way, it would cancel out the need for having both elements. I think Scott Mason’s audio recording of the physical exhibition for his project *Listen to the Gallery* was an interesting next step, providing a further translation of the exhibition, and a new way in which to encounter the works within it.

M.G.: Did this collaboration teach you something new about online commissions and display and the tensions that it might have with the physical space?

C.J.: Yes, it made me much more aware of the use of the online space as a potential platform and the way it could be used to create a new dimension to an artists’ practice, or a particular work. We are always thinking about the way we might interpret exhibitions for an online audience, and this has opened up new ways of thinking towards that.

M.G.: How do you think the audience responded to this exhibition project, which had two components, online, and offline displays, along with a downloadable sound mix?

C.J.: It’s difficult to know how many actually experienced both—I didn’t have any conversations with people who had seen the online side of the exhibition in any detail before coming to encounter the exhibition at Grand Union. I think we could have done more to bridge that gap with a series of talks live in the gallery.

A.4.4. Artists Interviews for *On the Upgrade WYSIWYG*

These nine interviews were published in the *On the Upgrade WYSIWYG* book to accompany the artworks of Jamie Allen, Renee Carmichael, David Horvitz, IOCOSE, Michael Kargl, Sara Nunes Fernandes, Julia Tcharfas, Maria Theodoraki and Richard Sides. They present the artists’ reflection on the process of translating works produced for a series of web-based exhibitions on or-bits-dot-com to the A5 print-on-demand book; May 2013 (see 4.4)

Jamie Allen

M.G.: The Fluxus scores that were broadcast as part of *128kbps objects* online radio exhibition derive from your Fluxus performance work based on Skype chat, and both these works are instructional, collaborative and event-based. Where does your interest in Fluxus scores come from and how does this relate to your exploration of the way people engage with technology

(digital or not) in the light of the contexts of production/display I have just mentioned?

J.A.: The way I think about technologies, and technical media (by which I mean the conflagration of communications, content and algorithms we know as the digital) is largely to do with how they structure thought. It's a hard thing to express in words (just another medium). Another thing you might say is that technical media are the infrastructure of thought. From the moment we started scratching lines on the inside of caves, we started reshaping our minds, and vice-versa ad-infinitum, until you wind up with these complex constellations of materials that we call computers and the like. I think Fluxus scores fit this kind of thinking really well because of their particular emphasis on freedom-through-instruction. The ultimate freedoms we can achieve in this world, it seems to me, are brought about through the realisation that we're always within, always enclosed, always entangled in complex systems, most of them technical or technological. Fluxus scores are exciting because they allow you to give yourself up to the instructional, to release yourself to a set of (often arbitrary) sequences and actions. This is rather freeing: to choose to be told what to do, to de-subjectify yourself intentionally (which is a pretty big contradiction, but that's okay).

M.G.: One of the main elements of the Fluxus scores for *128kbps objects* was the background noise, the sounds of the places in which you read and recorded the instructions, which would create a sort of imaginary scenario in the mind of the listener. This scenario would also enmesh with the environment of the people you chose to be the performers of the scores; thus it would relate to a third scenario, the setting in which these potential performers were at the moment of the broadcast. How has working with the printed page—which somehow is a way of fixing a moment in time—impacted the work, or better still, the mode in which you speak to your audience, who were previously a listener at set times during the day and now become a reader able to access the work at any time?

J.A.: These spaces you speak of are indeed a big part of the piece. I think something about the printed page probably loses aspects of these imagined and real spaces and how they overlap, as you suggest, because they're no longer concurrent, they're asynchronous and delayed through the use of the printed material. We also lose the voice, and the temporal and non-performer specificity that was originally intended. That said, I have no idea where the book will wind up, and so in that sense it's still a broadcast to whomever, and the works are, as ever, created for no-audience and no-performer. So it's nice that these printed elements might be read by someone on a train who decides to enact the gestures that are suggested (or not), or while sitting on the toilet some Sunday morning... In a way, the answer to the impact question is muted a bit if we consider that there is always a setting, always a space. I'm not sure I agree that the printed page is a way of fixing a moment in time, either. I read pretty slowly.

M.G.: In your view does the migration of the scores across these different mediums (and sites of distribution)—the Skype chat, the online radio broadcast, the publication—affect the work? How could object-hood, in your view, be described in relation to this movement, or perhaps in the larger framework of your work and research with sound, technology and collaborative settings?

J.A.: I think more than anything these different transductions make the Fluxus scores'

instructional style different. There are subtleties to these media in terms of how they en-frame, how they demand things of you, of the performance and performer of the score. Some of them are quite passive (reading letters on a page is arguably pretty passive) and some are quite demanding (I'd imagine hearing my voice on the radio, particularly if you know me, asking you to do things would be pretty hard not to respond to in some way). This helps highlight how we're always on or always within, as I mentioned earlier. There is no outside, never was. There's just different ways of being inside. An awareness and mindfulness of this is really what underpins the collaborations, media, sound, technology and artwork I love best. It is something I think is quite important to remind us of.

M.G.: I have one more question: what does interface mean to you, in terms of site of production and display?

JA: Interface is really just a particular kind of technical media, and it's a bit of an unfortunate term as it seems to downplay the spectrum of objects and devices that are always already interfacing histories and cultures, for example, objects from another place, or heirlooms that signify histories. Interfaces, of-the-present, when they're considered, highlight the general technicality of life...

Renee Carmichael

R.C.: This is the beginning of a larger research project into the structures of the internet and print, the new ways in which they can be explored. I am looking at the possibilities arising from them and how this effects / changes / creates the content.

M.G.: By 'structures of the internet' do you mean, specifically in relation to the work you made for Accordance, the technical supports used for writing, such as the different web-based platforms you adopted for producing and displaying the work? If so, how does the infrastructure of the web affect the process of writing, and thus the content?

R.C.: In terms of structure for *An Homage to the Death of Print*, I was thinking more along the lines of how the webpage looks in itself, in other words the interface. When opening the work, the viewer is faced with images of webpages that seem to have the same standardized formats, hence all the blue images. Of course the interface is more than just the way it looks, it is created through the technical support of code, for which I have used the metaphor of the control room here. So, in a way the infrastructure does affect the content. The code helps to dictate how the content will be divided into sections on the webpage – there is a header, footer, main content, and each of these have their own 'div' tag or style and the content must confirm to them to be easily read, for example. At the same time, the code must borrow and refer to the larger control structures of what print dictates. What I am suggesting then is a series of references to the way a printed page is structured, a 'how to read' of what a page is.

M.G.: In the process of making the work how did the adoption of the various interfaces impact upon the content of the work in the publication, *A Reading of the Remains*?

R.C.: I was thinking about the content, the text and the structure altogether; I had already planned the way that the text would display in different formats because I had chosen the

formats ahead of time. So I did not explore so much the effects they might have on each other. However, the relationship between content and structure became different when I was creating *A Reading of the Remains*. I originally decided to print one of the linked pages from Safari and then view it in InDesign to see what would happen. After doing so, the content was somehow missing, which wasn't planned. When I then attempted to print from Firefox all content was there, but the details of the background were not. This is when the idea of working with the physicality of the 'binding' came out, which I've used metaphorically as a contract via which the webpages would be tied to some sort of place and materiality. In the same way that we can only read a book when we hold it in front of us, we can only see a webpage properly when it is online, that is when the code—its material component—runs. Content, then, is always visible in relationship to the place, as in the structure within which it appears, even if that place is the code, which is constantly being run and in movement.

M.G.: How might the layout offered by the web services you employed, such as the Office suite Google Docs, and Wix website templates, differ from the page in a book?

R.C.: A webpage actually reveals the way in which it has been controlled more than a book does. Even though this control is hidden, if you know where to look you can view source code and see how its structure has been formed. Whereas, a book page usually comes to us as a finished product, you cannot readily see the design template, or the designers who had created it, from having the book in your hands. In other words, the structures of what makes a book a book are often taken for granted, whereas the structures of a webpage are seen as dynamic and changeable. Another difference is that in a book there are actual, real, constraints, such as the size of a page, while in a webpage the constraints are a construction—often borrowed from the rules of book design. Webpages do have real restraints too, determined by the various coding languages, but I don't think that these limits are used in the same way as the real constraints of a book; for example, they often come from what we think an interface should look like rather than the code. That said, in both cases, the constraints are not only due to the material form from which they stem (page size, code language) but from the larger cultural structures and histories that throughout time have come to create the form of a book, and eventually the webpage, as we understand them today. These are just a few initial thoughts...

M.G.: Where does your interest in print and publishing come from? You started with the publication *Flee Immediately!* and I wonder how these works you have produced for *(On) Accordance* and *On the Upgrade WYSIWYG* tie into your larger research?

R.C.: After finishing my MA in Interactive Media at Goldsmiths (London), I started to take an interest in code as a form of writing and structure. The interest in print and publishing just came naturally out of that and so I started *Flee Immediately!* *Flee Immediately!* started out as a space through which to experiment with technological systems, and how they function, in a way whereby technology would be seen as an integral part of our lives, as something that extends beyond the digital and the computer – a river is as much a technology as the latest smartphone. The adoption of the printed form, in my view, would then illustrate how exploring technology permeates all parts of the world we interact with—I wanted print to become an

object, and as such, a technology in its own right. *Flee Immediately!* has been an experiment from the very beginning and I am constantly trying to explore different formats with each new issue. As for the works I have made for or-bits-dot-com, I went a step back and reflected on the idea of printing online. I feel that much of the medium of the internet as a contemporary technology has not been explored. Since it is a medium which visibly shows its own changes and evolutions faster than technologies in the past, it gives me a useful entry point from which to explore technological systems—how they appear, how they are embedded in our lives and what power might flow through them.

M.G.: Last question, what does interface mean to you, in terms of site of production and display?

R.C.: Following the above, the interface then becomes a tool through which we can explore and expose different flows of power as well as reveal various cultural relationships with technology. It becomes a place to use, to think critically about, and to experiment with ideas from within the technology itself rather than from the outside; this inside is a liminal space between what we know and what we don't know that once exposed allows us to start questioning and forming ideas.

David Horvitz

The interview with the artist was presented in the book as an actual artwork.

M.G.: What does interface means to you, as a site of production and display?

D.H.: It's a place for the convening of the fingertips (production) and eyeballs (display). The only two other times these two body parts convene are when you have an itchy eye, or when your friend is annoying and you poke them in the eye.

IOCOSE

M.G.: A Crowded Apocalypse is a multi-layered project exploring the division and anonymity of internet labour and its possible effects. I understand that presenting it online – in the form of a website that also operates as a narrative database – has required painstaking work. The project was first presented at AND Festival (Liverpool, UK) and at a gallery exhibition at Furtherfield (London, UK) along with a slideshow, but has also been presented in other gallery exhibitions in Europe where I think you worked with other formats of presentation. For the website you have been gathering various materials to present in a user-friendly display, whilst 'outside' of that space it seems that the project can be displayed through disassembling it into its different components, somehow mirroring the process of 'commissioning micro tasks'. I wonder if you can tell me more about why you have decided to release the project on a website, the process of organising the material and what it means to you to have different iterations of the online display offline?

I.: The pain has been to find a way to locate ourselves in the production process. What could be the role played by ourselves in this work, how could we communicate the acts of commissioning, organising, archiving, selecting, displaying the material we received over one

year? We thought there was a question of authorship in this project, of our presence in the work itself, which somehow had to be addressed. That is where the narrative aspect of the project comes from, which originates from a declared distance (which is neither impartiality nor neutrality) from the crowdsourced work. There are numerous other ways through which we step back from the work we present. The pyramid structure of the website (which is probably made more clear in *STEPS*, the part of the project presented in this publication) is an example, also the offline installations have a clear symmetric organisation (the 81 photos are framed and displayed in equal distance from each other). At one point we thought that the most appropriate way to exhibit the unmanageable and chaotic material we were receiving was to map this material and show the rationale for its production. In a sense this is also our presence in the project: not outside of it, but not yet fully involved, commissioning and selecting but not producing it. This is what ties together the exhibitions of *A Crowded Apocalypse*, both on the website and in the gallery spaces, where there is a fairly clear structure and hierarchy between images, overlaying information, and actors.

M.G.: A part of the project, *A Crowded Apocalypse – On Air*, was presented during the *128kbps objects* radio exhibition for which readings of some of the tasks performed through crowdsourcing were recorded and broadcast, adding another layer which shows the plurality of forms that the project can contain and use to speak to an audience. How do the recordings relate to the project?

I.: The recordings were based on the texts of the conspiratory narratives that we received during the production of *A Crowded Apocalypse*. When challenged with the idea of giving an audio form to our work, we thought that this material could be used again as part of a further commission to the crowd. The possibilities are still quite open, recently we have been working with commissioned videos (*A Crowded Apocalypse—How to make a bomb*, which is soon to be released).

M.G.: Within your work, you often exploit the workings of the platforms you decided to operate with, from ubiquitous online video channels to gallery spaces, to name a few. I feel that there's a very strong element in your work which is about exposing the mechanisms often taken for granted by the platform users themselves, to the point of breaking down these mechanisms to reveal the nonsensical in them. Often you do so in relation to contemporary web-based communication systems, by taking advantage of their language, how do you achieve this? I mean how do you appropriate these languages and use them for your work? I suppose much of the work involves observations of patterns and behaviours...

I.: More generally we try to understand what could be the meanings of a platform, or service. The *NoTube* project is an example, an on-going work where we try to use the logic of preservation of video files, guaranteed by Youtube.com to its users, as the basis for an artistic intervention. *A Crowded Apocalypse* approaches crowdsourcing from a similar perspective. Crowdsourcing is used and understood, not necessarily in an essentialist or ideological way (opposing what crowdsourcing 'is' to what it should be) but more in its potential to be opened to unexpected forms of life. Which is, indeed, also a way to critique the ways in which

crowdsourcing has been used so far, but it's not in any way an attempt to define it or to think about in oppositional binarisms. If it is a language, then how can this language talk about the same topics differently, how can it reflect on its own grammar?

M.G.: For this publication the production process of *A Crowded Apocalypse*—the commissioning of tasks—is revealed, acting as a sort of reader for the project website, an offline navigation menu. It exposes the five different levels of the project through a combination of text, diagrams and images. I wonder if you have anything you'd like to say about the process that has led to *A Crowded Apocalypse – STEPS*? For example, have you encountered limitations with working with the format of the book in contrast to the fluidity that the online display might offer, or perhaps new possibilities?

I.: We thought about this part of the project as a sort of guideline for the website, a booklet to guide the reader through the navigation of the online space. Again, this is a further attempt to enrich *A Crowded Apocalypse* with maps and orientations, in an otherwise nonsensical production of paranoid material. Maybe you can read *STEPS* as a sort of second screen experience, only it's not a screen but printed matter.

M.G.: Last one, what does interface mean to you, as a site of production and display?

I.: It's difficult to say, as some of our works have been more explicitly focused on interfaces (e.g. *Win Nothing Day*, which was mostly based on a not-working website), others less explicitly (*NoTube* and *A Crowded Apocalypse* probably), while some others not at all (*Doughboys*, *Sunflower Seeds on Sunflower Seeds*, *Sokkomb*). Obviously it could be argued that the interface is always already there, somehow, as there is always a moment of relating to a form of representation. Let's say that we agree with Soren Pold, but also with Alex Galloway (*The Interface Effect*, 2012), that interfaces are an effect, and they need to be interrogated for their political aspect. The ways in which we pose this question changes from time to time, depending on how we play with the performative aspect of our projects – how we deal with the co-constitution of ourselves, the spectators or users, and the multiple material forms of the artworks.

Michael Kargl

M.G.: In the introduction to the work *Orbitals* on or-bits-dot-com you state that you had used the website itself 'as material for the production' of the piece. You have translated my editorials for each of the exhibitions prior to the one you are featured in into visual patterns, through the use of mathematical language. I know you have been exploring computer-generated works, I assume within your larger interest in configurations of knowledge—you even have a work with the same title! Can you tell me more about this, your relationship with computer technology and with online infrastructures?

M.K.: Computer technology and online infrastructures have been interesting to me as material to work with in a literal sense. It began years ago when my interests shifted from the tools which I used to produce content and the content I was employing, to questioning the media and their conditions themselves. It was evident that by interrogating the media, I had to acquire a lot of

knowledge to ask proper questions. Thus I learned a little about programming, protocols, and other network / machine related stuff. Then again, moving back and forth between what I had made and what I had learnt, it occurred to me that my thinking and doing is crucially shaped by these 'simple units of knowledge' which I mentioned in the introduction of *Orbitals*. For example, if you start to learn programming it's absolutely essential to be aware of this kind of knowledge; you have to break down everything into tiny steps and arrange them in a logical order. It's not as simple as saying: 'Go straight for 100 meters'. There has to be a definition of what 'going' means, what sort of direction 'straight' exactly is and how far '100 metres' really is in relation to what a machine can know about distance. All this is something that we, in our daily lives, never think about but obviously know. So, what are these simple units of knowledge that we constantly use but are not aware of?

M.G.: *Orbitals* online was created bearing in mind that it would be shown in a publication later on, so you have been playing with online and offline sites of display in connection with printing processes, I believe. The way in which the piece is visualised on or-bits-dot-com is different in size and resolution to the one that is presented in the publication. What do you think this hints at, especially in relation to much of the current research done into e-publishing, such as the ways in which our reading patterns have been impacted by online forms and formats of presentation?

M.K.: First and foremost, it just shows that there is a difference, I think. The implications of this difference are really dependent on the point of view. In connection to e-publishing, I would say it might just ask if it is a good idea, for example, to call a printout of something you have online a publication or vice-versa. These media are different and so – obviously – are the results. Of course current developments in online publishing are showing us huge possibilities for e-publications, but the state of the art is still the simple conversion of a paper book into a webpage or PDF (or the printed website). Going back to *Orbitals*, another thing that one could recognize is that – if adopting the perspective of the user – when browsing the hatched areas of the work one tends to lose orientation a little bit. This surely is not possible with the pages of a book, there are always the edges of the page which are visible – at least when you're not so close to the point that content becomes unreadable. Is this about the real limitations and control versus the virtual limitlessness and loss of control? I don't know.

M.G.: Lastly, you have been extensively researching how web-based art might exist in a physical space, both as a gallery display and in printed format. How do you relate to the idea of exhibition as interface and site-specificity?

M.K.: What is an interface? If an interface is understood as a tool for translating content between systems then there might be some similarity between an exhibition and an interface. Ideally an exhibition takes content and translates it, meaning that there is a huge part which is interpretation and only a small part is concerned with literal transfer, if any. Such a procedure (or 'mode', to speak with Walter Benjamin) adds layers of meaning and enriches the user experience – as one might put it in regard to interfaces. Site-specificity probably does it the other way round: translating qualities of a specific site (physical, virtual or relational) into works

(of art or other entities), so the work itself becomes a translation (or an interface).

Sara Nunes Fernandes

M.G.: To me *The sideways boy...* is a story where earth materials and their qualities are reconfigured within the framework of what seems like a children's storybook, in which the characters are not only their personifications, but are also users and consumers. What is your interest in earth materials, and the use humans make of them? And why a fictional story, a tale of magic worlds, such as Thing Land and The Empty Lands?

S.N.F.: Your brief stated quite clearly that you were interested in ideas of object-hood in works conceived to exist only online. My first thought was to come up with a text drenched in realness and matter to playfully contrast with the lightness of the online streaming format. This is one of the reasons why the story is constructed with earthly materials. I wanted the listener to be able to visualize the basic textures of the story – mud, dirt and stones – and use these references to help her picture the more intangible sets described in the narrative. The story speaks of a journey from Thing Land to the The Empty Lands and back. The inhabitants of Thing Land—*the sideways boy, the levitating granny, the frontal man, the backside woman, the upside-down man and his wife who had her feet on the ground*—are made from the same materials as everything else on their planet—mud, dirt and stones—and their visual configuration as a group of characters forms the planet's shape, like separate pieces of a magic cube. I hope that Thing Land will appear to the listener not too dissimilar from a heavy blob of dirt, and The Empty Lands much lighter. The first is a planet where breathing air and water have been replaced by dirt, which contrasts drastically with The Empty Lands, where there is air and gravity instead. I see these two places as loci of the acts of artistic creation and display in the same way that a blob of undefined rawness might be shaped by the artistic intention. In some of my work, complicated human constructions like these are caricatured, and I was trying to come up with a creation myth for my own artistic practice.

M.G.: When either listening to or reading the story one can almost feel these materials and their qualities, it is stressed in the language you use and also in the instrumental sounds played for the broadcast version, which loosely mimic sounds that one would hear, let's say, if playing with clay or stones. All this is stripped down to the direct interaction with the material, where technological tools don't appear. How much is this related to your sculptural work? How does translating your everyday studio practice into something intangible like an audio story and its script come about? What were the challenges, if any? I also wonder if this has freed you from any burden of the material you usually work with?

S.N.F.: Like I said before I wanted the piece to exist within the lightness of the audio streaming format though evoking images of heaviness. Me, you and most of the other artists in the show are part of the lucky generation that witnessed the Internet become an integral part of society. To try to imagine the unquantifiable amount of data that exists online nowadays (and is growing every second) is not dissimilar from our own idea of an expanding Universe. I was thinking about the ways in which digital information also occupies space in computer chips around the

globe. There's a dislocation between the place where this information is stored and where the user is accessing it. When I was writing the piece I wanted to evoke this idea of weight that exists remotely, away from the weightlessness of tab browsing, in the same way the story tries to represent ideas of a studio practise that exists remotely, most often away from the exhibition space. In the sound piece there's the sound of a drill, which is an electronic device, so I wouldn't say that I was avoiding the use of non-natural gadgets, rather I was using what was at hand, at home and in the studio. I also play the guitar and other instruments in the piece, I am also the one who narrates the story, and so this casualness in the making, in working with what's there, parallels my own creative process in the studio. I have a couple of musical projects going alongside my object-making practice and so I wouldn't say that it was 'freeing me from a burden' of making work in the studio. On the contrary, the decision to write a story like this was a completely different process that made me think about my work albeit remotely.

M.G.: This work was presented as a sound piece and a live event and now as written text. All forms that, in a way, you use in the development and production of the work in your studio, but each of them has also been distributed via different mediums: the internet radio, the gallery event, and soon via a publication. Does this impact upon the way you think about this work, or the way you think the audience will engage with it? For example, would the lack of sound in the script mean taking out an important aspect of the work? I just wonder how you feel about these transformations, especially in relation to the fact that *The sideways boy...* is in itself about transformations and the possibilities inherent in such processes.

S.N.F.: The piece was conceived originally for your radio programme. But the few attempts at performing other texts I had made in the past have prepared me to think about transmission: how to transmit this story about objects and my studio practice through storytelling. I have a music project called Colin Min Sai where I play solo guitar and sing my own lyrics. And I am at a point where I am figuring out how these other projects, my writing, and studio practice can merge or intersect. *The sideways boy...* is about a journey between worlds of different densities and so I think it fits well with these transformations between mediums. This is a story that can be told several times in many different ways. In storytelling each recounting of a story is always slightly different from the preceding ones, a story changes and grows with time. Inevitably this will happen with *The sideways boy...* And because of this, for *On the Upgrade WYSIWYG*, I decided to publish the script in order to document the actual piece as it played on the radio – hence the sound notations. This story, in fact, will be mutating with its future retelling.

M.G.: Last question, what does interface mean to you, as a site of production and display?

S.N.F.: Do you mean the online interface? Or any mediated medium? I think I half answered this question a while back in our conversation. It pleases me to think about the real weight of digital information being filtered through the screen, the way that the browser's window, in this case, exists as a poltergeist of the real thing.

Maria Theodoraki

M.G.: *the line* is an on-going work of yours that started with the *Here en Route* exhibition at the

James Taylor Gallery (London) in 2010, that itself had developed from *Here*, the web-based piece you made for the *Superposition* exhibition on or-bits-dot-com. Some time ago we discussed the relationship between the line and the on-going performative installation at the gallery as your 'need to grasp the distance [between your home and the exhibition space] physically'. In fact, during the show, you covered that distance daily on foot and knocked on every door on your way asking the inhabitants to take a picture of your work on the website as displayed on their computers. I read the line as a performative work, a kind of daily studio practice, which abstractly re-traces your steps during the exhibition. Can you tell me more about how the process-based and performative nature of *Here en Route* relates to *Here*?

M.T.: First of all, I want to stress that I understand every work of art as performative; when I see an art piece I see a person acting to bring it in front of me, as a work. Also, I don't think I would talk about studio practice; I have drawn the line in hundreds of places, from pubs to airplanes and from parks to waiting rooms. It is such a long process that it had to become part of my everyday life. The work *Here* is the process of creating a place by bringing close two postcards which show separate parts of the world. Moreover, it was conceived to be seen through accessing the Internet, a place elsewhere to me. By positioning the viewer at multiple crossroads he / she becomes the single connecting point between these different places. With *Here en Route* I explored this same process of connecting spaces by focusing on different distances: the distance between my home and the gallery, the place in front of my computer screen and the place in front of the computer screen of a stranger neighbour—416 neighbours to be exact, as this is the number of doors that separate my home from the gallery—the physical space of a room in a house, and the imaginative space created in the view of an artwork.

M.G.: So *the line* is a sort of daily ritual. What does it mean to you to freeze this on-going activity into a fixed form like that of a notebook, which has now become a series? And what does it mean to extrapolate a section of the notebook for this specific publication, in terms of the engagement with your audience, the people who will read it and flick through its pages?

M.T.: *the line* is the notebooks; is the pages; is the pens; is the ruler; is the days; is the sums. It is not a series. It is an on-going process happening every day and it is new every day. However, the line is mainly a mark, but, because this mark is already thousands of pages long, it becomes difficult to imagine as one thing. Thus in our minds mark the noun turns into mark the verb; we focus on the action rather than on its product. Cutting a section out of the notebook and presenting it in this publication is an attempt to return from the verb to the noun and, through sharing the turns and angles of the line with you / the viewer, to communicate again my initial desire to grasp a distance physically.

M.G.: Your research practice often explores ideas of recording and archiving through playing with mnemonic processes. This frequently entails your direct interaction not only with your viewer but also with the subjects of the work itself, such as in *Here en Route*. So I wonder, in terms of this interaction, what is the difference between remotely engaging with an audience and directly engaging with them in a gallery or in a public space, as in the instance of *Here* and

Here en Route respectively?

M.T.: I have a great interest in the very process of engaging with a work of art. I am constantly experimenting with different ways of affecting this process and at the same time, with ways of making the viewer aware of the specific steps through which she-herself / he-himself engages with the work. I believe that this interest is the main reason why I choose to often interact directly with the audience; I am there with no script discussing with them my process and their process. We work together and this working together is the difference. The works I present online, such as *Here*, are not interactive. For me presenting a work online is completely different from being present and directly engaging with an audience inside an exhibition space.

M.G.: What does interface mean to you, as a site of production and display?

MT: I don't know.

Richard Sides

M.G.: *The Joyful System* is a work that I believe started during your residency at [Space] Studios (London). At that time I assisted to a two-hour performance that comprised a video projection, an installation with a network of computers, a reading, and live sound. Can you tell me more about how this work has developed from there to become the work presented in the *Truth* exhibition? There was also the work broadcast for *128kbps objects, Stop Killing my Buzz (expanded edition 0.5)*, is this related to the above and if so, how?

R.S.: *The Joyful System* started as a play that developed out of the residency I did at [Space] Studios. Even though I spent the majority of my time there developing generative computer systems and systems that could respond to external stimulus through endless parameter changes, producing a meta-narrative project like that seemed to be the best way I could think of responding to this rational, process-based way of working. I was trying to be more discursive in the context of 'programming' by relating it to a wider field of ideas like the twentieth century or passive aggressiveness. At the time a lot of the ideas that I wanted to try, deal with, or formalise, were based on specific behavioural patterns and beliefs, and were attempts to somehow try and think about things metaphysically. So, I was trying to apply that way of thinking to the format of a website as theatre or as some kind of narrative environment, but with a slightly generative, incidental nature to it. The radio broadcast came from quite a different trajectory; I made it not long after an exhibition for which I had developed a different play. Mainly consisting of three speakers playing a 25-minute audio piece, a 30-minute sequence of coloured light, three posters and fabric sculptures, *Stop Killing my Buzz* was a much more structured installation where sound and spoken word featured heavily to create a surrealist mise-en-scène. The radio piece was a remix of that installation; a voice describing an impossible place, some generative computer pieces and a recomposition of Underworld's *Born Slippy*. This work comes from thinking a lot about space and temporality within music, amongst other things.

M.G.: Going one step back, perhaps, to me the iterations of the *The Joyful System* discuss technological infrastructures, the hidden systems that have an impact on constructing

contemporary socio-cultural narratives, the way they create limitations and boundaries of which we are often unaware, or are too lazy to resist. This reminds me of the stories of Raymond Carver and how his protagonists struggle with the 'structures' of the everyday and media culture of the seventies. *The Joyful System* proposes something similar I think, in a two-fold manner: on the one hand there are the thematics it discusses, on the other hand there are the structures that determine the way people engage with them in a rather forceful manner. I wonder where your interest in this comes from, I mean, how taking people with you on a journey relates to your interest in the control that media and perhaps digital infrastructure exert upon us?

R.S.: It's not so much an interest in these structures, but rather a reaction. I suppose I am one of those people who doesn't really trust much, like I don't think of having a set belief, but rather of looking at as much as I can in an empirical way. I also have a bit of a problem with hierarchy in certain contexts and somehow humouring these struggles in relation to a more abstract experience is what I do; making up a story and hopefully presenting something that people can relate to as well as being confused by. So, the journey takes place to somehow reveal things, to try and confront objects, or huge systems, or even the 'grand-scale' perhaps. Also, appropriation can reveal a lot in a very simple way.

M.G.: You often use material derived from popular culture – clips from films that somehow discuss the relationship between man and machine, iconic media images and people as well as songs – but it is all reframed within a new spatio-temporal framework in which sound plays an important role in creating an immersive scenario. There is the opera-like structure to the work on the or-bits-dot-com website and here, in the publication, a script that – although adopting only text – is about visual images, feelings and soundscapes of the real or imaginary dimension of the protagonist. What's your relationship to media, to a way of working that I would probably say is inter-media based, or is this is important to you at all?

R.S.: The idea of *mise-en-scène* is something I would say relates to how I think about these frameworks; creating a place that is within the mind or generous to the readers' own mind as well as being something complex and immersive in itself, an atmosphere or the whole scene. Using various media simultaneously, or along a time-based collage, is something I feel comfortable with and sequencing different events within this makes sense to me in how I want to portray a scene or an image. Sound and music is something I also feel has an immediacy that works for me.

M.G.: I wonder what it meant to work with the pages of a book, rather than let's say the online dimension of a web page or a physical space? What's the relationship between this script (*FOOK your ENTITLEMENT*) and the other (*Your pre-approved for a Wire Transfer*)?

R.S.: They're completely different works, but under my own defined project *The Joyful System*. This umbrella title allows me to think and develop something that is multi-layered and contradictory, but if viewed or experienced together has a clear relationship. Presenting only writing is quite a new thing for me and it's something I feel strongly drawn towards—how we are always thinking to ourselves in words. (*FOOK your ENTITLEMENT*) is somehow about being inside *The Joyful System*—I first dreamt it up as the consciousness of a search in a search

engine or an undefined database. (*FOOK your ENTITLEMENT*) and (*Your pre-approved for a Wire Transfer*) are different parts of the 'whole' scene or production.

M.G.: And lastly, this is probably related to all the above, what does interface mean to you, as a site of production and display?

R.S.: I think a lot about interface actually: how a human face has a facade with portals into something much more personal, or how the surface of language functions to create various entry points into a larger structure of potential. But also I like to use the interface in a technological context as a metaphor for the various call and response patterns it can generate – almost as a behavioural characteristic. For example, in the first *Joyful System* performance I set up eight iMacs to start performing generative videos simultaneously at 3pm. Each computer autonomously chose to display the word YES or NO and with each decision it played a single tone of autonomous pitch and length. What I was interested in with this element in the work was the idea of the computer's interface being reversed.

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M.G.: You have moved from a web-based visual storyboard to working with an existing layout – that of the report document—so it seems to me you have moved from constructing your own framework to working within a predetermined framework. I wonder what impact this might have had on the development of the story itself and on the conception of the ideas for your novel—if at all? Also, were you thinking about your reader in the same way when working with both of your adopted mediums / supports?

J.T.: *A Plot Schematic* is arranged visually through an assemblage of documents. The story is not told linearly, rather it is built by scrolling through all of the different information. This resembles the format of an exhibition more than that of a text. The printed report (*Summary Results*) is just a single piece from the collection of photographs, maps, illustrations, text, and other documents that make up the original storyboard. In both instances the reader encounters the plot from backstage. They get to browse the set, displays, the costume and prop closets, and other ephemera from which they get glimpses of a narrative.

M.G.: I also wonder how this might be related to your installation-based work, if and how these three spaces / sites of display – the gallery, the or-bits-dot-com website and the publication – might relate to each other?

J.T.: This is a continuation of a sculptural and architectural practice in which I get to set the stage, the space, and the architecture through a new medium.

M.G.: If I think of this work in relation to the (*On*) *Accordance* exhibition, or what we briefly discussed in the emails back then, there is an attempt to critique the mythologies of computer-based technology. If in the seventies and eighties this strand of critique had a bent towards dystopian scenarios, then now it seems to be drenched in scepticism. But in the case of *A Plot Schematic* it seems to me that what you are building could be a story of hope, a story of a community, of a balanced scenario in a time in which we struggle with the whole idea of self-sustainability. Why? How do you see this relationship between man and machine, and perhaps

the body?

J.T.: There probably is a certain connection here to the research I have been doing into future worlds as imagined through space travel, and the idea that man's natural habitat is a technological one. I have done a lot of research into artificial environments, and whole world systems, which would create fully sustainable habitats, but ones that no longer rely on our planet. The story of the geriatrics commune is definitely based on this history, but I can't say whether it's hopeful or dystopic, I think that might be something left up to the reader.

M.G.: What does interface means to you, as a site of production and display?

J.T.: I'm afraid I don't know how to answer this question.

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