

THE MEDIA()MESSE

At STWST48x8 DEEP you can see a fork of the MEDIA()MESSE, an international research group for new media and art+hacking+diy. APO33 conceived the event in May and report.

Abstract

THE MEDIA()MESSE brought together an international group of artists-researchers on new media / art+hacking+diy; 10 artist-hackers invited from European art and technology laboratories and collectives worked together on a new creation that builds on disconnects of our mediated realities through intermedia arts, DIY (do it yourself), DIWO (do it with others) and media activism and audio-visual performance.

Together, they interpreted the media and networks on the current situation in the world and intervened as a research group on a device for several screens and several sound systems. As an actual rebound of the chaos geopolitical and media states of the world, THE MEDIA()MESSE built a context of transformation of objectivity, where our sense of disconnection relies on de-construction of our imagination and possible interpretation of realities.

Artists

Marinos Koutsomichalis, Julien Ottavi, Gisle Froyland, Maite Cajaraville, Katerina Undo, Jenny Pickett, Tanja Brandmayr, Jan-Nahuel Jenny, Felix Vierlinger, taro

Key words

workshop | DIWO | sound | electronics | image | clothing | instruments | code | performance

Background

Apo33 has been cultivating the deep intermedia roots in our society, rotating crops of current and obsolescent technologies through a spectrum of differing concerns and relationships: from pirates, hackers and diy electronic enthusiasts, to ecology, environment, alternative politics and alter-globalisation activism. We have put our hands into the dirt of low technology, high technology, post-technology, dead technology and all the spaces inbetween and reaped the potential of their misuses and deviations. This collective artistic-research approach at Apo33 has been established over the course of 25 years and results from a desire to escape the reinforcement of late-capitalist individualism that permeates our social hierarchies through the arts, education, research, employment and even the family view of the world and its exponential consumption.

Invitation

For THE MEDIA()MESSE we wanted to create a space for research bringing entropy, chaos and mess into media arts, that usually privileges neat, tidy, shiny, high-production design that echos and reveres the high-end, technology used. Apo33 invited three artistic labs to form a temporary collective in order to share and explore together the ideas behind a Media mess(e), these included; Stadtwerkstatt from Linz, Austria; Madlab from Limassol, Cyprus; and Pikel from Bergen, Norway. The purpose of THE MEDIA()MESSE was to create a new kind of performance, for the 10 year anniversary of the Fabrique; a regroupement of music and arts organisation on the Ile de Nantes. We intended the space of the Plateforme Intermedia to be deconstructed – reappropriated – reinterpreted, where artists become engineers and where science turns into fiction.

Conception

As a group of artists, we were simultaneously united and divided, in the creation of a DIY localised inter-lab research process during a short window of time, where art fictions and art functions connected in a paradigm of chaosmosis in the deterritorialization of our common sense societies and mediatic rationalities. THE MEDIA()MESSE, despite being organised in a framework for diffusion, sought to counteract the opposition of public vs performer, audience vs artist by blurring the boundaries between who is producing what, or who is watching who, that falls somewhere between a performance and/or an installation.

Process

The MEDIA()MESSE is a DIWO (do it with others) process that began as an online conversation, through email exchanges, allowing each participant to have his/her input and express ideas relating to the interpretation of the theme, concrete propositions for messing with media and pragmatic implementation of these ideas in the Plateforme Intermedia. Jan-Nahuel Jenny (STWST) raised the first question: *»What would our part be in the MEDIA()MESSE?«* What will each of us do in this mess? Julien Ottavi (Apo33) responded: *»We don't know yet what is the role of each other [...] we could define that together, there are probably ideas we haven't thought about and this is where everyone could get in.«* The intention, the context and how to define each participant's position clearly, highlights one of the difficulties of the project. Jan Nahuel continues with a proposition to outline the MEDIA()MESSE process and research methodology:

»4(or more) player chaos media mess clash: 4(or more) stations generate sound, video light outputs over 2 hours – their intensity is subject to great fluctuation – for example we could say everyone shoots for 1/3 loud 1/3 medium 1/3 minimal intensity in output. We would not tell each other how our loud to minimal schedule is programmed! So in the course of the 2 hours there could be moments of absolute silence and moments of total chaos mess. This would be a great representation of the fun and chaos that DIWO can be. For the stations we try to use as much DIY stuff as possible.«

Research

This started the debate and exchange on methods for synchronisation, scores or directions, as a way to organise the project, turning around the subject itself by trying to somehow frame it. Marinos Koutsomichalis from Madlab reacted by adding to the idea of station: *»the paradigm of a (ham) radio-station, that is, sometimes just listening, sometimes just broadcasting, sometimes actively communicating and exchanging information - and of course such a station could comprise of more than one individual - there could be an entire micro socio-material technological ecosystem of things going on behind such a station. [...] On top of all this, and since the core idea is that of ,media mess/chaos' I suggest that we try introduce several layers of media-mess in there, not just sound and image and video, but also objects, text, fabrics, etc - anything that could make (or maybe better NOT make) sense.«* In that sense, multiplying the possibilities of extension of each station allowed everyone to start to imagine their own position in a process of transforming media. Katerina Undo (Madlab) reflected that *»A preliminary proposal is the generation and*

transmission of Messages from the Unseen World - that is a reference to Turing's homonymous cryptic postcards. I imagine written and oral responses between stations, but at this point, I would rather make this general theme available to your subjective interpretation. /To be continued, or not/«

From a theoretical point of view, the idea of the unseen found an echo during the performances, with some performers proposed to use sensors to materialise the unseen between audiences and artists, who were completely mixed up in the space. In response Tanja Brandmayr (STWST) introduced another view of the stations: *»we like the ideas of stations/personas also in a human/non-human manner. I like the context you made with the text. We thought of abstractums like sleep or water or other abstract materials like that, carrying traces of humans or even non-humans in them, maybe also of machines. [A]t least in our circulating ideas here ... its developing... At the moment we also think of the material, i.e. we ask ourselves concretely what stuff we want to work with. At the moment we think of material for sound-generating elements, visual disturbances and pulsating text parts...«*

At this point we had yet to enquire into the terminology of the MEDIA()MESSE and how each of us had imagined or defined it. Jenny Pickett (Apo33) talked about the thinking behind the title itself: *»MEDIA()MESSE- Messe which is french for »mass« (of the religious type) but sounds like a mess :) media rituals, church of social, TV, radio, media channels or something [...] Stations (suggested by Jan) - communication channels, radio TV stations, bus train stations, stations of the cross (incidentally this is »stage« in french...) But could also be territories...Obs situation in the world today is much more complex than when we last met in terms of territories and shutting down news stations (Russia but also Afghanistan and elsewhere).«*

Residency

As the date for the residency approached, the online discussions turned towards the practical materials and devices each will use; from electronic instruments, to free software such as puredata, PraxisLive or extract of texts, videos and many others medias to include into the mess, etc... We met up at the Plateforme Intermedia in Nantes and worked together IRL for 2 days.

The first day was dedicated to installing our stations, punctuated by regular conversation and exchanges about what we are going to do. How we will organise each of our positions in the space, and how the performance will take shape during the 2 hours. The second day was organised as a form of rehearsal and intense debate about the common ambitions of the group, the way the audience can interact

with our works, and how the MEDIA()MESSE will take its place in the larger event.

Performance

The final result was a 2 hours performance that included the varying visions of what of a MEDIA()MESSE could be; starting with a chaotic invasion of the space itself with multi-screens in all shapes and sizes, through to multiple and various types of sound systems, added to which was a huge amount of DIY electronics, mixers, hack tv machines and invented instruments.

The MEDIA()MESSE began outside the space with a sound piece composed by Katerina Undo, of multi-lingual data announcements was transmitted over APO33's speaker horn post, calling the attention of the public to the fire-escape of the Fabrique. On these stairs STWST installed an improvised instrument with which the public could play by grabbing hold of the raw copper from the audio cables dangling down. The main room was configured as an almost 360° immersive experience, where some blurring of performance and audience continued by placing the public in the center of the space, where some performers could also become one with the public and emerge or recede from the performance at a given moment.

Over the course of 2 hours, the MEDIA()MESSE created a distancing with a regular concert format, with multiple entry/exit points, giving room to interpretations from the different stations. Gisle Froyland and Maite Cajaraville (Piksel) video feedback from DIY electronic devices and heat sensors interacted with the public as they moved through the room. STWST kicked off the proceedings with a performance involving the body, chalk, water, TV mirroring, camera feedback and DIY electronic soundscapes. Tanja Brandmayr and taro tracing concepts in chalk onto the media, remixed in realtime by Jan-Nahuel Jenny, before dissolving these in amplified water and marking space with decisive movements, as a deconstruction of the situation and the media. The music slowly built up from small sounds performed by Felix Vierlinger and taro with improvised interpretations or interferences from Gisle Froyland and Maite Cajaraville as the soundscapes took place, producing a collective moment of uncertainty, where all the participants follow the actions of others and intervene for example through sound or the body traversing the space. Marinos Koutsomichalis' intervention with a locked control box, emerged from the public dressed in an orange overall echoing the movements of Tanja Brandmayr, before he turned the key and on with it irrational blasts and beats of noise. Solar

Return – Jenny Pickett and Julien Ottavi (Apo33) later entered the performance as postapocalyptic operators manipulating noise machines, hacked radios and producing maelstrom of chaotic deep black noise and intense electronics statics, clad in yellow overall and gasmasks.

The Plateforme Intermedia can usually host around 50 people comfortably, but here amongst the »mess« it was a tight squeeze. Large numbers of public entered the MEDIA()MESSE, interacted, listened and watched the performance unfold. The audience self organised the duration of their participation allowing for multiple waves of people to experience the performance, with some diehards staying put for the entire 2 hours. The performance terminated with a moment of total mess of loud improvised noise and visuals, resulting in an unclear ending that created a point of minimal deep listening, where all chaos disappeared into silent hum of the space.

THE MEDIA()MESSE Informations

Materials: synthesisers, DIY electronic instruments, cameras, PA system, projection screens, TVs, hydrophones, antennas, radios, computers, miscellaneous objects and appliances

Duration: 2h:00m:00s

Produced by: Apo33, supported by La Fabrique and La Ville de Nantes FR

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Julien Ottavi & Jenny Pickett perform together with Marinos Koutsomichalis during Stwst48x8:

DEEP()MESS - open.ended dis.connected

DEEP SOUND OPERA, Act 7

10. Sept, Saturday Night, 02:00 h

An open-ended disconnected/connected do-it-with-others performance dominated

by untamed frequencies, DIY instrumentation, electroacoustic noises, animistic objects, and orchestrated acts of irrationality.

