

Hans Bernhard, UBERMORGEN.COM

Digital Actionism – Media Hacking (1994–2006)

"Maverick Austrian businessman." CNN

Media Hacking

Media Hacking is generally described very vaguely as manipulation of media technology. A more specific definition is the massive intrusion into mass media channels with standard technology such as email or mobile communications, mobile phones, etc... Usually these actions are carried out within the legal realm – or at least in the twilight zone of international law. Sometimes laws have to be challenged in order to update/optimize the legal system. We have to judge for ourselves whether its unethical to do so or its totally reasonable to put freedom of speech above an applicable law. With such a cybernetic modus operandi – in the end only courage, intelligence and basic technological know how is necessary – we can achieve enormous reach and frequency in this age of the totally networked space. Popular media hacking projects are the „Toywar“ by etoy and „Vote-auction“ by UBERMORGEN.COM. Important to note: All our projects are non-ideological, non-political. they are pure basic research experiments.

Digital Actionism

digital actionism describes the intuitive transposition of the principles of actionism into the digital. The created identities – corporate and collective – become the artistic field of expression and extreme forms of aesthetics – for example pure communication. The actions are documented by media coverage, emails and logfiles. The „hanging inside the network“, to be connected to millions and millions of invisible channels, the sensation of being a thin membrane within a mass media storm... thats where it happens. Playground is the body of the „Actionist“ and especially the Head. It vibrates, it becomes threatening, it accelerates, the communication gets out of control and the network suddenly turns into a global menace.

etoy

etoy appeared as a multinational corporation since the foundation in 1994. At the time it was possible to appear online exactly like „real“ global corporations such Coca-Cola or Microsoft. We started to design a virtual global corporation with corporate identity and an online office and publication platform: the virtual homebase for the etoy.AGENTS. In 1994 we emmigrated to the internet, to the etoy.TANK-System. Net.Art as Avant Garde movement: Phase 1: 1994-1999, Phase 2: 2000-200X. etoy was organized like a formula-1 team. Highly efficient, strongly hierarchical, very high-tech, glamour and stylish to the outside. strongly influenced by viennese actionism. Parallel to the corporate apperaence, we existed as an underground brand, we were: "the first boy-group on the internet" or "the first street gang on the internet", „a digital drug cult“, we were „digital punk". Corporate Slogans: "The Future is Now!" and "The Surface is the Content". The etoy.MEMBERS are interchangeable, everyone is everyone, everywhere, leaving reality behind ... etoy, the designer is the architect is the popstar is the coder is the system is etoy. Deep inside, etoy was a hardcore cult. etoy was travelling the twilight zones of the "universe", always coming back to report from their missions (etoy-testpilots/internet-astronauts). The combination of drugs (LSD/MDMA), internet-technology, techno-music and the rise of truly global corporations gave us an ultimate mix for our art-game and we experimented on a global level, we started to cross borders of perception and reality and were sucked into the gigantic universe of THE NETWORK.

First etoy.Web-Site – www.ubermorgen.com/lectures/A_2007/images/etoy_firstwebsite_1.jpg

First Microsoft Web-Site – en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Microsoft_starmap.png

TV-Hack – etoy hijacked 2 Mio TV Spectators

On a nice saturday night, to be exact on december 7th 1996 in switzerland, the prime time saturday night lottery show BENISSIMO (live) was hijacked by etoy.AGENTS. the famous show master BERNHARD TURNHEER was attacked on stage by etoy.e03. He told him that he could not stand this television reality and that he has to find a way out of the TV into the Internet... after massive confusion, the Showmaster showed him a way out... This hijack was covered for over 10 days in the main newspapers of Switzerland.

The Video – www.ubermorgen.com/lectures/videos/etoy_bennissimo.mov

The digital hijack

1.5 mio people hijacked from search engines over a period of 4 months. [30 mio. people online 1996! We reached 5% of the internet population!!], immediately we ran into troubles with the US-secret service, the CIA, my appartement in Vienna was house-searched by the austrian secret service. The Digital Hijack was an act of deliberate sabotage of one of the most important tools for the common Internet user: the search engine. With this 1996 action, we demonstrated the "space" behind the popular interfaces of the World Wide Web. Influenced by the porn-industry and their agenda-setting – on the edge marketing-strategies.

The digital hijack – www.hijack.org

The etoy.Book

From Publishers Weekly: "In this penetrating examination of a seminal cyberspace turf war, Wishart and Bochsler tell a story about art imitating life and the artist being sued for trademark infringement. Documentary filmmaker Wishart and Swiss National TV reporter Bochsler recount the tale of etoy, a company of German-based avant-garde artists that held wild parties and issued stock to shareholders. It registered the name etoy.com to serve as an online gallery and virtual workspace. In September 1999, etoy was sued by the hugely popular online retailer Etoys.com, which at the time was valued at \$8 billion, for trademark infringement. The authors thoroughly detail each volley in the "Toy War," including lawsuits, denial of service attacks and grassroots activism. More significantly, the battle serves as a case study for exploring the conflicting forces that have shaped the Internet's development. Backed by venture capitalists and led by CEO Toby Lenk, Etoys.com was out to make a profit by selling products. Etoy, on the other hand, was supported by a few wealthy patrons and run by media-savvy artists with shaved heads who went by code names and wanted to shake things up. The latter were much more successful. With extensive and entertaining firsthand accounts, Wishart and Bochsler reveal how the dot-com boom warped the perceptions of artist and corporate executive alike. Although Lenk was a seasoned executive, he was caught off guard by the collapse of Etoys.com, and despite etoy's subversive origins, it developed internal power struggles that rivaled those of a Fortune 500 company."

U.K. Edition, Fourth Estate London, 359 Pages

U.S. Edition, Harper Collins Publisher, 324 Pages

UBERMORGEN.COM

UBERMORGEN.COM is an artist duo created in Vienna, Austria, by Lizvix and Hans Bernhard. Behind UBERMORGEN.COM we can find one of the most unmatched identities – controversial and iconoclast – of the contemporary European techno-fine-art avant-garde.

UBERMORGEN.COM's work is unique not because of what they do but because how, when, where and why they do it. The permanent amalgamation of fact and fiction points toward an extremely expanded concept of one's working materials, that for UBERMORGEN.COM also include (international) rights, democracy and global communication (input-feedback loops). "Ubergorgen" is the German word both for "the day after tomorrow" or "super-tomorrow".

UBERMORGEN.COM – www.ubermorgen.com

[F]originals

forged original document; either forged or authentic document or forged & authentic: A Foriginal is always original and unique. Foriginals are pixels on screens or substance on material [i.e. ink on paper].

[F]originals are non pragmatic – they are absurd. They do not tell you whether they are real or forged – there is no original but also no fully forged / faked document. Foriginals can be human or machine generated; Foriginals are digital or analog; [F]original is a sub category of "Legal Art";

[F]originals – www.foriginal.com

Psych|OS Cycle

In March 2002, ubermorgens Hans Bernhard experienced a manic outbreak in South Africa. He was airlifted to Austria – General Hospital Vienna. Two and a half years later, UBERMORGEN found video footage, photos and texts of his stay at the Mental hospital. They decide to release the material unedited. "We are the children of the 1980s, We are the first internet–pop–generation. We grew up with radical Michael Milken [The King of Junk Bonds] and mythical Michael Jackson [The King of Junk Pop]. Hans Bernhard is loaded with 10 years of internet & tech [digital cocaine], underground techno, hardcore drugs and net.art jet set [etoy]. His neuronal networks and brain structures are similar to the global synthetic network he maintained subversive activity within. And now both Hans Bernhard and The "Network" are infected by this structural disorder.

The Psych|OS–Generator – www.ipnic.org/psychos/

Psych|OS Video – www.hansbernhard.com/X/pages/video/

Psych|OS Foto–Series – www.hansbernhard.com/X/pages/photo/pages/psychos_hans.html

Psych|OS Paintings – www.hansbernhard.com/X/pages/painting/pages/psychos.html

Hansbernhardblog – www.ubermorgen.com/hansbernhardblog

Psychotropic Blog Karaoke – www.ubermorgen.com/Psychotropic_Drug_Karaoke

Vote–Auction

Voteauction was a Website which offered US citizens to sell their presidential vote to the highest bidder during the Presidential Elections 2000, Al Gore vs. G.W. Bush. Bringing capitalism and democracy closer together! Several US States (Missouri, Wisconsin, Chicago, Arizona, Nevada, California, Massachusetts, New York) issued temporary restraining orders. Federal Attorney Janet Reno, the FBI and the NSA were investigating the case to ensure the integrity of the voting process on november 7th, 2000. Over 2500 global and national News features in online media, print, television and radio have been reported (including a 27 min. CNN exclusive "Burden of Proof").

UBERMORGEN.COM exhibits the [V]ote–auction CNN tape, Voteauction–Seals and [F]original legal Documents in Museums and Galleries around the globe.

www.vote-auction.net

NAZI~LINE

NAZI~LINE was a collaboration between UBERMORGEN.COM and Christoph Schlingensief. THE PROGRAMM: right wing extremists [i.e. neo-Nazis] should experience economical and social warmth and support in order to be integrated into our society. The Campaign: Active Neo-Nazis were casted in Berlin. Then they were sent to Zurich (CH) to be actors in "Hamlet" (Schauspielhaus Theatre). The project dealt with transfer, integration, aggression and communication.. Additionally NAZI~LINE invests into psychological and medical treatment of neo-Nazis. International Corporations as well as neo-Nazis and hate criminals are kindly asked to register for treatment.

NAZI~LINE – www.ubermorgen.com/NAZI~LINE/

Generator Triptych

Injunction Generator: With their usual controversial and iconoclast spirit, Uebermorgen, an artist group created by Hans Bernhard (founder of etoy) and lizvlx, realized The Injunction Generator (www.ipnic.org), a software module which claims to generate on request legal injunctions and personalized documentation in .rtf/.pdf format to force a site into taking its contents offline. www.ipnic.org

BANKSTATEMENTGENERATOR: The "BSG" is an online engine that generates individual bank statements. If you need a positive or negative bank statement, generate it yourself! In doing so, the user is free to determine the amount and type of deposits and credits as well as the degree of design abstraction of the resulting document, an [F]original that manifests itself as an array of pixels on the monitor screen. www.ipnic.org/BANKSTATEMENTGENERATOR

Psych|OS-Generator: The "PG" generates diagnoses and creates medical prescriptions. The user can either answer a questionnaire or select a medical condition from the standardized WHO and U.S.A. list of mental illnesses (ICD-10 & DSM IV). The machine then generates a diagnosis and a "prints" a prescription with the list of psychotropic drugs to cure the disease. www.ipnic.org/psychos

GWEI – Google Will Eat Itself

We generate money by serving Google text advertisements on a series of hidden Websites. With this money we automatically buy Google shares. We buy Google via their own advertisement! So, Google eats itself – but in the end "we" own it! Now, by establishing this autocannibalistic model we deconstruct the new global advertisement mechanisms by rendering them into a surreal click-based economic model. After this whole process we hand over the common ownership of "our" Google Shares to the GTTP Ltd. [Google To The People Public Company] which distributes them back to the public. GTTP Ltd. currently owns 248 Google Class A Shares [valued at 469.94 USD each per Feb 28, 2007]. As predicted in a Village Voice article about GWEI, at this speed it will take around 23 Million years to buy all Google Shares... but "The greatest enemy of such a giant is not another giant. It's the parasite. If enough parasites suck small amounts of money..." reality" is, Google is currently valued more than all Swiss Banks together (sic).

GWEI – Google Will Eat Itself – www.gwei.org
(in collaboration with Alessandro Ludovico and Paolo Cirio)

Amazon Noir

THE PLOT: The Bad Guys (The Amazon Noir Crew: Cirio, Ludovico, Lizvlx, Bernhard) stole copyrighted books from Amazon by using sophisticated robot-perversion-technology coded by supervillain Paolo Cirio. A subliminal media fight and a covert legal dispute escalated into an online showdown with the heist of over 3000 books at the center of the story. Lizvlx from UBERMORGEN.COM had daily shoot outs with the global massmedia, Cirio continuously pushed the boundaries of copyright (books are just pixels on a screen or just ink on paper), Ludovico and Bernhard resisted kickback-bribes from powerful Amazon.com until they finally gave in and sold the technology for an undisclosed sum to Amazon. Betrayal, blasphemy and pessimism finally split the gang of bad guys. The good guys (Amazon.com) won the showdown and drove off into the blistering sun with the beautiful femme fatale, the seductive and erotic massmedia.

THE TECHNOLOGY: The Amazon Noir Robots (Sucker01–12) used the frontdoor to access the huge digital library of Amazon.com. They tricked around with Amazon.coms "Search Inside the Book" function until it gave away the complete volumes of copyright protected books. This was carried out by sending 5.000 – 10.000 requests per book. After this process the data was logically reassembled into pdf-format by the SIB-Book-Generator.

THE TRUTH: All our work is done in the open. Our matter is accurate. Amazon Noir was scripted as an internet-movie. The whole digital action (media hack) was carried out in the global massmedia, within the art world and on a highly sophisticated technical level in the clandestine matrix of our global networks. Amazon USA, Amazon U.K., Amazon Germany and Amazon France were vulnerable targets. During the attack they transformed part of the „Search Inside the Book“ technology to defend the rights of the copyright holders – without actually solving the problem. Over 3000 Books were downloaded and distributed through p2p (Peer-to-peer networks: Gnutella/G2, BitTorrent, FastTrack, ed2k) between April – October 2006. In July 2006 Amazon France and Amazon USA threatend to litigate. The matter was resolved out of court October 30th, 2006. Amazon (USA/France) bought the Amazon Noir software for an undisclosed sum – both parties signed a non-disclosure agreement.

Thieves of the invisible – www.amazon-noir.com/thieves.html
Dialogue – www.amazon-noir.com/dialogue.html
Diagram – www.amazon-noir.com/diagram.html

Amazon Noir – www.amazon-noir.com
(in collaboration with Alessandro Ludovico and Paolo Cirio)

Chinese Gold

It mixes up the real "virtual" (the game) with the virtually "real" (money). In China there are over 2000 Online-Gaming Workshops that hire people (over 500.000) to play online games such as World of Warcraft (WoW) day and night. The gaming workers produce in-game currency, equipments, and whole characters that are sold to American and European Gamers via Ebay. These people are called „Chinese Gold Farmers". The future is now!

Keywords: Metallic – Alternative Energy Sources – Trade Agreements – Ghostbuster, Roaming – Steel, sugar and services – Consumer-made content and value – 1500 Gold \$ 131.99 – close Internet cafés in Beijing to prevent the spread of SARS – Modified sees/crop, hydrogen – The Myspace angle – Media Hacking – prepaid Pass9 – a group of WOW players in China committed mass suicide, virtual die-ins – Taxes, copyright and Freedom of Speech, in game civil rights – Unions fighting Louis Vuitton living oceanfront – Boomtimes in Kuala Lumpur – Kaogma Festival – Megaphone diplomacy – New cartoon uproar

Economy / Inflation: In Warcraft, it's the currency itself that's being overproduced, not just any product. That means it'll take more units of that currency to exchange for any product. Inflation. The price of everything goes up. Everything you worked so hard to save up suddenly becomes worth so much less. The Warcraft economy appears to be on the lip of this plunge and administrators are taking steps to curb inflation. When they find a career farmer, they ban the character. Now the farming company has to re-buy the game and set up a new account. This makes the process of creating these goods overseas more expensive, and functions similar to a tariff (which is a protective tax). There is a balance, which in the real world, the Treasury, and the Federal Reserve, and International Organizations try to maintain. And by maintain, I mean getting as much cheap shit for themselves as possible without throwing the system completely out of whack. (In the finance industry, human rights is a footnote, if anything.) What lies ahead for the Warcraft economy? Let's keep watching it in the future.

Chinese Gold – www.ubermorgen.com/2007/projects/Chinese_Gold/

Belgrad Session 1 – 8 –

www.hansbernhard.com/X/pages/photo/pages/chinese_gold_screenshots.html

Blue Series, Untitled 1 – 7 –

www.hansbernhard.com/X/pages/photo/pages/chinese_gold_workshop.html

M. Bittanti, D. Quaranta (editors), GameScenes. Art in the Age of Videogames, Milan, Johan & Levi 2006. Text by Domenico Quaranta, 2006 – www.ubermorgen.com/publications/CHINESE_GOLD_QUARANTA_06/UBERMORGEN_eng_chinese_gold.htm

Bank of WoW – <http://www.bankofwow.com>

Guarantee: All Gold in our BANK are Made Totally Manually!

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