LJUBLJANA

Information Strategies


A conversation on the increasing danger of standardization due to omnipresent globalization. How could art relate to such development? Does the context of today’s visual art merely offer a space for repressive tolerance or does art still possess the capacity for fundamental criticism? Should visual art perhaps abandon the object aesthetics incorporated by the global economy and insert unexpected information strategies (rumors, private narratives), thereby, alternative, mass-communicative domains at the same time deploying?

TRANSFORMATION

Natascha Sadr Haghighian

In the context of Information/Misinformation (a project in the framework of the 24th International Biennial of Graphic Arts in Ljubljana), Rahad Becker and I are collaborating in a radio and television project, where we delve into the question where formatting starts to be constitutive and how it can possibly be transformed or distorted. We chose a standardized Western piece of music, a song by the group *Modern Talking*, with a tempered scale and a pentagonal moment. So, the piece consists of five different tones, which guarantees a high level of recognition.

*Modern Talking* travelled around the world and encountered diverse individual biographies and cultures, but never recognized how a format transforms in confrontation with such enormous diversity. What we wanted to do is to make the potential transformations of standardized formats both visible and audible. We had two different approaches. For the radio piece, we used a file containing all kinds of information about the piece of music such as melody, rhythm, and instrumentation. That file can be downloaded from the Internet. It also has the potential to change any of the parameters of information; we did not leave the path of recognition, but worked instead on the limits of resemblance and its transformation. The piece is different but one senses that one knows it.

For the television piece, we worked with many different elements in order to discover resemblance. For example, we tried to find images most similar to *Modern Talking*. In a search engine, we used keywords which came closest to images about *Modern Talking*. Then we collected all the possible matches and put them on memory cards. All images contained something similar to the *Modern Talking* image, but none really matched. The basic idea is to take entirely different things and try to connect them or find similarities.
Editors: Your project as a whole seems to be involved in researching standardization and transformation. Did you research how standardization and transformation of radio and television programs happen?

Sadr Haghighian: The project was not specifically about radio and television, but a reflection on technical or cultural formats as such. What I mean by standardization is that something has to have a format in order to become recognizable in a cultural sphere. What fascinates us is that because of the legal aspects of formats, one can claim territory in the public sphere. For example, when you listen to Modern Talking in India, that is an entirely different context, but Modern Talking can still claim the legal rights, since there has not been any transformation. Formats do not allow any interaction.

Editors: Your project starts from a critical attitude towards Western culture and Western frameworks. Could you elaborate on that critical point of departure behind your strategies?

Sadr Haghighian: When one is confronted with the limitations formats provide, several questions arise. What is the hidden potential within a format? How does one approach the constitution of the format? What kind of potential can be changed from within without leaving legal ground? Of course, our approach is critical, but it is also meant to make space.

Podnar: Investigation in the process of information as information has to do with meaning and making sense. So, there is also the question of communication and globalization as terms and processes which have to be defined. If processes such as formats are deconstructed, will they be able to open up an implicit sort of collaborative critique?

Sadr Haghighian: In making the transformations within the format audible or visible, one refers to communication. The format, however, is standardized. What happens with communication between individuals or between diverse cultures is that it implies transformation although nobody ever pays tribute to that. Communication seems to claim to be similar to transformation. We are interested, though, in the transformation process as such.

UNEXPECTEDNESS
Hans Ulrich Obrist

At the press conference this morning we presented the concept of the Information / Misinformation segment of the Ljubljana Biennial and its extensions into a billboard project, a newspaper, and a television program. Information/Misinformation is a project in cooperation with the museum in progress in Vienna, an institution