

NEUR-O-MATIC

IDA HIRŠENFELDER: THE ONLY NON-VIOLENT ACTION IS INACTION

Neur-o-matic is a space expressing the antagonisms produced by technologically enriched human beings. The new era of cultural history isn't marked with the antonyms between social stigmatization and individual autonomy. One should no longer analyse culture, identity and technology through the perspective of opposites between binary duals, such as public and private, object and subject, human and machine, for the use of technology and the multilateral, multi-directional, constant entanglement between the man and the machine doesn't permit thoughts about opposing social forces, such as individual freedom in opposite to automated alienation. Contemporary individuals are prone to the intimate use of technology. They appropriate the structural characteristics of automated procedures and change them into multi-layered interfaces for the expression of their own autonomy or self-determination. By the said use of technology the procedure of subjectivization is expressed and the role of the body and the machine radically changes in living and working relations. Indeterminate, improvised and confused aggregation of seemingly separate categories that through neural network manage to find themselves in the same context, in nearly at the same place (just one click away from anything else), at virtually the same time (depending on social-economic class, geopolitical location conditioning data bandwidth) leads to a the formation of a uniform place where contents can be found (an on-line interface, a shopping mall, a classroom), contents which have totally dissimilar genealogies or tendencies, be it political or scientific. The uniformity of the interfaces that connect indistinctly between diverse field lines is precisely why I would like to express doubt in the emancipatory potential of this aggregation, for deeds and things are not what they seem. The concept of Neur-o-matic, based on the repetition of an uniform working environment or the interface for the production of precarious cognitativat, is based on an idea of such uniformity that expresses in working relations regardless of the »diversity« of modern immaterial labour marked by short impulses of attention, constant distractions and interference, in short with multitasking. Perhaps it is precisely this apparent multiplicity where I can find the most ubiquitous antagonism of the present time, which is strongly expressed in all parts of the globalized world, irrespective of cultural background. I don't allude to universality, but the despotism of capitalism, whose operation is imposed regardless of the different political options, in which it is packaged. In the words of Baudrillard, any thing or decision is a part of business or consumer marketing, even though everything look as though it is political. In this context, policy has become entertainment and business at the same time, while science and art have become commodified and popularized.

Perhaps it is no coincidence that in the context of demand and sales I can only read about art multiples on-line as inexpensive and affordable, therefore comodified artistic outputs that adapt its symbolical (capital) value and the material (formal) features of the art works to the needs of the market. Although I recognize this kind of production as a legitimate part of the survival tactics of artists and artistic groups and do not in the least want to romanticize some kind of symbolic value of artwork, which, to be honest, has never been without connection to the capital, it seems to me that the artistic methods of multiplication should be far from narrowed down to just cute, portable and accessible consumer products. The effect and purpose of multiples is from installation to installation, of course, different. With the Swiss artist Zimoun it is about seeking sound effects that uses mechanical means to imitate nature and visual effects that imitate the organic flickering and physical waves. Neur-o-matic also is directed towards finding a sound effect. Instead of computer keyboard tapping, so typical a noise in working units or factories of the cognitativat, what rings is the unpredictable mechanistic violence produced by the saturation with information and the constant and ever increasing production. In the words of Bojana Kunst, this is »radical consumption, not in the sense of money, but in the sense of energy and human possibilities and actions [which] is in the heart of the spirit of modern capitalism, where the Protestant asceticism has been replaced

by the imperative of (ascetic) pleasure«*. This »radical consumption« is also where the fundamental absurdity of the Neur-o-matic installation lies - by threshing on the plaster casts of computer and office machines it causes a progressive and at least partial self-destruction. When the exhibition ends there will be little of the installation left. You will not be able to buy the multiples. Neur-o-matic takes into account the conceptual history of multiples which sprang up in the 60's as a means for linguistic deconstruction eliminating the difference between the marked and the marker. The table is shown as the most »table-ly« table, or that, which is not capable of subjectivation.

The heart of the absurd lies not solely in this extreme uselessness or self-damage of the system. It can also be found in the role and operation of the neural network, which oversees the space like a supervisor in the middle, from a chairing position. It introduces a longitudinal perspective onto the network connection in the space. It seems the formation does not comply with the idea of the risomatic integration so typical for, let's say, on-line environments. However, as described earlier, this multi-directional linking has mostly just to do with the apparently open forms still following totally dogmatic (uniform) knowledge. The central and chairing position controls and determinates knowledge of a certain working unit just as an ideologue in schools - as a main centre of power and control. Visitors, who are generally acquainted with the choreography of interactive installations will know that they can use the neural centre to manage the response of the individual tables. Yet there is a sinister intention to this fun and games for we never know what a certain action will produce - a pleasant hum of the engine, or total chaos. There is a devastating potential ingrained into the keys, the devastating potential of the intangible production of information, not in the moralistic sense, but from a desire to aggravate the idea of the complete reduction of the excessive production and radical consumption.

The enthusiasm for the absurdist literature of Daniil Harms, almost a century year old writings, which have triggered the first reflections about the installation and found their place in the hacked telephone room that was exhibited as a separate part of the installation's layout is not a desire to revive the absurdist movement, but a tendency towards the establishment of the antagonisms in the individual's relation to work and political participation or post-political interpassivity. The layout of the gallery space is reminiscent of a classroom or the work environment in cubicles. Wikipedia tells me that when first working cubicles and open offices where office workers were all lined up appeared, they were called action offices. As with livestock farming the concept of these cubicles is to rationalize space and not to create an open or uncontrolled situation. The cubicles are supposed to enable maximum concentration at minimum quadrature, at the same time allowing for a panoptic view from above without the worker knowing when s/he is being watched. The work situation is, despite numerous possibilities, reduced to elements/interfaces that are the same everywhere.

The system named Neur-o-matic tests the mood of contemporary cognitariat in its working environment, which precisely due to the apparency of transformations, the impossibility of autonomy and the inability of self-determination feels even more uncomfortable, trapped, limited, tense and regulated, just as though this inability is transparently expressed. Neur-o-matic is a system for the initiation of radical responsibility when operating, since every action is violent and the only possible rebellion against violence is inaction or action without control (wúwéi).