Miltos Manetas logo created by Angelo Plessas.

"DISTANT EXPLOSIONS"

Texts on Art and other ideas by Miltos Manetas.

NewPeople, 1997

Contemporary Art artists, are not the only active
artists around. There are still Surrealists in Paris,
Abstract Expressionists in NY, even Impressionists
who still paint flowers and mountains their pathetic
studios in Amsterdam and Rome .
All these people have their magazines, their gal-
leries and their critics. Societies doesn't disappear
easily because people tend to defend their style and
their way of life, The Surrealists, still give a lot of
importance to their imagination, the Expressionists
still drink a lot etc. They all try their best and most
of them are very charismatic people, but Art who
is a Dancing Queen, in Life's nightclub, gets bored
after a while and she moves to another table. When
she abandons a group of people she takes her gifts
back. Radicality, the spirit of invention, pretty girls
and young boys, they are all gone and what remains
is only fatigue.
For last, she takes away the specter of power and
authority and gives it to some new people which no-
body had noticed until then.

Today (1997), ninety seven years after Des Dem-
oiselles d'Avignon, it's time for changes again.
Europe, Asia and America, are still dominated by
Conceptual artists. There are all the flavours: Mini-
malists, Installators, Social agit props, Old Neogeos,
Documenta fighters, Flash Art Coverpagers. All
these people, are in rotation around the concept of
the *Real Space*. They seldom have the time to play

with videogames because they are busy with walls to touch, rooms to fill and objects to invent. A big photo in a frame. A small photo, unframed in an empty room. A video played on a TV or a video projection. New British Art. An old object in a new combination, a composition of elements from the language of this artist, some paintings, a text more important as an *image*, than an image some over scaled dolls and colorful toys with metaphorical power and many things in boxes so they look German and serious.
 The clan of these people seams to be the *right* one: It is powerful and exclusive, full with cool young people. It's the clan of Contemporary Art. In the same way that there are still Surrealists, Abstract Expressionists and Impressionists, there are many *Contemporary Art* artists.

And then, somewhere, there must exist some NewPeople and these are the people that I am curious about.

Miltos Manetas, New York 1997

Against job: give money for nothing.

  I am still very young, thirteen or fifteen years old
and I am locked inside the bathroom, the only place
in a Greek house where you can find some privacy.
I am looking the pale pink porcelain tiles that sur-
round me and I am dreaming that they are telecom-
munication buttons and screens and that by clicking
them, you can give orders to a group of terrorists and
produce distant explosions.
While I am sitting there blowing stuff up, my moth-
er's voice arrives from the other side of the door, (or
it was just the recording of her voice in my mind?),
My mother's voice at loop telling me that "I should
start working hard, plan my future. "If I will not
study hard enough, I will not enter to the University
and I will end up as a construction worker or a car
mechanic". Life is not for free, she said you need a
good job because nobody will give you money for
doing nothing".

Doing nothing? That sounded already as a good job
to me. I remember pushing some pink tiles and while
a department store in the centre of Athens was col-
lapsing in flames, I promised to take "Nothing" as
my future job.

  Later, around 1983, I discovered a book about the
great American Artist Jackson Pollock. I found his
art so easy that a few days later I started producing it
myself using his signature technique of dripping. Pol-
lock himself had borrowed *dripping* from an amateur

painter, a friend of his gallerist Peggy Guggenheim whose son was an artist. The lady was playing with the colors of her son when she discovered that you can produce wonderful paintings just by *dripping* and after Guggenheim gave her a show, Pollock was influenced in such a point to abandon the Picasso-type of pictures he was doing until then and start a new career with giant canvases made exclusively with this lady's technique. In the beginning, making Pollocks was just a summer game for me- I remember washing them in the sea to make them look more pretty, but after I sold one of them I noticed that this was also a good way to get money for quite nothing.

In 1985 I left Greece for Italy and there I learned more about Contemporary Art. This is a type of art that is open to anybody who has the courage to call himself an artist. After you make some reputation in this field, you get to travel around the planet and make exhibitions. While Museums and galleries pay your tickets and the hotels, you have the illusion of participating in something important, a conspiracy on an aesthetic and even social level!

But around 1995, Contemporary Art was not fun anymore. So many ex-students from the art colleges all around the World, were now respected artists and you had to compete with them. Biennials start happening all the time, everywhere. Most of my friends were searching for some photogenic scandal so that they would won points in these exhibitions and they will be invited to the upcoming ones. Each of us became specialised on a slice of the pie. It was all based on our identities and it was not that different after all from working as a car mechanic. Some artists,

would even resemble demolition workers, such was their capacity to fill up rooms with trash. That's what my friend Nicolas Bourriaud start calling *Relational Aesthetics*. While everyone was building his little business, I bought a computer and I start spending my time with it.

That computer, an Apple Powerbook laptop, was great mostly for one reason: It was empty! Today, all this seams a banality but back then when memory was 4 MB and your screen a gray scale, you really had to customize your machine to make it pretty enough. That's how I start looking for some interesting software, not because I wanted to do something with it but just to fill up my computer.
At a certain point, I was so much empty of ideas for exhibitions, that I decide to paint that laptop on a canvas. I didn't really know how to paint but I had visited a few museums and followed the instructions given from the dead masters. The dimensions of my paintings would also come from the old paintings, as well as the composition. In terms of coloring, I would try to apply a videogame atmosphere in my pictures to make them pretty.

Well, paintings were fine, but you still have to exhibit them and this is too much of a *job*. There is this preconception today: if you are a visual artist, you ought to fill up white rooms in a strange way, the public - mostly the expert one - must always get surprised. And it gets even worse because they already know what they want to see: they want Contemporary Art.

I decide that in order to not be bored, I should find some niche, some stuff, which you could hardly call "art" at all. Unfortunately, any object you'll take today and put in an empty room, will look like Art. Only some of the objects you'll encounter on your computer screen will still look too uncertain or too cheap to be art. I was living in NY then, but it was a very traditional Art city, so I moved to Los Angeles and I opened the "ElectronicOrphanage", a club for '"Screen Safari" and crazy Theories. Everything that was happening in the ElectronicOrphanage was visible from the street. I was paying some people to become "Orphans" and they start building a new culture, casually, like a constantly drunk mechanic who is fixing the transmission of a Volvo in NY and the brakes of a Mercedes in Paris, convinced that he is working on the same car.

It is stupid to pretend that you are doing art today while you actually do just a regular job. And if art is just a job as any other, then I don't want to do it. Maybe because-speaking the words of a literature critique about a black writer -"I never been hungry enough or insecure enough to learn the game". The *game* today is probably different. There are opportunities for everybody and because of that, whoever express himself in a professional manner is mediocre by definition. The new fun, is to sponsor people to do *nothing* or something close to nothing in an illuminating way.

Miltos Manetas, New York 2001, written for "Learn and Pass it On", published by i-D magazine.

Neen Manifesto

Neen, stands for Neenstars: a still undefined generation of visual artists. Some of them belong to the contemporary art world; others are software creators, web designers and videogame directors or animators.

Our official theories about reality, Deconstructivism and Quantum Physics, proved that the taste of our life is the taste of a simulation. Machines help us feel comfortable with this: they simulate the simulation that we call Nature. While you open the door of your room, or you click a folder on the desktop of your computer, you are send you to versions of reality which are apparently impeccable, but will dissolve once you start analyzing them.

Computing is to Neen what fantasy was to Surrealism and Freedom to Communism. Computing creates the context but it can also be postponed. Neenstars may glorify machines but they get easily bored with them. Neen is not about computers but about feelings: a new type of feelings we have *because* of the computers.

Neenstars like buying the newest hardware and software and watch it while it creates its momentum. But what Neenstars mostly do, is teaching stuff

to machines. They will install strange programs that they will never use to an empty hard drive. They will animate a character and send him sit at a corner.

Neenstars prefer multiple operating systems: they want to try the same thing again and again on different platforms. "Take the stairs and go back to get the elevator". They find pleasure in the in-between actions. They also love copying. In the same way that the city of Hong Kong does, Neenstars want to see "the same but just a bit different". Clothes, Style and architecture, are for Neenstars important tools for their "surface navigation".

Neen is not about identity, but Neenstars, may occasionally use their identity as a password in order to receive privileged information. The identity of a neenstar is his state of mind. Because he/she will publish everything on the web, his/her state of mind reflects on the public taste. Even if they spend most of their time isolated, each in his universe, Neenstars are public personas.

If *Fantasy* brought Surrealists to ridiculous and *Revolution* drove Communists to failure, it will be curious to see where *Computing* will bring Neen.

To be continued...
Miltos Manetas, 2000

The Square, 2005

There are 4 major trends:
a. "Beige", a theory created by Olivier Zahm and Elein Fleiss who are the founders of the magazine Purple
b. "Relational Aesthetics" created by Nicolas Bourriaud who directs the Palais de Tokyo in Paris.
c. "Telic" a trend that covers pretty much everything that deals with technology, Internet etc.
d. "Neen", a name coined by the Branding Company "Lexicon" - the same people who made the name Powerbook and Pentium- and which represents a new art movement, the first of this new century.

Beige   Neen

Telic   Relational Aesthetics

Beige starts from Araki and ends to Vanessa Beecroft. It includes people such as the photographers Terry Richardson and Wolfgang Tillmans, the directors Sophia Coppola and Guys Van Saint, the rock group Sonic Youth, the writer J.T Leroy, some fashion icons and fashion creators such as Kate Moss, Comme Des

Garcons and many young Japanese photographers and fashion editors. Beige is about these feelings that are properly "human" such as love, despair, vanity etc. These feelings were with us before computers arrived. It's also about young people, their love and loneliness, the way sometimes crash on the wall of the everyday reality. Beige, a color that is not black neither white, is the aesthetic of the snapshots we take while we are crashing on that wall.

 Relational Aesthetics starts from Guy Debord and ends to Maurizio Catellan. It's about a type of art that has been cultivated in Art Schools and which developed-with the assistant of the art curators into an international language. A "Relational Aestetist" such as artists Philippe Parreno, Pierre Huyghe, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Liam Gillick and Rirkrit Tiravanija is usually highly professional and serious even when he makes jokes. "Today's artist appears as an operator of signs, modeling production structures so as to provide significant doubles. An entrepreneur/politician/director" writes Bourriaud.

Telic comes from the Greek world Telos which means the final, the end and means something with a specific destination. Under Telic we find all kinds of design such as the Apple Computes, Fashion trends such as Prada but also most of Net Art and Art, which is made with computers and software. Telic is busy and productive. Magazines are usually Telic unless they become the manifestos of a new situation. Telic artists exhibit their works at the Ars Electonica festival in Austria and they are often boring to watch

types, dressed unremarkable, but very genius people once you come to know them.

Neen is a term made by a computer program (after the computer run different combinations from the letters of the word "screen") on commission from a group of people who wanted something differ-ent such as a contemporary Dada. It also happens to mean in old Greek "exactly now": this moment and not a second later. Neen is a frame of mind, it talks about a new type of feelings that we have through videogames and computers. But its not "computer art", Neen is mostly strange visual, sound and motion stuff that doesn't look "art" yet but they are so fresh and romantic that you can't forget them.

Artists such as Rafael Rozendaal and Angelo Plessas, Idoru personalities such as Mai Ueda, visionary architects such as Andreas Angelidakis, compos-ers such as GNAC, Nobukazu Takemura and Aki Tsuyuko and film makers such as Michel Gondry are definitely Neen. Some of the clothes that Nicolas Ghesquiere designs for Balenciaga, the T-shirts of Alexander Herchcovitch, some of the most hi tech pieces of Alexander McQueen and much of what Gaspar Yourkevitch is doing have a lot of Neen ele-ments but unfortunately Neen fashion doesn't really exist yet. Now, think of most of these 4 art trends as the formation of a square with a trend on each cor-ner. Most Art that started after the 80's can be found there. Takashi Murakami for example is a combina-tion of Relational Aesthetics and OtakuNeen. Some of the young female artists he promotes though are a

new flavor of Beige reinforced with Manga imagery. Matthew Barney is a Telic-Futurista, while his girl-friend Bjork is Beige-meet-Neen-meet-Television. Martin Margiela is Beige-for-the Pope and Bernhard Willhelm is Neen Naive. Nicolas Ghesquiere is Neen that more than often degenerates to Beige and Mariko Mori is dreamy Telic.

Miltos Manetas, 2005 interview at Tokion Magazine

after neen
is a show taking place at casco
which is a gallery in utrecht holland
i do not know what neen really is
i know that a greek artist manetas raised
$100 000
and paid someone to come up with
this word to represent a new art movement
it is a big tax deduction for someone
so come and see the show at casco
my name is nikola

Websites are the art of our times

Websites are today's most radical and important art objects.

Because the Internet is not just another "media", as the Old Media insists, but mostly a "space", similar to the American Continent immediately after it was discovered – anything that can be found on the Web, has a physical presence. It occupies real estate. To encounter a logo, a picture or an animation in the Internet, is a totally different experience than to find the same stuff in a magazine or on the television.

"Things" in the Internet exist in a specific location, while in magazines and on TV contents are mostly bullets of information. Online they constitute a body: they are parts of a new genre. They are Web Entities. These "creatures" are sometimes a mix of humans and software (think of Google), but sometimes are made by information only – such as in the case of Googlism.com, a website able to make a portrait of anything by collecting descriptions about that subject from Google itself (1) .

Most Web Entities are social entities. They get in touch and advertise their existence to each other. Similar to human beings, they will evaluate, criticize, "link" to each other, and ultimately, they develop a "taste".

Bob Dobbs (a friend of McLuhan) said: "advertis-

ing is communication between machines". He also suggested that machines came alive in 1967 and that "now they are in an angelic state". According to him, "advertising is communication between angels".

Well, some of these Web Entities – or shall we simply call them "Angels"? communicate already in a "pretty" way. As a result, a new type of "Art", or better, what- may–become -Art later, can be found in certain websites. But where exactly?

 The Telic spirit.

The Web is nothing more and nothing less than what the World has always been: unvisited and unfriendly territories, which are gradually transformed into a domestic landscape. From the Alps to the Japanese garden, this is the scenario: the illusory promise of order and system. But still, the simple rocks and sand in the well-arranged composition of a Japanese garden, for a better-trained intellect, are black holes and chaos. The Web came from this chaos; in a certain way, it came directly out of the Trojan Horse, described in Homer's Iliad, and now we are Ulysses lost in the ocean all over again. But we are not travelling alone: there is a special spirit that helps us navigate and that is the spirit of Telic.

Telic is our relationship with the tools that help us to design the World and to see things in a perspective. It is in mobile phones, computers but even in the way our houses and clothes are made. Our times are Telic. Telic means "something directed or tending towards

a goal or purpose; "purposeful". For example "I am driving my car to Los Angeles" is a Telic statement. "I am driving my car " is not. Telos, in Greek, means "the end" or "the purpose". Telic, firmly believes that it is Telic. (You may never arrive to Los Angeles; you may crash on a tree or something). Telic is super creative, often in a paranoid way. It is serious. It wants to explain every little detail. It will submit footnotes and references. It is "open source" and it accepts updates from anyone. Telic doesn't have a taste; it can be as ugly as an IBM computer.

Telic authors and artists have usually jobs in the tech industry, or they teach in Universities. They survive thanks to the grants that other Telic people are managing and they avoid the Art World, which in return also ignores them.

But Telic shapes the World. As J.G Ballard wrote: "Science and technology multiply around us. To an increasing extend they dictate the languages in which we speak and think. Either we use those languages or we remain mute".

Telic is making sense from these languages but then again, do we really want to make sense? Why shall we be so domesticated and so productive? Why does our "design" sometimes become so irrelevant that even the most boring companies are comfortable to sponsor it and use it as their banner?

After all, we all know how frustrating a trip in the Internet can be. It easily can feel like a flea market with

people offering you stuff in every corner, a nightmare, complete with the occasional buffoons who are providing vulgar entertainment with their "funny" websites. And when it comes to creativity, all you can usually find is the same style designers: the Martha Stewarts of the Net.

You wish there is a secret society; some people who know how to give to you the feelings directly, and who will keep you thinking, even after you quit browsing. You wish there were some websites to offer the metaphysical suspense of a painting. You wish for Neen.

Neen is a frame of Mind.

"I actually know for sure that there are scenes on the Internet that nobody knows about and nobody cares about, and within those milieus, very specialized sensibilities are evolving". (William Gibson, 2003) (2)

Neen is the crazy little brother of Telic. Invented by the Branding Company Lexicon, the creators of Pentium, Powerbook and hundreds of other brand names, it owes its existence to the realization that certain ideas or animations, certain sounds, words or behaviors are, indeed, Neen. In 2001, a group of people from all around the planet started talk about Neen. These people eventually met, some online and some in the real world and start exchanging their experience. A new art movement was born, the first of the 21 Century. But still, Neen is mostly a concept and as such it has its own life, which is independent

from the activity of people who practice it.

A person who thinks about Neen is a Neenster, while one who actually does Neen is a Neenstar. What a Neenstar does may sometimes seem silly but only because it is easy and amazing. A Neenstar is not trying to make sense; he/she doesn't suffer from any stress of production and doesn't respect a pattern. The dream of a Neenstar is to become a special Icon – but not the type of icon you usually find in the glossies. A Neenstar starts his career by becoming the Icon of his own imagination. Then, he projects that Icon to the outside as if it is a fact.

Identity is not a priority for a Neenstar, but one will fetishise oneself anyway and use that as a style: it's a fast way to produce content. But in contrast with contemporary artists, a Neenstar will change identities often, according to the situations: Neen is ultimately a state of mind. People such as Lucio Fontana, who were doing painting by simply slashing a canvas, were Neen before Neen.

Because the Internet is the best place to exercise your inertia, Neenstars spend a lot of time online. They are Friends of the information and not Users as the Telic people are. The word "cute", which has a dubious reputation in the West, while it is very respected in Asia, most of the times describes a Neen piece. But it's also Military Cute, Comme des Garçons for your brains.

Neenstars are obsessed with names. They will run a search in the Internet to see if the domain with a new

name they envisioned is available. If it is, they will register it. Immediately after, they'll do something fresh and they'll put it online: it will not be your father's website with the usual links, info and stuff – it will be something minimal, strange, romantic.

Neenstars will let the webpage be what we are looking for on the Internet: something never seen before, a new art object.

"It's really interesting... (Is it Jeffrey?)"

"Contemporary Art", the art of the past century, was based mostly on the following principle: "if you put something in an empty room, it seems strange and significant".

A variation of that was: "if you take something out of its context, it seems strange and significant".

Another was: "if you change the scale of something, it will seem strange and significant", and a last one: "if you multiply something it also becomes strange and significant". But after 80 years of different combinations for any kind of objects inside the hopelessly empty spaces of our art institutions, nothing seems really interesting. We see clearly now, that the supposed "art" is simply a bunch of trash, just some products bought in a mall or a photo illustration.

Outside of the Internet, there's no glory. Non-Internet artists are just some freelance employees of other employees (the curators of the exhibitions).

To work for somebody else is not necessarily a bad thing, after all that's how beautiful religious pictures were been produced in the past. The problem starts instead, when your commissioner doesn't have a clue as to what he/she wants from you.

Most art curators and people who commission art today never ask for anything specific from the artists that they choose. They want a "story" and the artists are required to provide it: they have to show, yet another time, what they (the artists) are already known for. It's an International loop and exhibitions in fact are identity control tests. Institutions bestow curators with confidence and power. They are not suppose to look for any unseen objects but for some evidence of human expression, which they will bring back to their commissioners, as a well-trained dog would do with its ball. They are just sampling stories...

No wonder then that any top level art exhibitions such as the Whitney Biennial, the Documenta in Kassel, the Manifesta and the Venice Biennial, they look alike, they look like Graduation Day for students of anthropology. In these "shows", any realistic representation could as well be used as an illustration for the National Geographic, while any abstract piece becomes mere decoration.

The Art World is relaxed and open to anything, because it knows that nothing peculiar will ever happen. Even if the gallery is left empty, the public will search for the label with the name of the artist who did the "work" and it will be satisfied in one way or

another. Balloons, beds, chickens. Real Space has lost its emptiness.

But in the Internet, where space is created by software and random imagination, an empty webpage is really empty. People and Web Entities ("Angels"), can still invent unpredictable objects to put there.

"Collectors"

Because Art is ultimately the power to put a form in the chaos, anyone who is busy with forms and concepts is an artist. That today includes "curators", "gallerists", "museum people" and even "collectors". They are all artists, most of them bad, but artists.

A "collector" however also does another job. Because he is a man with property, he decides what should survive. That's his artistic media after all: the power of keeping a piece in existence. Never has this power been more significant, than for a collector of websites.

Very few people are cool enough to collect websites. It requires intuition and courage. It is similar to the purchase of an apartment in a ghetto area of Harlem. You need to take the risks. Anybody instead can walk into a Gagosian gallery and buy some contemporary art. It's as easy as buying designer clothes: the House which sells the product guarantees its value and you get what you pay for: a giant certificate of authenticity with some picture on the front.

When you buy "Contemporary Art", you buy a copy of what already belongs in a Museum, because contemporary art museums are made specifically for this type of art and will eventually host anything produced by the major galleries.

It's an industry of memorabilia. Collecting in this case is not an adventure, but a banal experience, something like opening yet another Savings Account. Larry Gagosian in fact, refers with surprising sincerity to his collectors as "customers". It is OK, of course, to be a customer, but it is far more interesting and courageous to be a collector of websites.

The collector of a website has total control on the pieces he owns because the art in a website is not the animation or the code or the pictures that the website contains, but the experience of all the above in a unique place somewhere in cyberspace, under a unique name. What a collector of websites acquires, is a contract that passes to him the ownership of the web domain – the place where the work actually exists. If he decides one day to not pay the hosting fee, the work will disappear. You can burn a painting but its photograph will always permit people to reproduce it. It's not the same with the website though. The name of the website will return to the pool of the available domain names. The whole piece will expire, as if it has never existed.

Collecting a website, is a trip to a secret Villa. If a collector decides to keep this experience just to himself, he may put a password on the page and nobody

Will be able to access it. He will lock the Villa and keep the art a secret and that is OK. But if he decides to let the piece be available for viewing to the public, he will experience the feelings of the ultimate property. You are the owner of art that all can enjoy but only you own. In a time where anyone can buy anything, the only really glamorous collecting is the collecting of websites and other digital objects. The pieces which are not considered art yet but will become art later.

Miltos Manetas, 2002-2004

SAVE AS...

The third day, Jesus return to the earth - risen from the dead. In the gospel according to St. Mark (16:12) he is said to have appeared to his apostles "in an other form" which is probably why Caravaggio at his famous painting "The Supper in Emmaus" did not paint him with a beard but clean-shaven.

A clean-shaven Jesus, is a *slightly* different Jesus. Like a picture in TIFF that you can Open in Photoshop and Save As a .jpg, Jesus returns in a new format, a version which is lighter and easier for people to use. If He has lost some pixels during the compression but that was necessary. According to the Church, His mission was to become a Universal Standard and seams that 100% quality doesn't really matter.

Imagine nature, (or God) , as a very stubborn old man who sits in a corner and makes infinite variations of all sort of things. A long time ago, he made a piece of hardware (the Multiverse*) and load it with some basic software (Life). After he installed a few RAM on it (Time) he let the simulation start. He was probably trying to create a self-portrait. He may have recalled that once he was young and beautiful and he desired to see that beauty again.

But God (or Nature), is not an artist: he got bored so he devoted himself to the creation of different versions of reality, one on top of the other. He tried all the buttons and all the combinations. His hardware

(multiverse) acquired so much experience that it was hardly "hardware" anymore. It could now automatically produce new slots and install RAM (Time) to itself. As a consequence, RAM (Time), become *smart*. Time, sometimes behaves as "real" and sometimes as "virtual". Sometimes you feel it, sometimes you don't. If you push Time, it may crash but if you push it just a little harder, you may succeed running very sophisticated applications simultaneously.

Choose Expand

John (21:25) "There are also many other things which Jesus did, and if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books needed to be written"

Fiction is the User. The real purpose for everything is literature. People are just editions. They come in a portfolio of about a hundred different prints, in editions of one hundred fifty signed copies. These portfolios are eventually acquired by literary agents and over time they are positioned in different geographic locations and civilizations. But people have intelligence and therefore are constantly searching for the other members of the original portfolio.

When they find them, they create relationships. They think that they must connect with them somehow because of the shared portfolio memories. This is how stories between people are happening. Sometimes, people recognize some of their own copies. When that happens, they want to find and affect all the miss

ing companions, all the portfolios containing their copies. This adds a sense of tragedy and continuation to their destiny. This is how a person may enter the public life and starts exclaiming Theories.

As more and more people redirect their actions from the personal domain to the public one, theories multiply. If you'll try to describe all of them, the Universe will turn into a Hypothetical Universe. This is a danger that God, or Nature would do anything to avoid, so a protective software is installed in human soul: it obliges us to classify theories into Formats: The brand new ones, or those which become a "standard", are reproduced and they are available everywhere. All the rest, becomes obsolete.

It's difficult to find an operating system that reads the obsolete ones. For some beloved theories, people will write emulators that will allow their use. Take Marxism for example. Thus a very famous theory of the 20th century, it is now emulated via its alien OS of the Internet. The original theories (Formats), may still be interesting as a collector's item, but a dynamic user wouldn't care much for them: Dust to dust, ashes to ashes, he would think. If Jesus would return today, he shouldn't be just be just clean-shaved, he should at least look like a giant Pokemon!

Miltos Manetas, 2001
Published at EMIGRE#57, Feb. 2001

Jesus designed by Joel Fox for jesusswimming.com

"Happiness is heavy" 1999

In contrast with common believe, happiness is ob-
scuring our everyday life. Happiness, is the reflection
of still water, (the surface of a lake) on a mirror. Our
sensitivity is the mirror.

Therefore, what we "feel" is determined by the lake's
level of anxiety. What we "know", instead is just the
sum of the lake's reflections.

In everyday life, different situations and objects will
shadow our mirror. In rare occasions though, it hap-
pens that they cancel one another and we find our-
selves in the state of "happiness" It tastes like a full
emptiness. The safest way to actually know when we
are in that state, is when other people will notice it
and tell us.

But you are even happier, when you recall a moment
of happiness from the past. Sometimes, these "happi-
ness stills" are fake.

- A woman left : you sit on your bed and think of her.
An impressive happiness still flashes you and you ac-
cept it. You are too sad or too tired to remember that
you were never really happy together.
- You walk in your native country. Long time ago you
abandon it. You look at a building, at some streets
and there , happiness catches with you. It's a fake
one of course: you had a miserable childhood in that

country, but you enjoy that happiness.
- You may meet a new woman, you may enter an unknown city. You'll compare the intensity of your present situation with you snapshots of Happiness and you'll find it weak. Happiness weigh heavily on your life and makes it hard.

If you happen to be happy, people next to you will always notice. The reflection is even stronger towards outside than inside.
People will become flexible for a while, as if your happiness remembers them of something. If you'll notice that they noticed, you could work with them, make them do or see something otherwise impossible.
Some writers suggest that even inanimate objects become more manageable. People like Jesus is remembered to have walked on the surface of the sea.
  I remember playing a videogame, Hornet F-18 Flight Simulator for Macintosh. When I brought my plane on the water, it magically start to run on the surface exactly like Jesus. Every time I would land on the water, I would be able to perform the same miracle. In this sense, videogames, can protect our life from happiness because what you learn to do once, you can go on and do it again, forever.

Miltos Manetas 1999,
Published in "Made in USA" # 2

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F.O.R

Fabric of Reality. (a snapshot)

As we enter the 21st century, Reality is about to
replace Freedom as the century's' most coveted ideal.
Where Freedom starts and where it ends, who de-
serves his Freedom and under which conditions: this
was the subject of our past academic confrontations
and most of social battles.
Today, the debate is Reality. What is Real and what
is Fiction, how to recognize the difference and how
to communicate the knowledge of such a difference,
that is the question. Who has the rights to diffuse
knowledge about Reality? In which way ?

We are entities composed in a large part by informa-
tion as well as from bones and flesh: to who belongs
this info-slave inside us? To the producer of the in-
formation because of his "copyright" ? Day after day,
this becomes the reason for legal and illegal battles.

Still, shaken by the trouble about Freedom, we tend
to consider contemporary life itself, as just another
fictional story. Many of us will still look at an Atlas,
convinced that are watching our only natural environ-
ment, and they look down at computers and networks
as if they were "just tools".

We forget that everything is double today. Take the
blank noise of the city out of your window, look once
at the city and then your fax-machine and there it is: a
double void, ready to ring.

If silence has its double, property has a double too: recently, the King of the small island Tuvalu, sold to a Canadian company his Internet domain "Tuvalu.tv" , (a country automatically owns it's .com .net. org.tv etc even if it has no Internet connection at all). He multiplied the wealth of his country by selling it's alias.

But also the International law and the idea of Justice feel strange after our recent war against Serbia. While such an attack in a European country was in action, in Littleton, Colorado, two 18 years old boys, decide to give a similar lesson to their hostile environment by killing 15 young people, including themselves. The fact that everybody pretends to be surprised by those killings is another evidence about Reality. The adult world, which enjoys a bloody competition inside its tribe , fails to recognize a "legitimate" war between adolescents. (After Judith Rich Harris we know that "children adopt certain behaviors in social venues in order to win acceptance from their peers).

The press, blamed the Littletown "accident" on Cinema, Music, Internet and Videogames, in short everything that can be a portal to other realities. Public fear , tries to compact a multitude of "states of being" into a unique old-style RealLife, while it secretly honors it's usual Demons: the spectacles of War and destruction.

Miltos Manetas - 1999, written for F.O.R show at Rebecca Camhi, Athens, May 1999.

"Untitled", (Mai in Naples), 2003

 I despise floors. They shouldn't exist. Apartments
and houses should have "levels" instead , different
plateau that you can move up and down by pushing
a button. People should be always suspended when
they are inside a room and float between objects
their feet should never touch the ground. This would
accentuate the "artificiality" of everyday life and ulti-
mately, brings us closer to the "true" nature of things.

 I also dislike wooden floors - parquet - that "natural"
blonde color of wood. In a painting, floors should at
always painted gray, because gray is an abstraction.
I would had never paint a picture with a blonde par-
quet floor nor would I would have paint the details on
a kimono or made a carpet look exactly like a carpet.
I wouldn't paint anything to look exactly as it looks
because painting is meant to represent things in a way
that they aren't normally perceived.

 "A pipe is not a pipe," Magritte wrote over one of
his paintings. That was not necessary to say, a pipe is
an object and a painting is a ghost: how can a ghost
be an object? But paintings become objects, there is
nothing to do to prevent this. They become illustra-
tions and "Reality". We cannot hold a copyright on
Reality: it would be stupid, because then we would
have to accept that Reality is a fact that is beyond our
interpretation of it.

Because my images are doomed to become Reality,

they are free to be captured, represented, and painted again by other artists.

We are already familiar with the idea, (Quantum physics - Many Worlds Scenario) that there exists at least one parallel universe to the one where I am writing this text (actually they exist at least 350 trillion of them). To get how that feels, check this very simple set of universes: In one of them, I am writing an e-mail. There is another where I have decided to not write it, and yet another one, the universe where I wrote the e-mail but I decide to not to send it out. Therefore, there is a finite set of consequences, always of course, based on our choices.
E-mail, is such a good exercise to help us think about Multiple Universes, because our choices are confirmed by a click of a button- the Send Command.

This universe, the place where I am writing this text, is a place where I am known as a painter. I started painting in 1995, I learned how to do it by telephone, talking to a friend of mine. But in that point, I had already spend many years visiting Museums, copying - in my brain - 6 old masters, Rembrand, Rafael, Rubens, Titian, Carlo Crivelli and Manet.

The question of painting has always been a fairly simple one for me: The only really important "problem" for a painter is his subject. The subject has to be an original one, something that has never been painted before. This is why I choose to portray computers and videogames: nobody had paint them until then. The dimensions of my pictures came from

the paintings in the Museums, how it will look the portrait of a Joystick next to a "Gentiluomo" at the Metropolitan if painted as large as him? Shall I make a Playstation and a Nintendo controller gigantic or they will be ridiculous in comparison to a Madonna and Child in the Louvre? I considered the actual manner of the painting as secondary, a matter of analogue Photoshop. I just "Open" the picture - usually by projecting it on to a canvas, I "Fill" the space, by reproducing a large quantity from a digital photograph of my subject, I correct the "Levels", and the "Color Balance" etc. When the picture looks sharp enough, then its done. I also use assistants who know nothing about techniques and I describe to them how I *think* that a painting should be made. I often ask them to put the "wrong" color, so the canvas will look weird and I will have a reason to paint on it, try to "Save" it from them. Finally, I often stop the picture whenever somebody suggests that it ready. Who am I to know better? But sometimes, I visit collectors in their homes and with the excuse that I should change a little detail in the picture, I repaint large portions on it.

And when Gabriele Di Matteo, an Italian artist from Naples who I admire, asked me to make a show in his gallery with my paintings painted by him, I accepted. Nothing wrong with that I thought, Gabriele would function as my assistants did in the past and the canvases will be "original" Manetas. But my psychoanalyst in New York didn't agree. "He is an artist and an important one", she said. It will be his art. I accepted her point and I proposed to Di Matteo that

he make his own exhibition. I would give him the digital pictures that I am using and I would even go to the show and pose as a living sculpture for him. Finally, for different reasons, I couldn't go, and they invited my Japanese ex-partner Mai Ueda -who is also the model for my pictures to Naples.

The paintings came out "pretty", so pretty indeed that I wouldn't had the courage to destroy them by turning the realistically painted blonde parquet to a flat gray surface. Or maybe I would, I don't know. These works does not belong to me, they are signed by a different artist. It would be nice though, if one of my collectors would buy a piece. Then, I could go to his house and ask him if I can "correct" some details and change them completely. I would be the first painter to restore his own art, before it has been even damaged! Or would it be the restoration of the art of Gabriele di Matteo?

 I used to think of painting as something Telic, something that has a destiny precluded in its project, a destiny determined by its default definition as a "Representation" and "Art". Now, thanks to Di Matteo, I see that painting is instead "Neen", one of the most Neen (which in old Greek means "exactly now") activities for a contemporary person. Painting is computer hardware and software together: it can be used to give us alternative views of the same thing as it stays surrounded by the sequence of many universes.

Miltos Manetas, April, 2003

Neen Animal, created by Angelo Plessas in 2004.

Neen Dogma of Painting. (Francesco Bonami.com)

There was a time when paintings were pretty and fresh things to create, in the same way that Flash animations and Websites are today. But maybe there is still a way to paint amazing pictures. Here are the rules of the "Neen Dogma of Painting":

1. In order to paint a large canvas, buy large brushes. Buy many of them, because you will need clean brushes to smooth the line where the different colors meet. Only Oil on Canvas is allowed. Never mix the colors with anything else than linseed oil. That should give to your paintings the "glossiness" of a computer screen.

2. Use a projector to display the picture you want to paint on the canvas. If you know how to draw, do not make paintings: make Flash Animations instead.

3. Abstract paintings are prohibited unless you invent an "automatic system", such as those of Jackson Pollock and Lucio Fontana. That is always cool because anybody can use their systems and successfully produce Fontana and Pollock pictures. Abstract Art is interesting only when it originates from a machine or from a person who emulates a machine.

4. Use the most expensive material, so you will feel

the urgency to make something valuable in order to get your expenses back.

5. Composition, colors and size of the painting, should always be copied from other paintings in the Museums.

6. Deal with the brush stroke as if you were a hair-dresser.

7. You should use assistants as much as possible. They should have no experience or any interest in painting. Just hire the people whose features match the characters you want to paint and ask them to fill your canvas as if they were painting a wall: without any passion. Command your assistants to use the wrong color so you will feel the urgency of taking over and save the work from them.

8. Paint many pictures at the same time and let them dry before you apply new layers of color. Sometimes, you'll notice that the color your have prepared for a painting should go to another painting instead. A picture may take many years until it will be completed and actually, it's not even your job to finish it. If people want to buy it before its done, just sell it to them.

9. Make copies of your most important paintings and permit to other to copy them. All important painters of the past were making copies and that's why their work has survived today.
10. The most important instruction: try to discover

and represent, something that has never been painted before. If you find such a subject, you will produce a masterpiece whatever the manner you may use to paint it.

The "Neen Dogma of Painting", is written by Miltos Manetas, in the occasion of the 50th Venice Biennial.

Commissioned by FrancescoBonami.com

email

From Rebecca:
>are you mad at me? where is a little hello- a little
>sign of love? >> xx >> rebecca

 Reply:
Not mad... I just like to use blank e-mails for our
communication. It's as if we were speaking to each
other from inside our bodies . Without greetings and
signs of any kind. Like if we are many in one.
We can do that through email.
We can save tenderness for later, for when we meet in
real life, or for some special "e-mail bonus love".
It will be more intense...

> xxx > mm

e-mail send in 12-20-2001

2000 of what ?

I never thought that I should justify my fascination
with the arrival of the year 2000 . It was only after
I start discussing F.O.R (a show in Athens, strongly
connected with the Millennium), that my Greek
gallerist and close friend Rebecca Camhi, accused me
to have such childish ideas and to give importance to
facts that are just calendary. According to Rebecca,
these are "Preconceptions which other people have
established", they are "ideas based on dates that will
change nothing to my own destiny and if they were to
change something, then in the same way other dates
also will", so what's all this big buzz for the 2 with
the 3 zeros" ?

But I am not childish, I told Rebecca, children don't
care about 2000". In that point though, I had a flash
back and I start remembering how all this Millennium
story started for me. I was very young, probably eight
years old when I noticed that 2000 will soon arrive.

Imagine a boy in the bathroom (the only place where
you can find concentration in a contemporary Greek
house), a young boy who tries to think of himself
as something and finds nothing. There were no life
style models for me to imitate: weak/confused par-
ents, public school with idiotic professors, no modern
books or magazines, no personal computers, only at-
tention deficit disorder and the misleading surround-
ing of a country famous for its white marbles. (they

were colored in the original.)

One thing that I knew for sure, was the date of my
birth, 1964. I made some arbitrary calculations,
1+9=10 , 6+4=10. That gives 1010 which is 2.
I decide that in the year 2000 I maybe able to restart
myself and become something more interesting than
what I was in that bathroom. Was Rebecca right then?
Is it 2000 a personal fantasy, a chimera?

Let's take it from the start. 2000 years of what? 2000
the age of an idea (the Christian spirit), of a punish-
ment (2 thieves crucified), of a mistake (Jesus on the
Cross) , and also of a successful performance (We re-
peat the representation of Jesus's birth, death and res-
urrection every year). And so What? Rebecca would
ask. Even if the Year 0001 introduced this successful
drama with a happy end (Jesus comes back in some
point and Save us all), why 2000 should be more a
more glamorous year than -say- the year 1355.

The word Glamour goes back to the early days of
Christianity. In those days, when missionaries were
visiting England, a wild country then, they used to
read the Holy Scriptures to the Barbarians. The Bar-
barians- who haven't ever seen any written words or
books or for that matter the heavily decorated clothes
that the Christians were wearing, would literary *fall*
on the ground by the glam (lighting) of those things.
That's how Christians took the old power of the
Greek Logos and combine it with the technology of
books, images, clothing and music. Glamour is what
the Christian spirit was in those ages, (Jesus on the

cover of Vogue every month!) .

There is a lot of Christian-free kind of glamour today, but the Christian multimedia is still on the center of our interest for whatever gets really popular. Y2K is like the cartoon of a date , its apparently promising adventures and catastrophes and in the reality will be just another Saturday. Nothing in particular will happen, but the date itself has *Glamour* and many barbarians may fall. The little boy in the Greek bath-room will also get surprised, when he will verify for another time that time counts zero. Or, he may finally accept that in this post 000 state of things, he is really important to the other cartoon characters that he lives within. And what he will need then, will be some new theories because the old representations of reality will be now too old (2000 Years old).

There is a special power in the year 2000 and that is the power of evocation, which in a passive world means nothing, in an active world thought , can be the Source.

Miltos Manetas 1999, written for *Made in USA* # 0

PPP : an interview

A: PPP is a show at Rebecca Camhi gallery in Athens...

M: It is a show about portable computers and videogames.

A: But few people in the art world have any computing experience and even less of them have ever played any new videogames . Do you think that you will have any public ?

M: They will find their connections, they are some intelligent people in the Arts you know! But let's give here some descriptions. Portable computers are machines that will keep in their storage your photos, your thoughts and your calculations so you are able to always carry the world of your choice. Conservative people try to sell computers as if they were necessary tools. They suggest them for what you can do with them, but I love them mostly for their handicaps. They are capable of a certain amount of memory, after that they froze. They also speak a language in between then and with their users, which is imperfect and everchanging. They are a great contemporary landscape for an artist, even if themselves have nothing to do with art. They are not more related with art, that psychoanalysis with the anxiety disorder: You cannot cure anxiety disorder with analysis, it is beyond its power. In the same way, we will not renovate art with computers but still, they are ideal objects for representation. They can even be used as role models,

because computers can teach you how to live and watch.

A: but why you choose to represent them using language painting? Why not take a photo, or make a movie or even put some Powerbook together in a big transparent container or something.

M: Because whatever you may paint with Oil on Canvas, will join the company of famous characters: Jesus and his Mother painted by Rafael, Maraut by David, Olympia naked by Ingres and Manet, Marilyn Monroe by Andy Warhol, The American Flag by Jasper Johns. Now, this seems to me as a fine company to put a Powerbook and a Sony PlayStation.

A: What is a PlayStation?

M: It's a console that you plug into your TV set. It gives a very theatrical video game where you control your hero with a stick. You turn the stick right or left and the hero walk to his adventures. A famous hero today is SuperMario by Nintendo 64.

A : I see! That guy who looks like a plumper with the red hat. In your PPP show in Athens, you have him in a video next to your painting. Why?

M: In that video, he sleeps all the time. I thought that it would be nice have him sleep next to a painting. Of course the art is only at the canvas, that video is there just as a friend.

A : But do you like his face ? And that mustache!

M: You come to like the hero that you have to play. I believe that reality is not described entirely by what it exists. Reality is what we are used to watch and

in this sense even SuperMario can be emblematic of reality.

A : Why all that interest for cartoons ? All computer game heroes are nothing but cartoons. Why not to concentrate on the images of real people?

M: When you want to meet real people today, you can choose between visit a person in its house or a place like in a street or at a bar, or you can just sit in front of your computer, log on the Internet and meet different people in a chat room. Soon, we may dress as SuperMario or as a Dragon, to meet a Prince in a 3-D animated forest. Which one will be our real face then? The one that we will still encounter each morning in our mirror or the one that we will use on-line? In a cartoon World , our exterior is something like a car, you can have it big and black or red and small. It's great because you can observe forms without being obliged to defend the form that you happen to have.

A: And Contemporary Art ? All the rules for how a citizen must observe reality ...

M: Poor contemporary art ...But I don't care much. Do you?

* PPP comes from Point to Point Protocol. Can be also used as Painting and Photography Protocol.

Miltos Manetas, 1998

A Floor.

The famous software application, QuarkXpress, employed by any and all serious Graphic Designers, includes a function entitled 'Group'.

Once you apply 'Group' to any selected item, it binds the designated selection together as one. The document then becomes two layers: The layer of the empty page and the layer of the 'Group' .

Similarly, in the referenced painting of 'Untitled' (Floor with Cigarettes and Bottle of Water),1999, (i.e. pages 12 & 13) where objects are displayed, the observer becomes connected with the layer of the floor and the unfriendly assortment of associated objects. The pink floor, behaves like an empty QuarkXpress page.

What is a floor? Why do we not consider it a part of the 'Group'? Is it because without a floor, the Net of objects will float in the air? Without a 'floor', we may have difficulty with both animate and inanimate objects such as our body, a camera or perspective in general. We might have to reconsider these elements within the designated Net.

The Floor's Color

Consider an empty computer screen. Look intensively into the screen for some time. Then close your eyes

and experience the flash of light before your retina. What you have just experienced, is a color field, very similar to a floor, co-existing between your familiar 3-D space and your visual impressions of reality (after all we don't live inside cartoons!).

Even if the quality of color which is experienced in the field is closer to a black-ish green, I prefer to think of it as an iridescent pink. A color with enough metaphorical power which women can appreciate.

The Net of Objects

Visualize one cigarette as a clear image of the past representational of wafting smoke. It exists as nothing more than a small fire with a finite duration which can be used to gage Time. Multiple cigarettes, on the other hand, perhaps, 'a floor of cigarettes', could represent infinity. Yet two cigarettes, side by side, two times the same, exist as a question mark in the singularity of any given moment.

Think of a bottle of water. There are many kinds of 'vertical' bottles of water and we trust them all! A vertical concentration of water seems natural and correct. Perhaps we reflexively dismiss the shape as natural because the cubical structure of our stomach linked with the linear esophagus passage which reinforces the preconception. Ironically, in the States, water is packaged in alternative, rounded cubicles which look like a bad joke, an offense to our "fabric

of reality"*.

Explanation of the Painting

Apart from the cigarettes and the square cubicles of water, Adidas shoes, wires and cables, Sony Playstation and Nintendo 64 controllers are inclusive only as a reference to Pop. After all, Adidas (as well as Nike shoes) and Joysticks recall Hermes, a Pop allusion!

Image:

Hermes nailed to the floor, But what is a floor if not a compromise for keeping us rational ?

Sentence:

Our enemy is dead.
Good Fortune. Success.

* "The Fabric of Reality" by David Deutsch, 1998.

Miltos Manetas, 1999

Moving and Shooting

a: "Contemporary Art" museums are terrible !
b: Why ?
a: Because, what we call contemporary art, and
which is nothing but an elite sequel of Modern Art,
is strongly based on the sensation of "displacement".
To realize such a displacement, contemporary artists,
usually employ a few basic tricks. The most common
of those, is the multiplication of an image and the
change of its scale.
b: How does this works?
a: It works, because the art is exhibited in empty
interiors. The idea of using empty space to help
manipulate emotions, goes back to the invention of
perspective in the times of the Italian Renaissance.
Using perspective's laws, you can make an image
that does not include yourself . Your position instead,
will be the so called "vanishing point", somewhere
out of the picture, in a similar way that God can be
absent from its creation. In recent times, Dadaists and
their friends stopped framing real space -they broke
the picture- and they re-introduced perspective. They
did so, by putting their objects in "position" and by
applying over them some metaphorical sense. Ready-
made and similar objects are entirely different than
any sculpture, yet are still connected to the idea of
painting.
b: really?
a: You cannot appreciate a bottle holder or a bicycle
wheel, until you'll "frame" it with some empty space.

Even the existence of simple furniture in a room, would disorient the viewer from having that exact amount of displacement which may will lead him to exclaim: This is an artwork! It's great!

b: What do you mean by "Empty space"?

a: Wide empty interior space was not always available. In fact, it is a new thing. It came with the Modern Times, along with the realization that everything on the surface of the Earth has been discovered, that our planet is nothing but a giant ready-made which we can observe from an available moon. It became evident suddenly, that a naked room was now the only place where you could hide yourself. An empty room (four white walls) became the context. There, you could make some magic spell like Joseph Beuys; you could change something into nothing, or even nothing into something. However, in that empty room you would still meet people and socialize.

b: You mean having parties?

a: Artists and their friends began enjoy their privileges and in the following fifty years (1950-1999) they created a society and a small but nice niche market. In this new situation, the artist became the guy who makes "discoveries" .Together with his gallerist, they would invite other friends and foes to see the "exhibits". Soon, people without talent, but with the experience of May 68, (Germano Celant's generation) joined the game and they quickly convinced some of their old pals , successful politicians now, that this adventure could be somehow profitable. With a combination of public money and private funds, the friends of the artists (curators) start housing the most awarded discoveries in Museums, Institutes and

Foundations . As the market value of the "discoveries" and the power of the curators increased, the fame and reputation of those institutions overcame the fame and reputation of even the most successful galleries. And why not? "Museums" were the emptiest, widest, and whitest of all spaces!

b: aha!
a: Before contemporary art, Museums were great. In the cities of our passive world, they would function as virtual reality machines. They would transport you quickly and inexpensively to the most bizarre past or future. They are full of items disconnected from our time but also expelled by their times. A Roman sculpture, a Chinese vase, a Cezanne painting, are not where you would expect them to be -respectively on a courtyard in Rome, in a Chinese kitchen, or over a sofa in a Frenchman's house. They are positioned instead in alien displays and are together under the same walls, within walking distance. The Museum would transforms all it contains! I bet (provided the guards are asleep), that if someone took his clothes off in the Museum, nobody would object: people would exist there not as citizens but as visitors. They were not supposed to watch each other. But contemporary art museums, changed everything. They activated empty space: made a context out of it. They turned any object, from our past or our present, in to a concept.

b: I got it! But is it fun?
a: Not really.. Sex is fun and also moving into unknown terrain can be fun. Looking around and

discover places. Today, in front of a computer, you can do that with your fingers! New land appears on your screen while you are connected on-line or while you play a videogame. It's a nice and clean land made by pixels. You can be with other humans there, but mostly you are alone, so it feels private, as it was nature to an aborigine. Every game you play is a new experience, which teaches you some recent patterns of moving and exploring reality. A videogame makes us enjoy life twice. We take pleasure from the "reality" of the game, when pushing a button to open a door and then, after we quit, once returned in the world outside where a door can be opened in an "analogue" way, we enjoy that old door too. There is the same type of psychological confusion, as when we visit Venice for a day and then fly back to a big noisy city. The difference of the two Worlds makes both desirable.

b: yeah..

a: Another thing we really enjoy is destruction. It is again a matter of visibility; we want to break the appearance, to see how something is composed, or just turn everything into pieces as we move. In real life the combination of moving and firing a gun can be a dangerous sport, while in a videogame it's safe to perform violence. In shoot-em all videogames such as Doom and Quake a chair may fall into pieces but it may also stay there, indestructible. Destruction in a videogame, is less predictable than in reality. By using the proper cheats, you can cross through walls or get unlimited ammo. Shooting , becomes natural:

another body function. You will still meet enemies, but the cheat of "immortality" will save you from the boring rules of death. In the videogame version of reality, you are free to avoid death and this is what makes computer games as empty and as interesting as art: both ignore the "user" even if they wouldn't be able to function without him.

They are both (art and videogaming) abstract !

b: Yes. Ok. Shall we play some SuperMario now?

a: I can't. I am busy...

Jean Francois Lyotard : Postmodern Fables University of Minnessota Press

Miltos Manetas, 1999, written for a show by Palle Torsson & Tobias Bernstrup called Museum Meltdown (22 May - 19 August 1999) at Moderna Musee, Stockholm Sweden.

Playstation Time.
Art, games and video .

Miltos Manetas speaks with Lionel Bovier,
Christophe Cherix & John Tremblay.

Brooklyn , the 6th of April 1997, at the end of a very
normal day. Miltos Manetas is lying on a brown
psychoanalyst's couch that constitutes the only color-
ful furniture in the entire white and gray loft that he
inhabits with Vanessa Beecroft. He has disposed three
seats next to it, albeit placing himself in the situation
of an analyzed. The conversation above is the exact
transcription of this lacanian "floating listening" ses-
sion...

Lionel Bovier : Yesterday, we were watching your
new videos and discussing the precise nature of
the gap existing between them and their referent
(i e some specific and actual video games) How
could you define your relationship to video ?

Miltos Manetas : I suppose that I have to make some
videos because it's easy to handle-it's convenient
and cheap, - but I also hate video. In a way, it's even
worst than cinema: you have to watch them in a box
framing the images . If I have to make a real video
film, I would have to work hard for something that
doesn't represent me entirely even if it's very effec-
tive as a demo of an idea. Anyway, this process of
creation implies a position I am not really inter-ested

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in. So, when I bought my Sony PlayStation, I discovered a fast way to make videos: I just have to record a part of a game that linked to something I'm interested to show or express . The images are coming from a precedent scenario that I can use and appropriate just by playing the game... For example, for the video series Flames 1997, which I made from the game Tomb Raider, I had the girl (Lara Croft) , run into a cave with arrows coming from all around and get hit by them until she fall dead on the snow mourning a moving "ah". I had her run again and again, in a tape of ten minutes. Ten times she tries to cross the corridor but she always faults and dies. It fulfilled my wishes for a story about weakness , beauty and tragedy as if it was designed for me ,waiting for me in the stores to buy it and iso-late what I'm needing for the construction of an art piece . Moreover, technically it's made exactly like a real video, because in the game you can decide how to move the girl , you can decide from which point of view you want to film her, etc.. So you are actually the real director of the game session . The only difference since the actor is virtual and that all the sets , stage lighting and so on are ready-made from the game's program-mer. A second video , is made from a flight simulator , in which you are supposed to drive an airplane in the sky , but that runs endlessly on the water. The video is called "Miracle 1996 ", in memory of the famous Jesus miracle . I like Jesus miracles, which as Gerald Lynn said are very credible because they include such astonish details, that you end up believing them. Once , in a wedding (not a proper occasion for a miracle) Jesus transformed a whole river into wine ...

John Tremblay : I just performed a miracle : I transformed regular bread into toast! If somebody needs some ...

Lionel Bovier: I understand that you are using an error in the programming of the game to have your work done , is that right ? Some kind of free space in the preconceived scenarios...

Miltos Manetas : Yes, I like mistakes, bugs and failure of computer's functions as much as their abilities and performances. "Miracle 1996" is an experience of the limits of a game situation and the sudden implosion of every competence. The main subject that I choose to represent with my work , is the moment when ability fades. It's a classical topic. You can find it , for instance , in the book of Heinrich Von Kleist The Prince of Homburg , where a young prince falls asleep and forgets the battle he supposed to go into.

Lionel Bovier: Do you really always need to organize your work on such specific themes ?

Miltos Manetas: I need a subject . I don't believe in abstract art . I think I am always relating to representation.

Lionel Bovier: That reminds me of the collection of characters that you started in 1993 (and called ,as in the "figuration" side of cinema's jobs, Extras.)

John Tremblay : What ?

Lionel Bovier: Miltos collected in his computer
hundred of descriptions of fictional characters and
just edited the list. You have to read that "book" :
it's exciting and at the same time reaching a point of
perfect void.

John Tremblay : Is it infinite ?

Miltos Manetas : Yes, it's a never-ending process. I
go to libraries and copy in my powerbook the de-
scriptions. What I wanted to do was to create a book
from the material which I usually avoid to read.

**John Tremblay: Why don't you read this type of
descriptions normally ?**

Miltos Manetas: Because my focus in literature,
is as in life , consists in the generic and not in the
individual or the particular. I try to avoid look on the
features or the de-tails of things , I want to see the
whole image- or the image as a whole . This attitude
is there pushed to the opposite. I make art just to be
able to make the opposite from what I really should
do. I even become a painter lately ... because I never
had any interest for painting something...

**John Tremblay : Here, I've one description from
Boris Vian to add to your collection : "He was rea-
sonably tall and slim-hipped; he had long legs and
was very , very nice. The name Colin suited him
almost perfectly. He talked to girls with charm**

and to boys with pleasure. He was always in a good mood-and the rest of the time he slept. "

Christophe Cherix : I have played the game Tomb Raider yesterday and found very perverse that you continuously kill the girl in your video, be-cause the death you are show-ing is in fact the one of your own identification in the game. I wouldn't call it a failure, because this is inscribed in the main purposes f the game. Look at the delicate way in which the character is dying ! What I would like to know is why you choose these specif-ic sets (in a cave , with arrows or different cutting objects) and not others and how you in-terpret the suicidal way you purposely played ?

Miltos Manetas : First, I like that confusion of iden-tity. As a player, you are the girl character, but you are also the director of the video in which she is (or you are) acting. Then, I choose specific sets that un-derline what I wanted to express. Moreover, when the character dies it is impossible for you to see the rest of the landscapes in the game which actually are very beautiful. With her death , understanding becomes impossible-because what in real life is movement and motion, is in the field of representation , comprehen-sion. When motion stops, comprehension finito.

Christophe Cherix : In a game where you are sup-posed to have the maximum "freedom", you have cut any possibility of
 . Is that a metaphor of your own artistic condi-tion, in the same way as you said before that you

"had to make " videos or paintings ?

Miltos Manetas: There is no freedom. Art is interesting because you are never free, because you are under specific conditions.

Lionel Bovier: But isn't it precisely the kind of situation in which , as in a video game , you should look for a failure in the system ?

Miltos Manetas : Beauty is the failure ! I mean , by being a painter also, I know that when you come close to beauty, you are on a verge of failure. As an individual one should not look for qualities but for the loss of them all. That's also the line that separates the artist from a philosopher . The philosopher knows about beauty but avoids it , the artist doesn't avoid beauty he prefer to become a human mistake. Plato was considering artists as low figures in the hierarchy of his ideal society , as they deal with real objects and simulation, when the philosopher is treating the ideas that define the reality. When you are making art , you are always accumulate qualities, beauty , success, experience and so on, instead of reaching the state of abstraction , essence and ideas. Look at Picasso, the guy wearing shorts on the beach and trying to sleep with as many girls as he can, on the same kind of agenda he has for paintings : accumulating more and more experiments with forms.

Christophe Cherix : Starting from this philosophical premise, how did you become interested in such formal issues as painting ?

Miltos Manetas : My identity is to work with philo-sophical tools but my attraction in art would be to access the ability of , say , John Armleder. The video Soft Driller 1994 was about that kind of paradoxical and desperate artistic position: one guy saying that he will fuck up the other and this one constantly deny-ing this perspective : both sides of my own position. That's why I am working with machines that we build to help us and that finally end up complicating our entire life, as they become mirror sites of it . This room is packed with computers and electronics and that's however something that I'm not comfortable with. That's like women .

John Tremblay : But you are not surrounded by women...

Miltos Manetas : No, but Vanessa embodies them all...

John Tremblay : Which is precisely what she is up to in her performances, using all dif-ferent type of characters to delegate herself to the audience... Lionel Bovier : You said that, before this year , you could not contextualize your own work. How did it happen that you seem now able to do it ?

Miltos Manetas : In a way, painting was the point I had to reach to be able to have a perspective on my work. In the process of oil painting on canvas, you apply layers of memory on a projection surface and you end up with a kind of window. David Robbins

said once that "wall painting is a door and a painting on canvas a window" .

Lionel Bovier : And what about size ?

Miltos Manetas : Size is not important. Pollock made bigger paintings and the museum just became bigger...that's all.

Playstation Time is an interview taken in 1996, NY.