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## THE LAUNCH OF MEDIAKUNST.NET

On June 19 Mediakunst.net was launched at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam in the presence of a diverse public of artists, students and professionals during a public program. Short presentations by Gaby Wijers, Pier Taylor, Sacha Bronwasser, David Garcia and Julika Rudelius were followed by a panel conversation led by moderator Katja Kwastek. Kwastek, professor of modern and contemporary art at the Free University in Amsterdam focuses on media art and media aesthetics in her research and writing. Therefore she has been working with media art archives from both the inside and as a user. Researchers, especially those who research media art, are often depending on physical resources such as libraries, museums, festivals and archives. Not being able to see the works at festivals or in museums, Kwastek indicates to often use platforms like Vimeo, Youtube, artists websites or Google to search for information and documentation. The presence of media art online will most certainly influence the future and position of media art within institutions. Where is it that we can access media art nowadays? and what does it mean for an artwork or for the artists that their works are disseminated online, finding their digital place in different contexts? What is it like for the institution and curators to have media art available online? Is it a blessing or is it problematic in terms of exclusivity for example?

Freelance art critic, programmer and curator Sacha Bronwasser “would have died to have such an archive online” such as Mediakunst.net. Bronwasser stresses that it has always been problematic for researchers and curators to research media art because you would always have to go to physical archives but she believes it is getting better. An example of what one artwork could look like online is a Google search inquiry of Guido van der Werve’s video work *Nummer Acht (Everything is*



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*going to be alright*) (2007), that is represented by dozens of images that differ from each other. Some of the images are dominated by white and blue tones, others are largely green. The images are also snapshots of different moments of the video where Van der Werve walks in front of the icebreaker. Bronwasser uses this Google search as an example to make clear that these images only represent a glimpse of the original work by Van der Werve, to experience the work you need to

go to a museum or a screening, because otherwise you would not experience the real work with sound. In this way Bronwasser criticizes the fear, that has become common among artists and institutions, to put things online because it would take away the necessity to go somewhere and says: “every art historian knows that you have to see a work for real.” This fear, is of course, not completely unfounded, because it holds a relation to the most important - and traditional - conditions of art; authorship, ownership and museal context.

Artist and critic David Garcia stresses the importance of video art history, especially the time of Marina Abramovic, Ulay and Vito Acconci, the time when the possibilities of video art were explored through the capturing of behaviour and light movement. Video as a knowledge- and expressive tool. In light of *Mediakunst.net* Garcia reflects upon the digital database as a political phenomenon and states that the online database is not a library or archive, because it is driven by query: “You don’t have to go and find what you’re looking for based on existing taxonomy. You put in a question, it comes back to you”. In this new politics of the database a challenge for artists operating within these contexts or frameworks has risen. According to Garcia artists need to realize that they have lost control of their works. Their works will be taken from them, reappropriated or re-made. In order to work within this context, we need to understand how to embrace and at the same time manage this new era in art and



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technology: “We have no choice but to accept and explore those possibilities, because resistance is not just futile, it may just be fertile”.

On the other side, accepting these new conditions might just be positive in terms of visibility and distribution. Artist Julika Rudelius, who also teaches, is often confronted with the problem that she can not find works of people that she admires or that she finds important. For comparison, if Rudelius wanted she could show her students tons of Logan Paul video's, the famous

Youtube vlogger that has been criticized for his video in the suicide forest in Japan, but it is hard for her to show her students video work or documentation of early feminist artists. Rudelius, who makes sculptural installations, has chosen to take her work off the internet for a long time and to restrict online access to her work because of her situation as an artist who has to finance her work and make a living at the same time. Nowadays Rudelius strongly believes in the possibilities of open, moderated platforms that could turn into communities, where media art can be brought back into the public space that is currently dominated by mass media and vlogs by Logan Paul.

According to these artists Mediakunst.net is a glimpse of an idea, a hint of a work, presented on an open platform that is accessible for everyone, from professionals, researchers, curators to artists and students. The creation of Mediakunst.net took an great amount of effort and time, but the result is outstanding. Who would ever imagine ten or twenty years ago that you could make an online playlist, filled with works of art historical icons, pioneers and contemporary talent, where works from Marina Abramovic are juxtaposed next to the colorful works of Melanie Bonajo. Of course there is still a lot of work to be done regarding to contextual texts and information, the representation of multi-channel video works or for example complex software or browser based artworks. It is a never ending work in



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progress. In the end, Mediakunst.net is going to be a growing platform that will unite more works and collections than the now represented five media art collections in the Netherlands of the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Van Abbemuseum, the Dutch Heritage Agency of the Netherlands, Frans Hals Museum and LIMA.

*Text: Manique Hendricks (LIMA)*