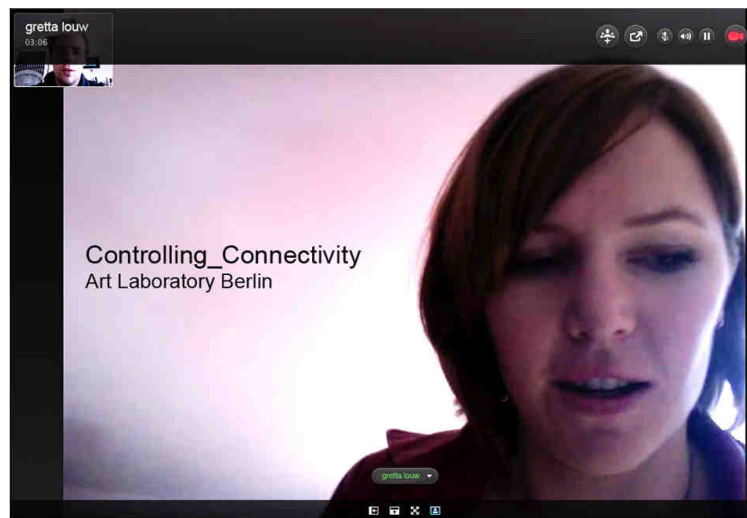


Gretta Louw
Controlling_Connectivity

Online performance: 2-12 November, 2011
Exhibition: 26 November, 2011 – 15 January, 2012
Opening: 25 November, 2011, 8PM

In many ways participation in the elaborate communication networks that now underlie social interaction is no longer a matter of choice, since failure to participate is, in many demographics, akin to social withdrawal. Our decision to connect with and perform within online networks also plays an increasingly large role in determining professional success. The question, however, is what are the other effects of our growing reliance on online communication and community on our lives, culture, and society?



With the opportunity for connectivity and limitless access to information comes the obligation to be increasingly available to receive and transmit; to be perpetually connected. The consequent erosion of true leisure time, the blurring of the traditional professional / personal, public / private dichotomies, and an information overload are creating hitherto unknown levels of psychological pressure. Furthermore a controversial debate has emerged as to whether constant use of the internet (and so called phenomena of 'internet addiction') actually restructures our brain.¹ If these studies prove correct, this suggests that we take part in a subtle act of 'becoming machine' or 'becoming interface' whenever we spend excessive amounts of time online.

The Australian performance and multimedia artist Gretta Louw explores the manifold implications of total internet immersion in her upcoming performance project *Controlling_Connectivity*. The performance uses the pervasiveness of internet-based social networking as well as the obligation and opportunity for constant connection with these platforms as a paradigm for a severe and systematic disruption of normal, socially accepted patterns of life and interpersonal interaction during a self-documented performance. Taking to its natural extreme the notion that new technologies are increasingly dictating our social interaction, professional life and have a far reaching effect on many other aspects of daily life, Gretta Louw will complete a durational performance, living in the gallery space in complete isolation except for contact through various online social networking sites.

¹ <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=does-addictive-internet-use-restructure-brain> and <http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0020708> (accessed 2011-10-11).

For 10 days the artist will be available 24 hr/day for discussions, emails, comments, or interviews – of both private and professional nature – for any internet user, from anywhere in the world, wishing to take part in the project. All necessary supplies will be stored within the gallery and the windows will be blacked out to ensure that the environment is not normalised by natural light or social rhythms outside, but defined purely by the internet connection to external participants. Beyond being constantly available on a variety of social media including skype, facebook, google+, twitter and email, a number of planned online events (the artist's 30th birthday, live talks with partners in New York, interviews with press) will be scheduled at intervals throughout the performance, with these social and professional pressures becoming progressively more difficult to fulfill as sleep deprivation and isolation take effect.

During the performance the artist will create and install the subsequent exhibition at Art Laboratory Berlin, with the aim of examining how extreme internet use, and our reliance on online connectivity could affect psychological functioning; our ability to censor ourselves, and continue to behave in a socially acceptable and comprehensible way under the constant pressure of inexorably increasing connectivity.

Controlling Connectivity is part of a long tradition of durational performance, whose origins date back to the 1970s and the work of Vito Acconci and Marina Abramovic, but Louw has brought this tradition into the 21st century by addressing the radically new changes that recent technology has made to the way we communicate and spend our time. Louw's background in psychology informs her methods and paths of inquiry. Both the structure of the performance and the documentation, which will make up part of the exhibition form part of the current dialogue between artistic practice and scientific research, as well as addressing the complex philosophical and ethical questions posed by new technology.

Selected events during the performance (CET= Berlin time):

02.11. 2011 - 12-13 hrs GMT (13-14 CET): google + hang out to mark the start of the performance.
03.11. 2011 - 19-21 hrs, CET: 30th birthday party online (google + hangout, twitter, facebook, skype)
04.11. 2011 – TBA: live skype chat with audience at Grace Exhibition Space performance art exhibition, Brooklyn. <http://www.grace-exhibition-space.com/>
10.11. 2011 – TBA: live skype chat with Flux Factory's monthly salon evening event, Flux Thursday.
11.11. 2011 – TBA: live discussion with Panoply Lab during their Conference of Work: Operations and Participations series on performance art. <http://www.panoplylab.org/conference.html>
12.11.2011 - 11-12 hrs Greenwich mean time(12-13 CET): google + hang out to mark the end of the performance.

Selected online venues:

<http://controllingconnectivity.tumblr.com/>
<http://twitter.com/GrettaLouw>
https://www.facebook.com/pages/Gretta-Louw-Controlling_Connectivity/232846076767283
<https://plus.google.com/111051021342350315664/posts>
skype: controlling_connectivity

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