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CHORUS
+ BASTARD CULTURE

„How user participation transforms cultural production" is one of the main questions in Mirko Tobias Schäfer's book *bastard culture.*

Participation has become a key concept and is used to frame emerging media practices. It considers transformation of former audiences into active participants and agents of cultural production.

Schäfer describes the consequences of user participation as an extension of the cultural industries. The interactions between users and corporations, and the connectivity between markets and media practices, are inherently intertwined and constitute something he brashly dubbed "*bastard culture*" to indicate how the most heterogeneous participants and practices are blended together.

It's this practice of „blending together" that constitutes our hybrid formats. We are questioning aspects of public space, participation and its rules, as well as practices of embodiment and connectivity - refering to the immense production of personal imagery and subsequent aspects of surveillance. This involves a simultaneous research of interdependent fields. Will the greek chorus of the old times resurface out of the practice of blending the swarm of digital users and agents of image production with the resulting imagery and letting them act out their own practice of constantly chasing images?

BASTARD CROWDING
WITH GADGETS

In the course of new developments in computing, robotic and artificial intelligence, and the development of the internet in the late 80ies and early 90ies - research of swarm intelligence became of interest. Swarm intelligence (SI) is the collective behavior of decentralized, self-organized systems, natural or artificial. The concept is employed in work on artificial intelligence. The expression was introduced by Gerardo Beni and Jing Wang in 1989, in the context of cellular robotic systems. Parallel to this the swarm became established as a paradigm in analysis of social and cultural sciences, and in the public domain phenomenons as smart mobs appeared.

I got to know choroegraphic practices of swarming or flocking for the first time in Tanaka Min´s Mai Juku Butoh workshop – an exercise named Tsuri Tsurare (riding the same wave) exercised a technique of feeling the movement intentions of neighbours and in such a way creating a sort of nearly simultaneous group movement reminding flocks of sheep or swarms of fish moving.

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Flocking in the digital realm was analized when using the algorithms for programming behaviour of virtual entities. Basic models of flocking behavior are controlled by three simple rules:

1. Separation - avoid crowding neighbors (short range repulsion)
2. Alignment - steer towards average heading of neighbors
3. Cohesion - steer towards average position of neighbors (long range attraction)

With these three simple rules, the flock moves in an extremely realistic way, creating complex motion and interaction that would be extremely hard to create otherwise.

Recently scholar Mona de Weerdt wrote an essay titeled „swarm dynamics and social togetherness" about an improvisation choreography by Tom Hauert and his group Zoo. „It´s about togetherness, social behaviour and the functionality of a non–hierarchic group, she states,"both phenomenons, the swarm and dance improvisation as well are being characterized by emergence, transitoriness and performativity."
De Weerdt brings in Jean Luc Nancy and his approach of socialphilosophy of „the inbetween" where the gaze is directed on the intermediate, which is happening between us. In Nancy´s book „singular–plural" he asks himself the question, how we can think a WE without submitting this WE a substancial (in or exclusive)identity.
He puts an emphasis on the „being with", which according to him is a being shared between us, a social fabric, separating as well as binding and in such a way a common form which is characterized by the plurality in being together and not through homogenous ideological synchronisation.
In our crowding aproaches we examine and apply improvisational choreographic principles to interacting human bodies in urban space and include the use of gadgets of digital imageproduction such as smart phones and cameras. Departing from this we actually experiment with creating a second swarm besides a physical one in urban contexts – the second one consisting of the nonmaterial images every swarm-member is recording which are being transfered via an interfaces (mobile phones with Wi-Fi, mobile servers) to a digital space, and mapped into a 2D projection which eventually we project as a double layer of an intervention on surfaces in the environments we use. Along with Byung Chul Han describing „digital swarms" as a public phenomenon - we are working with an embodied swarm of people directly related to the digital trace of the production, we are interested in. We will work with trained dancers as well as non-professionals who are triggered in their physical behaviour by various scores like flocking and concentrating on the body as well as by the score to record others while they are recording others with digital gagdets.

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