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P7C-1 INTERTUBULAR
PNEUMATIC PACKET
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INTRODUCTION: A COMMON PIPE DREAM AT TRANSMEDIALE 2013 “BWPWAP”

TATIANA BAZZICHELLI

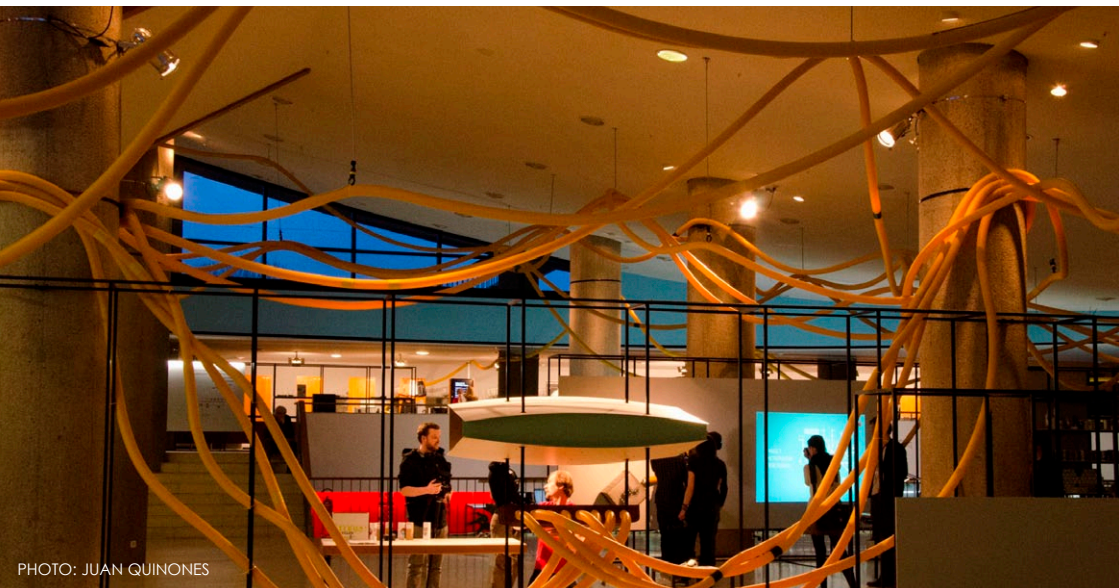


PHOTO: JUAN QUINONES

During the *transmediale* festival 2013, under the jargon acronym “BWPWAP: *Back When Pluto Was a Planet*” we investigated how technological development and new knowledge paradigms are changing our cultural imaginaries, and at the same time, by re-appropriating artistic practices from past decades, how it is still possible to reinvent such imaginaries, generating new experimental modes of interaction. One of our fields of investigation was the development of social networking, since social networks have become a pervasive part of our daily lives, and have progressively contributed to changing the way we create friendships



and connections. Among the four conceptual threads we followed during the festival (Networks, Paper, User and Desire), we encouraged a critical reflection on the current meaning and practices of building networks.

While we worked on the conceptualisation of the “Networks thread” in the BWPWAP festival programme, we posed the following questions: What does it mean to consider Networks BWPWAP and therefore, to think of networks as obsolete? And what is today’s role of artists and activists in a context in which networking is becoming very much linked to business strategies in the Web 2.0 market? Do we still have the possibility to build

alternative tools and thereby rethink the role of networked art in an increasingly commercialised networking context?

Among the programme team of the festival, we agreed that it would have been a limitation to reflect on the current situation of social networking without assuming a broader perspective on the development of network practices, and without creating a conceptual relationship between the past and the present of networked art.

The practice of networking as a modality of sharing knowledge has been central to the creation of aesthetic situations among a small group of participants in the fields of experimental art and poetry in the last half of the twentieth century (Saper, *Networked Art*, 2001); on the other hand, with the emergence of social media and Web 2.0, enabling communities has become a pervasive business and market strategy (Lovink & Rossiter, 2006; Galloway & Thacker 2007; Cox, 2008).

The meaning of participation, collaboration and networking is itself changing and, since the mid 2000s, social networking has become a mainstream concept. However, if we recognise that networking today is opening an ever broader channel of communication among people who are not necessarily involved in the alternative art and technology scene, it is possible to imagine Web 2.0 as a new context for artistic practices, as pointed out by Juan Martin Prada in 2007 in his paper presented at the “New Art Dynamics in Web 2 Mode” conference.

With the emergence of Web 2.0, we are facing *a process of continuity*: networking, which was previously a narrow artistic practice among the Avant-garde, or in the underground creative scene during the 1980s and 1990s, has found a much wider audience today and is becoming a common mode of interaction. But we are also facing *a deep change*, or as many hacktivists and critical theoreticians argue, an involution in the modalities of creating networks, which are becoming ever more centralised and informed by the logic of business.

This dual approach looks more like a split, if analysed from a critical political perspective. However, such a transformation of networking practices is not necessarily negative and might open new contexts of interventions for artists and hackers. The Californian computer engineer Lee Felsenstein stresses the point that today the term social media implies a form of expanded participation - at least, formally - and this might be considered a victory for some hacker principles such as *access for all*, and *computer power to the people* (Felsenstein in Bazzichelli, 2009b).

Similarly, Vittore Baroni argues that we must recognise the potential of social networks as widespread platforms for sharing and exchanging; therefore, it is important to engage with them, while nevertheless maintaining a critical approach (Baroni, 2009). It is central to reflect on the meaning of networking as a collective art practice, and as a challenge to acting within production processes (recalling the *hands-on imperative* of the hackers). The idea of working from within the functionality of network systems becomes an opportunity to reflect on concepts such as openness,



authority, and sharing, which are constantly challenged and renegotiated by artists and activists, who work within the realms of social and cultural disruption.

Following such reflections carried on with the other members of the *transmediale* festival, Kristoffer Gansing (Artistic Director) and I (Programme Curator), imagined a very experimental project for *transmediale* 2013: a living metaphor of a social network generated via pneumatic tube architecture, but also a tribute to the local Berlin *Rohrpost*, a historical public service of Pneumatic Tube Transport created in 1865 in Berlin. The *Rohrpost* not only had a very prominent role in the communication traffic in Berlin until the end of the 1970s, but has been a source of imagination

for many artists and activists of the city - among them, the founders of the “rohrpost mailing-list”, the German mailing-list for the culture of digital media and networks promoted by Micro Berlin and initially administrated by Tilman Baumgärtel and Florian Cramer (rohrpost@mikrolisten.de; today at: <http://post.in-mind.de/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/rohrpost>).

From this intellectual spark, a joint collaboration between the *reSource*



PHOTO: GALYA KOVOLOVA

transmedial culture berlin / transmediale, the Berlin-based collective Telekommunisten, the raumlabor berlin group and an international network of mail artists coordinated by Vittore Baroni was generated. During a travel in Slovenia, in the context of a Telekommunisten exhibition at the *Aksioma | Project Space* in Ljubljana Dmytri Kleiner, Jonas Frankki and I started a conversation on the possible applications of such a pneumatic project, and I asked the Telekommunisten collective to help develop and conceptualize the work, which later took the name *OCTO-P7C-1 Intertubular Pneumatic*

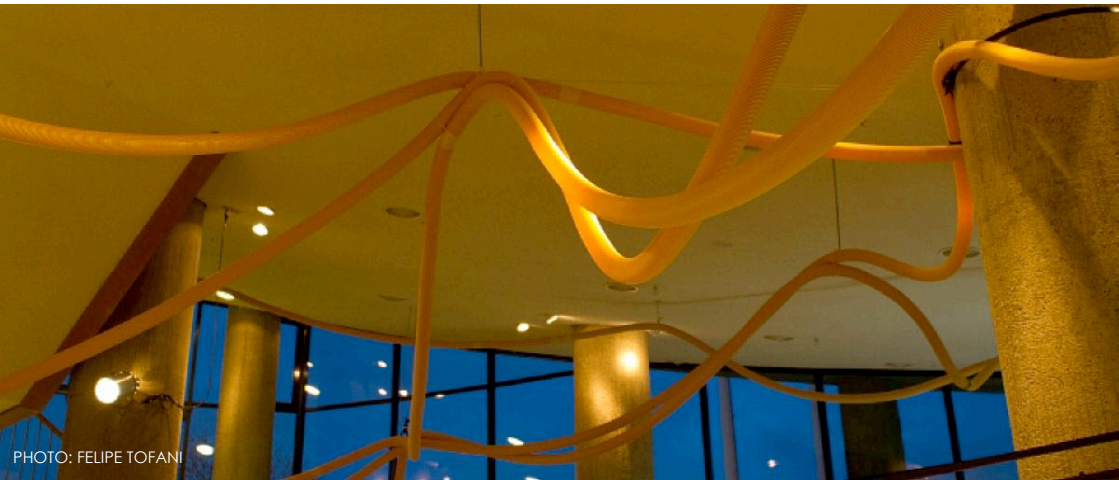
Packet Distribution System. It was “proclaimed” the transmediale 2013’s Official Miscommunication Platform, following the development of the miscommunication technology series by Telekommunisten, and extensively involved the Telekommunisten collective, as described by Dmytri Kleiner in his piece for this catalogue. The Telekommunisten members have been working on the functionalities of the network (especially Jeff Mann, Dmytri Kleiner, Baruch Gottlieb, and Jonas Frankki) and on the ironic and disruptive fiction of the *OCTO* corporation (under the motto *A Global Pipe Dream Come True*), lead by the unique CEO Octavia Allende Friedman. Similarly, Andrea Hofmann, Florian Stirnemann and Markus Bader of raumlabor berlin worked on the architectural aesthetics of the installation, taking care of the various phases of the montage, in collaboration with the technical staff of the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (under the supervision by Sibylle Kerlisch and Phillip Sünderhauf). The development of the *OCTO* project also extensively involved the transmediale team, in particular our project manager Inga Seidler, and from the *reSource* team, Georgia Nicolau and Heiko Stubenrauch.

But what is a network without a multitude of networkers? On July 2, 2012 I contacted Vittore Baroni, with whom I already had the honor to collaborate for other art projects in Berlin (one of them was the *Hackmit!* exhibition in 2007, at the Machmit! Museum), and I proposed to him to participate in this adventurous project. It was a great experience, an extensive networking operation, but also a real “madness”, as he wrote to me, ironically reflecting on the amount of people and complications, but also the fun that we encountered during its development. From the extravagant mind of Vittore Baroni, there emerged the *PNEUMatic circUS* concept, thanks to which we all experimented the meaning, practice, and also unpredictability of mail art at transmediale 2013.

The *OCTO P7C-1* installation and *PNEUMatic circUS* project were developed in the transmediale festival context “*reSource*transmedialculture berlin” (www.transmediale.de/resource), which I have been running since 2011. The *reSource* focuses especially on the interconnection between networking, hacking and activist practices, and develops through various events before and after the festival. During August 2012, at the *reSource 002: “Out of Place, Out of Time”* event, *OCTO P7C-1* and *PNEUMatic circUS* were launched. The production took six months, leading up to *transmediale 2013: BWPWAP*, where the final results were shown and performed, as described by Vittore Baroni in his text. During the *reSource 002* event,

the first *OCTO* prototype was demonstrated, together with a teaser video and *OCTO / PNEUMatic circUS* poster, at the Kunstraum Kreuzberg / Bethanien cultural centre, while a discussion on “Imaginary Networks” was held on August 23, with Dmytri Kleiner & the Telekommunisten, Simon Worthington, Lutz Wohlrab, setting up the basis for the development of the project.

In the following months Vittore Baroni invited over a hundred international mail artists to contribute pneumatic post capsules containing instructions and scores to be used and performed by transmediale festival visitors at the “Haus der Kulturen der Welt”, which animated the festival for its entire duration, as described by Vittore in his contributed text.



Similarly, some members of the mail art network came to the festival to help, participating quite actively, as described later in their essays and diaries.

Even if such a unique pneumatic project was held under the umbrella of *BWPWAP*, our intention was not to reconstruct a history of networking (neither to recreate a sort of nostalgia for the past of networked practices), but to focus on the meaning of social networking as a critical and artistic art practice, investigating the presence of network technologies by operating a conceptual displacement from the past (analogue network practices) to the future (reinventing new disruptive forms of social networks).

Such imaginary was also at the core of the conference panel “*Disrupting the Bureaucracy: Rethinking Social Networks*” held during transmediale 2013 with contributions by Craig Saper, Dmytri Kleiner, Stevphen Shukaitis, and myself, including a rubber stamp intervention by Karla Sachse and Lutz Wohlrab. It was conceived as a comparative standpoint to analyse grassroots artistic interventions in the digital and analogue framework of contemporary social networking. By discovering the dark side of the gift-exchange economy, we reflected on the imagination of “intimate bureaucracies” able to intervene in the frame of networking by generating disruption and the creative appropriation of market logics.



By highlighting the abundance of paradoxes in networked systems of organization and control in social media and beyond, the objective was to investigate decentralized alternative models - from “miscommunication technologies” to other “imaginal machines”.

This corresponds with our aims in proposing and experiencing *OCTO P7C-1* and *PNEUMatic circUS* at the festival, and thanks to the contributions of more than 100 mail artists - which we would like to thank for their precious and brilliant contributions - bureaucracy became both a parody of itself and a challenge to establishing unexpected connections.

We wish to keep working in a collective manner toward the production of other fascinating autonomous forms of organization, so that our “global pipe dream” will come true once again!



PHOTO: JULIA
GRACHIKOVA

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Artivism won the honorary mention for digital communities at Ars Electronica in 2007.

www.networkingart.eu - www.disruptiv.biz

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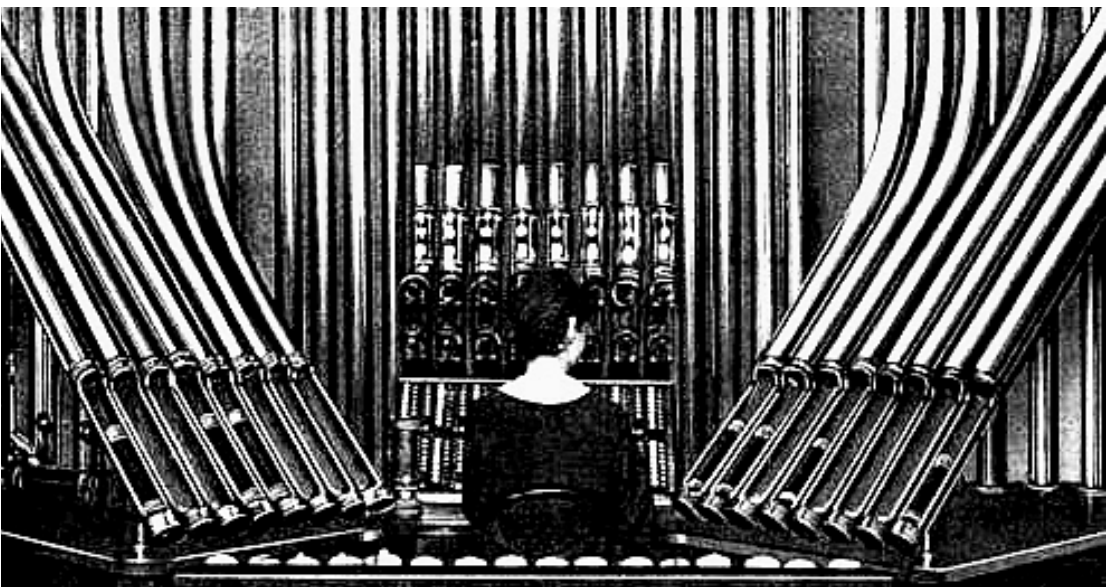
WELCOME TO THE PNEUMATIC CIRCUS!

VITTORE BARONI

PHOTO: TATIANA VILLANI / MANUEL PERNA



BACK WHEN PNEUMATIC WAS A POSSIBILITY



In the early Sixties, when I was a little kid, the Italian television network used to broadcast rather late in the evening the Hanna-Barbera cartoon series *The Flintstones* and *The Jetsons*. Considered more suitable for adults, I always tried to get to bed late to get a glimpse of these sitcoms set in prehistoric times and a thousand years in the future. I have a clear memory of the futuristic opening sequence during which George Jetson is flying to work in his small rocket-car, dispatching the members of his family to school and to the shopping center after having “sealed” them in transparent capsules. I also remember that at the Jetsons’ home in Orbit City, meals were served through pneumatic devices that dropped the dishes right in the middle of the table, while the characters could move instantly from one floor to the other, sucked up into big transparent tubes. How cool! With an oblique wink to *The Jetsons*, another famous and more recent animated series, *Futurama* by Matt Groening and David X. Cohen, shows in its opening sequence rows of people flying through long transparent pipes: It is the New New York City’s Tube Transport System, a (not very reliable) form of mass transit that has replaced the old underground subway.

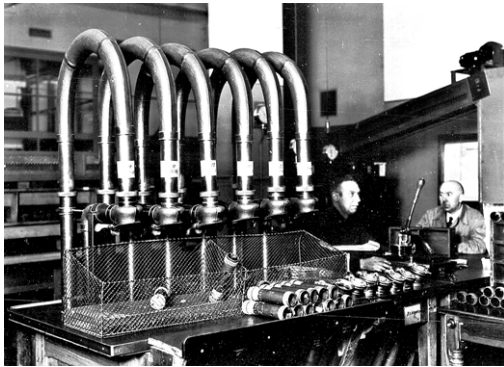
Pneumatic tube systems used to transport solid objects (or even human beings) by vacuum, have always caught the imagination of science-fiction writers, from Jules Verne to Edward Bellamy, but are also part of an authentic and largely forgotten history that dates back to the intuitions of the Greek mathematician Heron of Alexandria (in the first Century B.C., no less), with implications which were certainly not limited to the notorious services of pneumatic post. However, after William Murdoch's invention of the pneumatic capsule in 1836, the rapid delivery of mail via pneumatic networks became very popular in several European and American cities, from Vienna to Rome, from New York to Rio de Janeiro. In a sequence of the masterful piece of cinematography *Baisers volés* (*Stolen Kisses*) by François Truffaut, which can easily be found on YouTube, one can follow the voyage of a letter posted in the street, then folded and inserted by postal employees in a cylindrical container and sent speeding through the underground tubes system of Paris, revealing a sort of hidden, eerily run-down but also poignantly romantic map of the city. To send a declaration of love (or even a small *cadeau*) through a *petit bleu*, the affectionate name given by Parisians to their *pnèu* mail, was considered much less impersonal than the use of a normal telegram or of regular correspondence.



Vintage capsules

The network of pneumatic mail, initially used to connect more quickly the post offices with train stations, stock exchanges, banks and other “institutions of power”, soon assumed broader functions and reached in numerous big cities a phenomenal extension, distributing at high speed (up to 50 km per hour) millions of telegrams, letters and small packages annually: The Berlin Rohrpost, inaugurated in 1865 and remaining active until 1963 (in West Berlin) and 1980 (in the East), consisted in total of over 400 kilometres of tubes. In the United States, plans were optimistically developed to build a system that would connect every home in the country! The Prague Pneumatic Post ran from its inauguration in 1889 until the big flood of 2004, when several stations were submerged and damaged. But

besides its widespread use for mail delivery, there has been a time, in the late 19th and early 20th century, when pneumatic technology really seemed to be able to resolve all sorts of daily problems, just like a new technological paradigm. An article by Thomas Anderson that appeared in the *Boston Globe* on December 24th, 1900 supported the view that “The pneumatic tube service will have reached its perfection long before the first half of the new century has flown. It will have become a most important factor in the domestic life of the people which also will have undergone great changes. Through such tubes a householder will undoubtedly receive his letters, his readymade lunches, his laundry, his morning and evening paper, and even the



Boxes for incoming capsules

things he may require from the department store, which will furnish at the touch of a button any essential solid or liquid that can be named”. (George Jetson would have loved this!).

As early as 1861, the London Pneumatic Despatch Company experimented with a tube system large enough to accommodate a person lying down horizontally. The Duke

of Buckingham, chairman of the Company, was blown through the tube in 1865, at the inauguration of the Holborn Station, for a claustrophobic five minute trip to Euston. Prototypes for various underground or elevated carriages, pneumatically propelled and able to contain several passengers were presented in those years on the occasion of big fairs and international exhibitions. Experimental stations and route sections were built in London (12.1 km), Dublin (2.82 km), Exeter (32 km), Paris (2 km), before such plans were abandoned in favor of other technologies. Entire books have been written, for instance, on the subject of Alfred Ely Beach’s adventurous dream of a pneumatic subway for the city of New York. In 1869, the Beach Pneumatic Transit Company even got as far as to build a 95 meter long tunnel underneath Broadway in total secret, in order to demonstrate the possibilities of a pneumatic pipe that could move carriages with twelve passengers plus a conductor on board. Political disputes ditched Beach’s efforts, but for anyone interested in industrial archaeology, these old plans

of forgotten systems of transportation, and the few remaining original photographs, are totally fascinating (see Joseph Brennan's research *Beach Pneumatic* at <http://www.columbia.edu/~brennan/beach/>).

The utopian engineering appeal and a kind of retro-futurist space age nostalgia (the spacedelic theme of *The Jetsons* became a minor hit in 1986, anticipating the lounge music revival of the cocktail generation) are good reasons for the long-standing popularity of the concept of pneumatic transport. But there must be something more

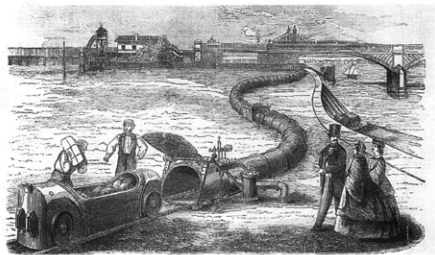


Pneumatic Post Office

to it. Just think of the drain-pipes that we all have around our houses, safely collecting and directing rainwater while emitting a sort of musical, soothing rhythm. We are instinctively drawn to appreciate the utilitarian qualities of networks of tubes (waterworks, sewage systems, etc.) as carriers of physical and metaphorical “contents”, just as the cable lines (akin to small tubes) carry into our houses the electricity, or information via optical fibers. But a pneumatic voyage through a tube is also reminiscent of the slides and water chutes found in amusement parks, it is something very playful and exciting, maybe just a bit scary, something we all tried out in our youth. On the other hand, a pneumatic postal network, such as the one described by George Orwell in his dystopian novel *1984*, has also come to represent the obtuseness and brutality of central bureaucracies. Just think of Terry Gilliam's Orwellian nightmare *Brazil*, with homes and offices invaded by the pipes of the omnipresent Central Service. Therefore, the adjective “pneumatic” functions at the same time as a metaphor for innovation and backward technology, enjoyment and inhumanity, quasi-organic and mechanical, connection and distance. It signifies a fluctuation between opposites, just as life often is. And after all, we human beings exist because a network of veins and arteries circulate blood inside our body. Pneumatic propulsion in a tubular system is part of our physical reality from the very moment we open our eyes.

The growth, in recent years, of the Steampunk phenomenon in literature, art, design and fashion has rendered extremely trendy all sorts of Victorian curiosities, pneumatic machines and contraptions included. But if we do a quick search on the web, we discover that “pneumania” is not limited

just to the world of young dark-gothic cosplayers in techno-anachronistic costumes. There are blogs out there run by fans of pneumatic transmissions, who come from all walks of life. The amazing *Pneumatic Post* (<http://pneumaticpost.blogspot.it/>) for example, which is full of interesting pneu-oddities and re-discoveries, is maintained by an Australian anthropologist/sociologist researching medical practices. In fact pneumatic tube systems are still in use today mostly inside hospitals, pharmacies, banks, public libraries and supermarkets. Pneumatic technology could have been really huge, if the scientific world had not changed direction at a certain point in time. All this said (I could go on and on, but I notice that some of you are dozing), when the “networked art” expert Tatiana Bazzichelli invited me to organize a mail art event for a system of pneumatic post, as part of the retro-futuristically titled *transmediale 2013 - Back When Pluto Was A Planet* festival in Berlin, I knew this was an offer I could not refuse. The *pnèu* is so much part of postal mythology that, after over thirty years of militant activism in the correspondence art circuits, I surely could not ignore the possibility to organize the first project ever of pneumatic mail art in a hot spot of pneumatic history.



Battersea Pneumatic Transport

THE SOUL (PNEUMA) OF MAIL ART

We really took a leap into an uncharted territory with the launch of the *PNEUMatic circUS*. The calls for mail art projects are usually very simple: you give a theme and a deadline, maybe you just add a size limit, and that's it. The unwritten rules of correspondence art exhibitions and events are also quite simple: no participation fee, all contributions should be included, no work will be returned, a documentation will be sent for free to all the participants. With a project conceived to test the versatility of the amazing *OCTO P7C-1* pneumatic system devised by the Telekommunisten and raumlaborberlin teams, things could not be so simple. For the “official miscommunication platform of *transmediale 2013*” we needed tridimensional objects that could travel through the tubes, and an idea that could connect

these objects with the audience at the festival. My concept was to involve the mail art community in the creation of home-made pneumatic capsules of a specific size, that should contain the materials necessary for a small performance or action plus a simple set of explanatory instructions. In this way, the visitors at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin could request the capsules through *OCTO*, explore and perform their content and then put them back into the system. The performances would take place at three out of the eight *OCTO* end station tentacles in specifically designed areas,

PHOTO: GIULIA BACCOSI



resembling “circus rings”. Members of the audience would thereby become performing acts for a few minutes.

In the title of the project, *PNEUMAtic circUS*, I stressed the word PNEUMA (its etymological meaning refers to breathe, but also to the soul or spirit) and the pronoun US, to emphasize the communal and cooperative Soul of mail art: Let’s make a silly little circus together, let’s carry the rough, boisterous, empathetic and naïve spirit of mail art into the heart of hi-tech art and digital culture. The mail artists were requested to put a small piece of their “soul” in the do-it-yourself capsules (that became

capSOULes), to be shared by those present at the festival. There was not a fixed theme, but I recommended contributions that could “reflect critically upon the phenomenon of centralized social networks”, an underlying topic of *transmediale 2013 - BWPWAP*. It took me two crammed pages to properly explain the project, so this was easily one of the more complex mail art invitations ever circulated.

The calls are usually disseminated through snail mail, even though in recent years blogs and email have started to play a relevant role. For *PNEUMatic circUS* I decided, for practicality and rapidity, to launch the project only via email, so that I could monitor in real time the number of adhesions. We needed not more than a hundred participants, because it would have been impossible to manage a higher number of capsules in the short time of the festival (January 29th-February 3rd). So I started out with a series of selected personal invites, an equal mix of veteran mail artists and newcomers, and I progressively expanded the list whilst I received rejections from networkers who could not take part, until I reached the ideal number of adhesions. The risk of getting too few contributions or pieces which could not travel through *OCTO* was high, but the reports that I started to receive from Berlin in the last weeks of 2012 were positive and rather encouraging. The capSOULes were arriving in quantity and, at the last count, there were 109 contributions from 94 authors worldwide, roughly what we needed and expected. A few mail artists, actually, took some liberties and sent materials that could not be transmitted, due to wrong size or other technical reasons, so these contributions remained on display on the open shelves next to the Central *OCTO* Station. The majority of the capSOULes worked however smoothly and were really a mixed bag, in pure mail art style, of amusing oddities and humble wonders.

Inside the capSOULes, the audience could find a lot of mail art stamps and rubber stamps, pens and poems, prayers and manifestos, balloons and rubber balls, soap bubbles and clown noses, musical instruments, feathers, masks, bracelets... Some items were gifts for the performers (small artworks, badges, stickers, even coins and keys from a computer keyboard), other materials could be used for simple performances that hid deeper meanings under the humorous façade or were just experiments in “futile meaningless communication”. Katerina Nikoltsova from Greece, for example, weaved long chains of paper medals, “circles of her spirit” to be twirled in the air “like a circle in a spiral, like a wheel within a wheel”. Cobàs created a similar twirling instrument for a peace ritual, with a fragile



PHOTOS: TATIANA VILLANI / MANUEL PERNA

eggshell attached, while Maggi provided a Dalai Lama face moving around on a mechanical gadget (!).

The audience could wear a headband with a slogan (Arno Arts), put on adhesive kisses (Ancillotti) and even a fake brain to pick up oneiric transmissions (Bove). Dada spectacles and dices (Mancusi), instruction cards (Wood) and gloves (Buchholz) could be used for brief Fluxus-style actions. Alchemical rituals were proposed involving breath sealed into a small ampulla (Gina Pritti Tutti al Lago), the burning of symbolic substances on a real furnace (Rossini) or the manipulation of raw wax (Larocchi). The old fun fair attractions were evoked by Manenti's satiric interactive work, while other networkers revisited the world of puzzle games (Hinchcliff, Penn, Perna) and various types of party games and board games (de Jonge, Leigh, Nielsen, Skooter, Spiderweb Prods, Zilling). Reflections on postal myths (Heed), language permutations (Wada), organic growth and ecological awareness (Poletti, Villani) were other facets of the circUS, and of course there were several provocations and hints of "miscommunication": Galli asked the audience to paint a mural on a wall of the HKW, Bates gave tickets to leave (instead of enter) the festival, Obvious Front and Liuzzi created mocking "physical" versions of Facebook, while Bellarosa and Doornenbal joked on the addiction to social networks in a way both incisive and tender.

Different forms of interaction were stimulated between the performers and the authors of the capSOULEs, also through requests to return photos, texts and other materials. Hans Braumüller asked me to send him a capsule on the theme of "corn" that he reworked and sent to Berlin as a collaborative piece. Along the way, we learned that Kristina Lindström and Åsa Stahl from Sweden had already used pneumatic cylinders (as "time capsules") in their art projects, so I invited them to the circUS. A link was created between the paper-based world of mail art and the digital sphere of hacktivism and net art, a mix up into which the heterogeneous Berlin audience also happily merged. Since you do not need a membership card to create mail art, the distinctions between who is a correspondence artist and who isn't were completely blurred. And the visitors could use special rubber stamps placed at the *OCTO* stations to leave their name, contact and comments directly on the instructions sheet found in the capSOULEs they performed.

PNEUMatic circUS was a really peculiar mail art project in many different ways. It was not only, as far as I know, the first postal art project carried out through a pneumatic tube system, with the first mail art catalog ever

produced in the usb-key format, but probably also the first mail art event coordinated “at distance” (in fact, due to various impediments I could not be in Berlin for the festival) and the first mail art documentation to include a comprehensive list of names of audience members who interacted with the project (“Thanks a lot for this beautiful moment of popularity, amazing idea/project”, wrote Carla Cixi on one of the capSOULEs). A full-cycle blend of art/life was celebrated, pointing the finger to the king’s nudity (who is an artist and who isn’t?), while on the shelves of the HKW - and now preserved in the extensive *transmediale* archives - the cylinders made by mail artists mixed freely with those personalized by the audience and those produced at the mail art workshop supervised by Karla Sachse and Lutz



PHOTOS: TATIANA VILLANI / MANUEL PERNA

Wohlrab, two veteran mail artists living in Berlin who also participated in a conference panel on mail art in the GDR and made a rubber stamps performance together.

Part of the “anything goes” philosophy of mail art is the fact that a contribution to a project may as well be something haphazardly prepared in a few minutes or the result of a lengthy and painstaking work process. A seasoned professional artist may come up with a quick “light” piece, while an amateur may hit an astonishing idea. A sort of “fair play” is requested in networking practices: you simply do not analyze a mail art piece with the same critical tools and parameters applied to a work of fine art. The second

is (also) a commodity for sale, the first is (mainly) a gift, with no pomposity attached but on the contrary a certain tongue in cheek mockery of the egotism so widespread in high art circles. “You should not look a gift horse in the mouth”, as the old saying goes.

A good similitude for a mail art project is that of a chorus performance: you need a composer and a choir master (the person or persons who come up with the concept and coordinate the proceedings) and then you need a very large number of singers to obtain a powerful performance. If the majority of the choir members are well motivated, it is not a big problem, if some of them hit the wrong note or keep silent during the performance.



This will not affect the end result. The choir master alone will never be able to obtain the full, rich and organic sound of a hundred different voices singing in unison, not even if he overdubs his own voice a hundred times. A networking project is really much more akin to a collective street art action or even a flash mob than to a traditional fine arts show.

I was lucky to have a great team of collaborators in Berlin, starting with Georgia Nicolau, who numbered, catalogued and photographed all the capsules, and Inga Seidler, who was an efficient project manager, to end with the circUS supervisors Tatiana Villani and Manuel Perna (who gave me a detailed face-to-face report of *transmediale*), Theis Vallø Madsen,

Topsy Qur'et, plus Lutz Wohlrab and Karla Sachse. The capSOULes were not sacred, pricey artworks to be put under glass and defended with alarms, but something to be freely handled, modified, even “taken home”. In fact, a handful of mail art capsules resulted missing, when the materials were checked by Georgia after the festival, but this is perfectly understandable and acceptable. Someone must have just followed the instructions left by a visitor on a leaflet: “Perform like a butterfly”.

MISCOMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN (OR THE SATORI OF PARADOX)

As we all know, there is a dark side to the Web 2.0 and the globalization of the world's knowledge and economy facilitated by new media technologies: Rampant corruption, risky financial speculation, hypocritical populism, false democracy, hidden forces of control, you name it. The social networks may help start a thousand charitable and praiseworthy projects, but may also become the place where creativity is saturated and diluted, ideologies are twisted and ideas homologated and devalued. Social networks can be a place of communication or miscommunication, of helpful information or scrambled data. The agenda of BWPWAP was to rethink the impact of seemingly obsolete media such as the Rohrpost (so deeply rooted in the history of Berlin) and to reflect on how quickly and often deceitfully technologies change the way we think and live. In 2006, when Facebook and Twitter were infants, we still believed that Pluto was a planet, and that was not so long ago.

Mail art is a good example of “forgotten media”: A global social network in function decades before the arrival of the Internet. The long tradition and the many undertakings of correspondence art have been generally ignored by art historians, and only recently the phenomenon has been slowly historicized as a “Precursor to Art and Activism on the Internet”, to use the words of the anthology *At A Distance* (The MIT Press, 2005) edited by Annmarie Chandler and Norie Neumark. Whole postal collections, like the *Lomholt Mail Art Archive* of Niels Lomholt in Denmark, are now at last being digitalized, so the online availability of a huge amount of relevant data (art works, magazines, catalogs, etc.) may gradually change the common perception of mail art as just a funny footnote to Ray Johnson's

curriculum vitae. Maybe the direct links and the profound kinship with other proto-social networks will then become more evident, from the circle of Beat writers and junk/collage artists that in California revolved around Wallace Berman and his “Semina” magazine to the Fluxus world network masterminded by George Maciunas, from the international connections of Concrete and Visual poets to the Situationist groups and publications, from the Tape Network to the different waves of the Zines revolution.

So is the obsolete and today (relatively) expensive medium of mail art



PHOTO: TATIANA VILLANI / MANUEL PERNA



PHOTO: TATIANA VILLANI / MANUEL PERNA

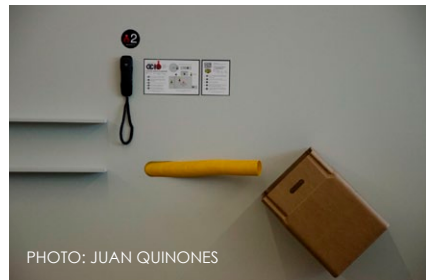


PHOTO: JUAN QUINONES

still relevant in some way or is it just a forgotten eccentricity like pneumatic transport? Is the message travelling in an envelope less exposed to control and censorship than a digital post? Are we still able to make sense out of the arcane poetics of paper, scissors and glue? Some *PNEUMAtic circUS* contributions were indeed utterly inexplicable, hitting notes of genuine “miscommunication”. What were Tillier’s big collages intended for? Or Nakamura’s row of small green frogs sealed inside a test-tube? A small anecdote may be appropriate here. The mail and audio artist Ken Montgomery distributed through his capSOULe a series of “Official Communication” ID cards that the audience had to fill and return

to him in New York for lamination. He did in fact receive, soon after the festival, a letter with the card of a woman who sent her photo and “communication” but forgot to include a return postal address. So this was probably an example of miscommunication between postal and digital networks, “since she included a photo, maybe she thought she would be tagged” wrote Montgomery to me via email. There was a certain degree of miscommunication also in the way I prepared this catalog. Since I was not in Berlin, I had to collect the materials in various ways, trying to form in my mind a picture of what had happened at the festival through photographs and videos, articles and podcasts, conversations and emails. In the process of joining all the pieces of the puzzle, I probably committed a few mistakes that only add more ambiguity to the mixture of fiction and reality of the *OCTO* concept.

OCTO P7C-1, however, was a gigantic metaphor embodying many paradoxes: an highly centralized system (the Central Station had total control on the capsules) that provided free-form fun for everyone, a system so powerful in appearance and so easy to sabotage (just like the pipes in Brazil), a machinery both menacing (in Italy the octopus symbolizes the Mafia) and lovingly willing to embrace and serve. The messy, frenzied, P.T. Barnum-like activities of *OCTO* in full swing resembled some bureaucratic headquarters gone nuts: Enlightenment through a Networked Art extravaganza? Geert Lovink, media guru and founding director of the Institute of Network Cultures in Amsterdam, punctuates his well-informed “Critique of Social Media” *Networks Without a Cause* (Polity Press, 2011) with a lot of open questions, and very few answers. The issue of social networks is still open to debate and subject to sudden and unpredictable developments. Should we move beyond the idea that we are all equally connected and start to recognize the need for new digital forms of class struggle? Should we disrupt the logic of corporate social network from within or come up with viable alternatives? Should we learn to revalue less hyperactive forms of “slow communication”? The way things go (wrong) in the world today confirms that there needs to be done a lot of rethinking.

FIRST WE TAKE BERLIN (THEN WE TAKE THE WORLD)

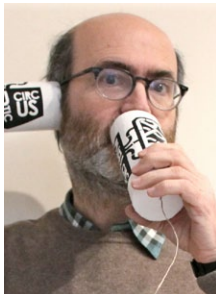
The *OCTO P7C-1 Intertubular Pneumatic Packet Distribution System* was the undisputed star in the rich program of *transmediale* 2013 (from Geert

Lovink to People Like Us, check www.transmediale.de), as anyone who visited the festival can testify. The credit for this success goes 100% to the bold conception and masterful execution of the tentacular plans laid out, through a lot of brain storming and an incredible amount of behind-the-scenes work, by the combined teams of the Telekommunisten collective, the raumlaborberlin architects and the reSource transmedial culture Berlin / *transmediale* staff. They brilliantly gave life to an enigmatic merger of structure and communication, space age retro-design (the magnificent control board at the Central Station) and recycled household appliances. Instead of renting a costly industrial pneumatic tube system, of the kind you may find in the offices of your local hospital, the pool of inventors took the Rube Goldberg path and built their own home-made “Intertubular” monster. It was all done with a vacuum cleaner, some telephones and an enormous quantity of electrician’s pipes! The big yellow OCTOpus was imposingly attractive but also totally functional, operative and interactive, unlike other examples of “pneumatic art” that we can dig up with a careful Google search. Installations with capsules flowing through transparent tubes have been set up in museums and public spaces before, like Wilhelm Koch’s and Oskar Lottner’s tubes environment at the Luft Museum in Amberg (Germany) or Yvonne Lee Schultz’s permanent installation *Thoughts* at the European Patent Office in Munich, but these are impressive kinetic sculptures that can only be looked at. The same can be said of more historical works with a pneumatic or “tube network” connotation, such as Joseph Beuys’ *Honeypump in the Workplace* created in 1977 for documenta 6 (two tons of honey pumped through plastic tubing to represent the circulation of cultural energies) and Martin Kippenberger’s *Metro-Net World Connection* (1993-7), subway entrances built in various locations that lead to an imaginary underground network encircling the whole planet.

OCTO P7C-1, on the contrary, was a tool completely in the hands of the end-users, with the expert assistance of the young personnel identifiable at each station by the bright yellow uniforms with the red *OCTO* logo. Children and grown-ups could create, send and receive their own capsules, or request and perform those prepared by mail artists. The dominant vibes were those of a fully interactive social network, that had become physically tangible at last. Cybersex, that seemed such a novelty in the early days of virtual reality, has long been forgotten. The more popular and centralized social networks are becoming increasingly diluted and opaque today, with a haze of endless chatter, a humming of data stripped of any flesh. As human

beings, we do need something to touch that is not just a screen-pad or the button of a mouse. Octavia Allende Friedman was such a convincing CEO for *OCTO P7C-1* at its *transmediale* presentation that hardly anyone would not desire to have a small *OCTO P7C-1* installed at home. Your mom screams from upstairs to bring her a bottle of shampoo, you simply throw it into the tube and pop it's gone, Jetsons-style, neat and easy, without any more flights of stairs to climb panting and gasping. The mailman comes and swish the envelopes are sucked from your mailbox directly onto your desk, isn't that great? "I'm guided by the beauty of our weapons", sang old Leonard Cohen: *OCTO's* weapons are a set of bright yellow tubes and a small vacuum cleaner, and for sure they can give beautiful results. The legend lives on.

Thanks to Tatiana Bazzichelli and to the *transmediale* director Kristoffer Gansing for the precious opportunity, to Ken Montgomery for the Paul Collins essay *The Pneumatic Underground* and to Karl-Friedrich Hacker for the Buys and Kippenberger tips, plus of course to all the mail artists and visitors who took part in the circUS and to the Telekommunisten, raumlaborberlin and everyone at *transmediale* for making *OCTO P7C-1* "a global pipe dream come true".



VITTORE BARONI is a music critic and explorer of the counter-cultures, since the mid-Seventies he is also one of the most active participants and promoters of the planetary mail art network. He has written extensively on aspects of correspondence art and of the networking cultures that anticipated Internet. With Piermario Ciani and others, he was the originator of seminal networking projects such as the TRAX modular system, the multiple names Lieutenant Murnau and Luther Blissett, the F.U.N. (Funtastic United Nations) alliance and the Art Detox 2010 campaign. vittorebaroni@alice.it

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CircUS Supervisors:

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Tatiana Villani
Lutz Wohlrab



THE MANY TENTACLES OF OCTO P7C-1 @ TRANSMEDIALE- BWPWAP

DMYTRI KLEINER

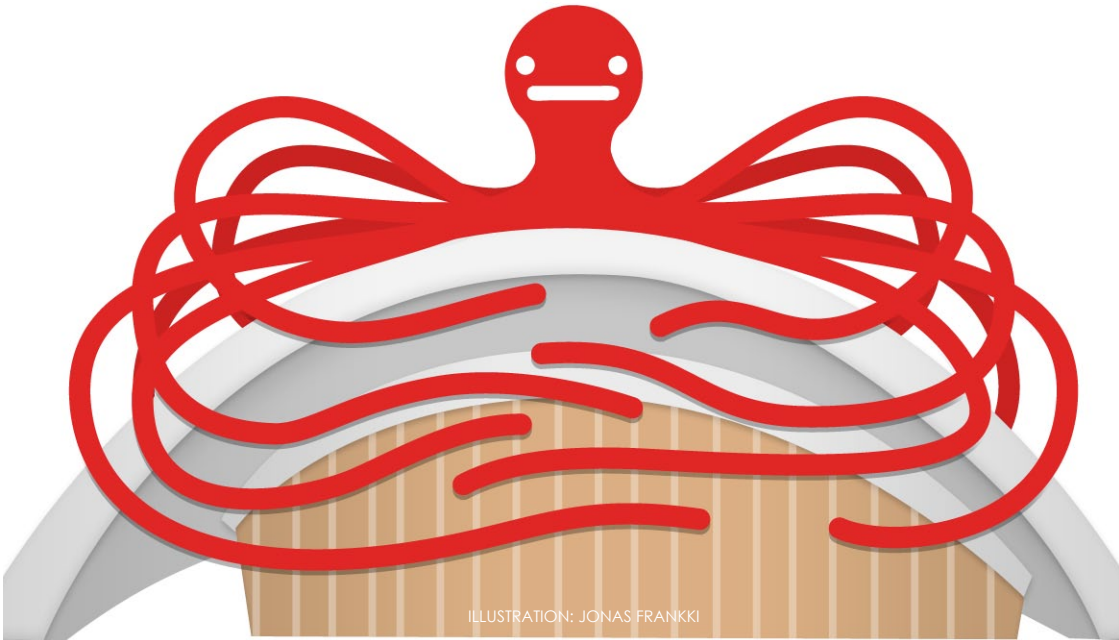


ILLUSTRATION: JONAS FRANKKI

FEBRUARY 12, 2013

Though Telekommunisten has been a participant in *transmediale* in some capacity for several years now, this year, as a partner of the festival, was by far our largest involvement to date.

The *Octo P7C-1* installation, was not only loud, active and physically huge, occupying the entire building with about a kilometer of tubing, 8 end stations and the P7C-1 central operating station, but the project was also the largest collaboration, both with the number of members of the Telekommunisten network involved, and the number of partners involved.

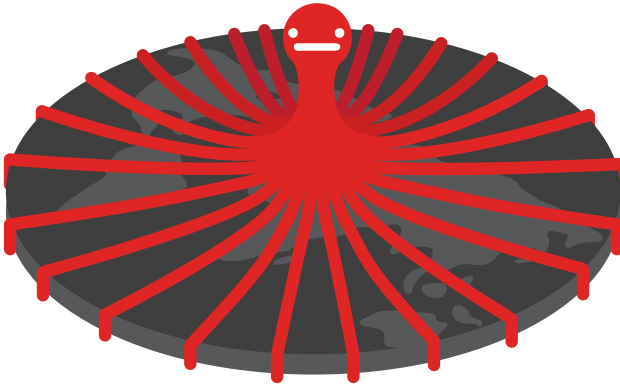


ILLUSTRATION: JONAS FRANKKI

Kristoffer Gansing and Tatiana Bazzichelli came to us in August of 2012, since *R15N* was the Official Miscommunication Platform of the previous year's festival, they wanted to work with us early, as a partner, to plan the Miscommunication Platform for the upcoming *transmediale*, they shared the #BWPWAP theme with us, and asked us if we could do something with a pneumatic tube theme, since we had discussed our mutual admiration for the technology and interest in Berlin's system on previous occasions.

None of us knew yet what *Octo* would become.

As the latest installment in the Miscommunication Technologies series, certain components of the artwork were evident from the beginning. Octo is perhaps the most clear demonstration of a centralized topology possible, and so the idea of Octo as a global domination minded start-up seeking to capture physical delivery by offering a business model based on control of user data and interaction. Once again, Telekommunisten designer-in-chief Jonas Frankki, created the graphic identity of the work, brilliantly using a cartoon octopus with a peculiarly neutral expression to express both the topology and global domination ambitions of the start-up.



However, Octo is more than just a social fiction or electronic telecommunication system, it's very physical, and actually engineering a large scale pneumatic post system was the largest undertaking Telekommunisten has attempted to date.

Fortunately, electronic artist Jeff Mann, inventor-in-chief, had some experience with this. Jeff's work draws out tensions between notions of utopian industrialism, personal theatre, and the evocative enigma of electronic equipment.

Jeff invented what was to become the *Octo P7C-1* system, suggesting

that we could use plain-old vacuum cleaners and drainage pipe to build the system. We demoed Jeff's concept at a ReSource Transmedial Culture event and it was clear that this was not only going to work as pneumatic system, but also as a wonderful sculptural and audio installation. It was everyone's first glimpse of Octo. We were all convinced and excited.

Next, we needed to prove the concept to Raumlaborberlin, the *transmediale* architects, and the Haus der Kulturen der Welt.

Using one of the Shop-Vacs that was later to be installed in the central operating station, we propelled a full 500ml can of beer through 50m of

drainage pipe stretched across the Podewill courtyard, up into a 3rd story window, and down the hall.

Amazingly, it worked! Not only did it work, but it looked and sounded great.



PHOTO: GALYA KOVOLOVA

Over the next few months, right up to the last minutes before *transmediale* 2013 opened its doors, we worked with the HKW and Raumlabor, who designed the chaotic alignment of the tubes throughout the building, and created the 8 end stations. Jeff, drawing on his research into the nature of technological life and its cultural representation, designed and built the beautiful P7C-1 central operating station, which was almost certainly photographed more than Mount Fuji during the run of the festival.

And though the physicality of the work is on a scale much larger than any previous Telekommunisten work, the performative aspect of Octo was also more prevalent.

Telekommunisten director-in-chief, Baruch Gottlieb directed the many facets of the project towards a coherent whole, bringing new emphasis to the performative fiction aspect of Telekommunisten's work through the lens of his concept of the biographical chronicle of labour. All the *trans-mediale* volunteers that operated the central station and attended to the end-stations, and all building maintenance staff that was constantly adjusting tubes throughout the building extended the work as labour theatre.



Baruch worked closely with long time member of the Telekommunisten network, Diani Barreto, to create the character of Octavia Allende Friedman, CEO of Octo Corporation, a character which Diani played to great effect, both in person at transmediale, and online, as a social media power house, who amassed well over a thousand friends and followers in just a couple of weeks.

It was also our first time working with Julian Gough, who played the role of Octavia's personal biographer, a role we all hope he will reprise as the legend of Octavia goes on.

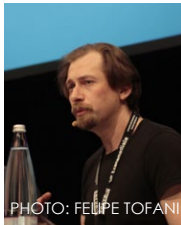
As usual, Telekommunisten Chief Communication Officer Mike Pearce, helped make our message simple and concise, while Chief Operations Officer Rico Weise handled our administrative work.

Although you kinda had to be there to really get it, we've collected some pictures and videos here: <http://telekommunisten.net/octo>

I can't thank everybody enough for helping us pull this off!

We're very interested in showing the work again, so we encourage adventurous curators to contact us.

And yup, I'll be at Stammtisch tonight at 9pm, so come have a drink with us.



Kind Regards,
DMYTRI KLEINER
analyst-in-chief
Telekommunisten

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OCTO - A GLOBAL PIPE DREAM COME TRUE

As part of reSource and *transmediale* 2013, Telekommunisten unveiled to potential investors and partners the most radically disruptive project in the history of telecommunications, bringing the transformative power of digital communications to the physical sphere with a global sharing platform for the transmission of physical objects. Octo is building a global system to interconnect every household and place of business with pneumatic tubes, which will permit the high-speed delivery of packages to and from any subscriber worldwide.

For *transmediale* 2013 a prototype of the system was deployed at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin, called *Octo P7C-1*. Working with Vittore Baroni and an international network of artists, *Octo P7C-1 Intertubular Pneumatic Packet Distribution System* was not only to be used for on-site communications by *transmediale* staff and festival guests, but also as part of the *PNEUMATIC circUS* international mail art project highlighting the potential and versatility of the platform.

Octo P7C-1 was the Official Miscommunication Platform of *transmediale* 2013.

TELEKOMMUNISTEN EXECUTIVES

JEFF MANN

Chief Inventor and Head of Pneumatics

Jeff created the P7C-1 prototype, contributing decades of research into pneumatics and art machines to his vision for the tubular system, and his master creation, the P7C-1 central operating station.

JONAS FRANKKI

Chief Designer, Head of Graphic Identity.

Jonas created the powerful branding and corporate identity that so perfectly expresses the numerous layers of the project.

BARUCH GOTTLIEB

Chief Director, Head of Labour Dramaturgy.

Baruch directed the many facets of the project towards a coherent whole.

DIANI BARRETO

Chief Executive Performer, head of social representation

Diani brought the project persona to life online and at the festival.

MIKE PEARCE

Chief Communication Officer.

Mike works towards bringing our often complex, perhaps even convoluted message, to the general public by adding simplicity and concision.

DMYTRI KLEINER

Chief Systems Analyst, head of investor relations.

Dmytri works at identifying the way social relations are embodied in economic and communications systems, and how profit and power is captured and maintained.

RICO WEISE

Chief Operations Officer.

Manages the ever expanding administrative flow.



THE TELEKOMMUNISTEN & OCTAVIA ALLENDE FRIEDMAN - CEO OF OCTO - PRESENT THE OCTO P7C-1

OCTAVIA ALLENDE FRIEDMAN

We at OCTO believe, technological advances are a central causal element in the process of social change. We want to be an intrinsic part of that change.

Our view is that sustainable growth and progress should focus on scientific and technical dimensions, as well as ethical and social ones.

Octo strives to improve the quality of life for all, with a fair distribution of the costs and benefits, with a staunch commitment to eco-friendly solutions.

OCTO enhances Internet services, and standard communication, through the transmission of objects via pneumatic tubes, providing a vast array of new services to customers.



WHAT IS OCTO P7C-1?

It is a prototype for the next paradigm in telecommunications: it is the physical network.

This is a system of Pneumatic Tube Transport or PTT, via capsule pipelines, with a capacity of up to 500 cubic centimeters per capsule, bringing the tangible to the social at vacuum speed of around 7.5 meters per second.

Whereas the Internet is digital, the OCTO net is physical, providing endless new forms of interaction.

OCTO P7C-1 is a secure and reliable network, as it is completely centralized and most importantly, it complies with all local, national and international regulations.

Our deep capsule inspection technology insures against terrorism and contraband.

OCTO offers endless investment opportunities and a whole new gamut of capsule-friendly product designs, not to mention the immense gains of the end-user subscription market.

Return on investment is assured through a new dimension of user data intelligence, and a virtual monopoly on pneumatic transfer.

OCTO end-stations are completely customizable to fit with any decor or design and is capturing the imagination of designers across the world, to make OCTO a unique branding and user experience.

Now, consider OCTO, as part of a larger spectrum of human activity, such as in the development of new ecological business models, new forms of trade, not to mention the vast array of new possibilities of human interaction through the relation with physical objects.

If print helped produce the modern nation state and the Internet produced a global citizenry, then OCTO can bring forth a truly global marketplace.

We at OCTO strive to inspire a new generation to re-think and re-design the architecture of networks, and to provide opportunity to harness innovation and creativity and thus pave the way toward a restorative economy. P7C-1 has it all; bleeding-edge, digital-logic, pneumatic-control technology, physical content, and communication.

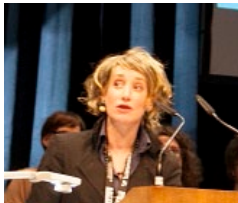
The P7C-1 prototype is already a functional reality, and we would like to invite all of you to experience the world of physical communication.

Pneumatics have proven to be a robust and viable technology for well over a century now. Major hospitals, libraries, warehouses, hotels and other institutions depend on the speed and solid reliability of pneumatic delivery every day.

In order to create an optimally dense degree of distribution, OCTO will expand to serve the global community to become the first to offer International pneumatic delivery service.

This is the opportunity of a lifetime, one which fosters a new infrastructure combined with a new-ecology, so join us and invest in OCTO today!

Because the future of communication is physical!



OCTAVIA ALLENDE FRIEDMAN

CEO of OCTO

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MAIL ART - MADE IN GDR

LUTZ WOHLRAB



ILLUSTRATION: LUTZ WOHLRAB

Mail Art is postal communication through art. It is still very lively and open to everyone. Mail Art emerged in the Cold War era and was very important to some Eastern Europeans. At least a big part of our mailings passed the Iron Curtain, which gave us the opportunity to communicate worldwide. For mail artists in Eastern Germany to play with Mail Art was a serious thing, because with their provocative political post-cards they attacked the regime of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), that answered with political criminal law. Any “illegal establishing of contacts” with the West and any critique of the State could have been seriously punished. The Ministry for State Security (Staatssicherheit, MfS or Stasi) controlled the mail of the whole country. Mail artists Rainer Luck and Jürgen Gottschalk had been sent to prison for over two years in 1984. Friedrich Winnes nearly had to face the same fate for his subversive Mail Art in 1980.



When Ray Johnson carried out his idea of sending art by mail in 1962, this was the beginning of a development that shook the art world. Johnson's small collages made of paper clippings, little drawings and slogans were sent to friends, acquaintances and completely unknown people with the invitation to change them and then forward or send them back to Johnson. He even mailed invitations to exhibitions that never took place or made appointments for his correspondents for a certain time and place to bring them together. The Whitney Museum of American Art in New York invited him for an exhibition and he sent the invitation to his correspondents in 1970.

When he closed his “New York Correspondence School” in 1973, a network had been established that communicated worldwide with the help of the mail system - often anarchic, subversive, provocative, playful and funny. Renowned artists such as Joseph Beuys and other Fluxus artists

participated in it. Ben Vautier designed his legendary postcard *The Postman's Choice* in 1965, showing two identical sides with different addresses in the address field, leaving the postman with the decision on where it should be sent. Robert Watts, another Fluxus artist, made the first artist's stamps. Jean-Marc Poinot coined the term "Mail Art" in 1971. He asked avant-garde artists of the Sixties to send him a contribution via snail mail. He made a catalogue in 1972. David Zack wrote on this subject in "Art in America" in 1973 and made Mail Art very popular in the USA. In the same year, Ken Friedman started the biggest Mail Art project ever, the *Omaha Flow Systems* with over three thousand participants. He and others set the standards: all works should be accepted, no juries, no fees and a documentation should be sent to every contributor.

THE WINDOW TO THE WORLD

Around 1971 Robert Rehfeldt (1931-1993), the first and most well-known mail artist in the GDR, got some addresses from behind the Iron Curtain via Klaus Groh or Polish artists that he had been friends with. He provided his first Mail Art project in Warsaw in 1975. From 1976 on, Mail Art was shown even in the GDR, initially illegally in Erfurt, later on legally at the Berlin gallery Arkade in 1978. However, the gallery of the State Art Trade was closed in 1980 and its director fired. More and more independent minds in Eastern Europe participated in international Mail Art projects. The leadership of the socialistic countries could be provoked with easily created postcard collages and in this subversive manner a little freedom of opinion could be achieved. Mail Art got its largest political-aesthetic explosiveness in time of the "policy of détente", from 1974 to 1989. Especially in East Germany, it was highly significant because for many interested in art it was the only window to the outside world. So mail became the medium for international communication that could be used to overcome not only differences in style, genre, language and culture but also state boundaries. It might today appear naive to imagine a potential friend behind every address. At the time it was an immensely supportive thought that appeared rather suspect to the eyes of the GDR regime.

THE OPERATIONAL ACT “ENEMY”

The Staatssicherheit saw the mail artist as an “enemy”. And that was the name it gave to the operational act against four active mail artists from Dresden. What caused the observation was the pacifistic project *International Contact with Mail Art in the Spirit of Peaceful Coexistence*, that Birger



Birger Jesch

Jesch exhibited in January 1981 at the Dresden Weinbergskirche. Together with Jürgen Gottschalk he had been the only GDR artist that dared to participate in the project *Solidarity with Solidarnosc* of gallery owner Jürgen Schweinebraden, who had been expatriated from the GDR in 1980. In the final report of the operational act “Enemy” the Staatssicherheit stated full of satisfaction that Jürgen Gottschalk was called to account by criminal law. He was condemned to imprisonment for two and a half years after § 220 (“public vilification”) of the GDR criminal code. Furthermore, they succeeded in making mail artists Steffen Giersch, Birger Jesch and Joachim Stange “insecure and

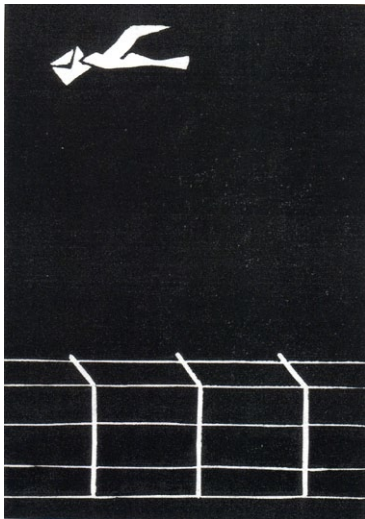
pushing them back in their activities as far as possible”. The final report also states that “via a similar approach of the MfS to the contact partners in the GDR, the ministry has determined that no more operational actions would be needed and that due to its loss of effectiveness Mail Art does not have to be considered a “problem” anymore. The persons treated by the operational act had to face the fact that Mail Art is no instrument to attack the social circumstances in the GDR in any way.”

With regard to that remark, the Stasi was wrong. Right in the years from 1984 on, Mail Art turned into a GDR-wide movement with lots of exhibitions and subversive actions, especially in co-operation with the churchly “peace and democracy” groups. Joachim Stange, for example, called for a project *Never again Dresden and Hiroshima 1945* in 1984 and

Tolerance in 1986. After he created a postcard in reaction to the scarce news coverage of the summit between US president Ronald Reagan and Soviet secretary general Mikhail Gorbachev in Geneva, saying “In Genf nur Senf” (“Nothing but mustard in Geneva”, using the pun in German) in 1985 a fine of a month’s salary was imposed on him. Other mail artists had to face similar punishments.

STRANGE EVENTS AT “LOCATION 12”

With extraordinary efforts the SED state tried to avoid the circulation of improper thoughts via mail. The “Section M” of the Staatssicherheit had more than two thousand employees, only for mail control. About ten percent of all letters or 90.000 items were opened every day. Each of the fifteen mail-administrating centers, one in every district of the GDR, had a secret anteroom of the Stasi (code name “Location 12”) to which employees of the postal service had no access. Here, all cards and letters were checked and noticeable mail was sorted out. The Stasi used lists of senders and receivers that had to be observed.



Lutz Wierszbowski

Suspicious mail was kept and brought to conspiratorial places by Stasi members in disguise as postal service employees. From there, the mail was transported in civil cars to the regional administration office of the MfS and to the “Section M” that used steam tables to open the letters. All directors of the mail-administration centers cooperated closely with the Staatssicherheit, some as “officers on special mission”. When a letter could not be opened without damages the Stasi simply kept it. Such mail was then found in the Stasi files at the Office of the Federal Commissioner Preserving the Records of the Ministry for State Security of the GDR.

In order to cheat the monitoring state, some mail artists sent their mail as certified mail - to do so, was pretty cheap at that time. However, this did not

prevent the mail from getting “lost”. But since the GDR postal service paid up to forty East Marks for lost certified mail. Stasi officers were, following an investigation, forced to admit that there was mail censorship. One day Birger Jesch was told that his claim for compensation for lost mail was not accepted, because his mail was “against the maxims of the socialistic moral due to its outer appearance”. He had in fact changed a postcard from Karl-Marx-Stadt to Karl-May-Stadt, thereby making fun of the ideology of the GDR. In the Karl Marx year of 1983 the publication of the books by Karl May was finally allowed again.

Furthermore, Jesch was told that his card was “handed to the state institution to be examined”. Here the mean trick of the Stasi mail censorship showed up: the Stasi instructed the directors of the main postal offices to speak out as eye of the law in backdated letters - in fact no noticeable cards and letters were handed out to the Stasi by the postal service because the people of the MfS always saw them first.

THE BABY THAT WAS NOT ALLOWED TO BE “LABOR ACTIVIST”

Friedrich Winnes (1949-2005) had been “dealt with” by the Stasi since 1977. An incident that nearly lead to his imprisonment is documented in his Stasi files: The “Section M” found a letter to the Polish mail artist Tomasz Schulz from September 28th, 1980, including two collages. One of these showed his new-born daughter with the medal “labor activist” on her breast. At that time the martial law had not come into effect in the neighboring country Poland and the very fast growing influence of the independent union Solidarnosc made the leadership of the GDR nervous. Sending a picture of the baby with the medal was enough for the Stasi to see “an element of offense according to § 220 StGB as fulfilled”. This paragraph said that spreading “symbols, that can be used to affect state or public law and order, disturb the socialistic co-existence or dis-respect the state and civil order” can be punished with up to three years in prison.

From the files one can see that Friedrich Winnes was not arrested only because of the Stasi acting sloppily. Still he was not allowed to enter Poland for three years, but thereof no one has ever told him.

The first Mail Art project I took part in was *Relations* by Walter Goes in 1985. I met him at the Max Uhlig exhibition, a painter from Dresden I liked at the time, at the Orangerie Putbus and he sent me the invitation. The documentation included fifty addresses and I began to write to everyone on this list, so I became a mail artist. One year later I made my first project *Animals as which do you feel yourself and others*. It was a psychological question. At the time I had to interrupt my medicine studies for three years for political reasons. I went to Berlin and was in contact with Robert Rehfeldt. In 1986 I was a participant in the First Decentralized Worldwide Mail Art Congress at Robert's studio and there I met many mail artists from the GDR personally.



Friedrich Winnes



PHOTO: JULIA GRUESSING

DR. LUTZ WOHLRAB, a mail artist himself, started the online Mail Artists' Index (www.mailartists.wordpress.com). There you can find biographies of the artists mentioned above and many others. In 1994 he edited, together with Friedrich Winnes, the standard work *Mail Art Szene DDR 1975-1990* published in Germany by Haude & Spener. He works as psychoanalyst in Berlin.



A WORKING PNEUMATIC POSTAL SYSTEM IN BERLIN IN THE THIRTEENTH YEAR OF THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY

KARLA SACHSE



PHOTO: FELIPE TOFANI



The central control of the old Berlin pneumatic post still might be waiting for a capsule flopping in that colossal, dark, silent, locked building at the intersection of Oranienburger and Tucholsky Street...

Not far from it, the pneumatic circus of *transmediale* 13 pervades the once futuristic building between the river Spree and the biggest park in town with bright yellow tubes and the sound of rushing capsules.

Ordered or sent.

Visible and audible and touchable.

But what a surprise when they plop into the slanted boxes!

These capsules have an individual shape:

Outside - they show a little mail-art work, sent to Berlin in postal packages from all over the world following an invite by Vittore Baroni from Italy, or created directly on site.

Inside - they offer a real pleasure, by giving instructions for a little interaction or a funny performance or a moment of pause...



PHOTO: FELIPE TOFANI

In the center of this well-known festival of digital media and virtual communication suddenly one could follow the traces of a pen, feel a drop of glue, handle poor little things from someone else's hands...



PHOTO: MELANIE TWELE

KARLA SACHSE has been an active Mail Artist since the early Eighties. She has organized several postal projects, exhibitions, workshops, street actions and installations. She lives and works in Berlin.



CATALOGUING THE CAPSOULES

GEORGIA NICOLAU



PHOTO: TATIANA VILLANI / MANUEL PERNA

It was never taught in school that art is life, and vice versa. On the contrary: the message transmitted was always that art was something far away from ordinary human beings... Something so complex that only illuminated artists could deal with it. Later on -outside institutions - I

found out that there were infinite definitions of what art is and what role an artist could play in society. Jump to 2012. I was working at *transmediale* festival collaborating with Tatiana Bazzichelli at the reSource transmedial culture berlin, the year-round part of the festival. One of the projects of the reSource was the *PNEUMatic circUS*, hosted by the “official miscommunication platform” of this year’s *transmediale*: *OCTO*. Someone had to deal with the cataloguing process of all the capsules sent for this project by international mail artists. I had heard about Mail Art before, but didn’t really know much about it. And to be honest, I didn’t really understand how mail could be art, and even what was the exact concept behind postal art. It was an intensive immersion. During six weeks I opened and photographed 109 capsules created by mail artist. Sent from all continents. Some handmade, some not. Rubber and postal stamps, gifts, letters, postcards, toys, provocative performances, libertarian messages, funny games. But above all: humorous and playful art.

“Mail art makes the world a town”, wrote the mail artist Cheryl Penn, from South Africa. During these weeks I felt as if I had all these friends around the world. I laughed, I thought about it, I talked to them in my mind. Every package was a surprise. Every package was a delight. I kept thinking about how many minutes, hours, days one invested into making a capsule just for the sake of doing it - and for the sake of someone else opening it. And there I was, opening all of them. Like a kid opening his Christmas presents at midnight. So many details. It was never just a capsule. These 109 capsules were a reminder that generosity is out there. That there are still a lot of people with humor. That Dada and Fluxus ideas are still alive. Thank you to all the mail artists for reminding me of what art and life could and should be!



GEORGIA NICOLAU is a Brazilian journalist and cultural agitator with experience in international festivals, collective projects, multimedia communication and networked ideas.



A TRIP THROUGH THE TUBE - LOG-BOOK

TATIANA VILLANI & MANUEL PERNA



PHOTO: GALYA KOVOLOVA

Just arrived into the world “Back When Pluto Was A Planet”. The journey begins through a white and frozen Berlin. Everybody is busy working. The giant keeps taking form.

JANUARY 28TH

The OCTO is almost ready - flight tests are being performed - the sounds and vibrations of the tubes turn every shipment into a thrill. Here come the volunteers. We hold a meeting, and then proceed to visit all the projects. Critique and nostalgia merge with the present and dart into possible future scenarios. Karla Sachse, Mail Art veteran, leads our group through the voyage of discovery of the capSOULes.

JANUARY 29TH

The doors open, and immediately the OCTO activates itself. Onto the river of people in the auditorium hall the curators and artists pour their orations. The CEO Octavia Allende-Freedman prepares for her speech and officially opens the fundraising campaign for the new pneumatic communication company.

Let the miscommunication flow!

Visitors send and receive messages and ask us, whether we think this company will be truly viable and sustainable, and what advantages it might hold over other companies, and among the many actors in the networked world.

A huge crowd lingers on until late at night.

JANUARY 30TH

Once finished the exploit¹ achieved by the opening, we sum up the information about the functioning of the machine and about the overall operations of the *PNEUMatic Circus*.

We remark that the visitors have been drawn to the capSOULes and to the OCTO, and that they have already created a forest of new capSOULes and messages. The transmediale staff and the volunteers, thanks to this

calmer atmosphere, start to approach less shyly the 109 capsules made by the artists, hence inducing emulative processes involving the visitors, who start performing more regularly by interacting with the capSOULes. The circus is alive and in full gear, and it already has its loyal aficionados: people coming back to continue their exploratory voyage through the imagination of the mail artists, feeling that this is no more than a hors d'oeuvre in the great feast.

Meanwhile, in the Lower Foyer, a conference on Mail Art in the GDR is being held, moderated by Dieter Daniels, with Karla Sachse and Lutz Wohlrab. The panel illustrates the contiguity of this form of art to the political field, and clarifies the relationship between the German mail artists and the Stasi.

JANUARY 31ST

Today the capSOULes are travelling fast, the network materialized in yellow reveals its ability to embody itself through the performances that continuously take place both in the objectively marked arena of the "circUS" and across the entire Haus der Kulturen der Welt. Our log-book reports two feats in particular among the deeds of the day: the panel of the Telekomunisten, and the experiment set up and performed by Giacomo Verde, Luca Leggero and Clemente Pestelli. We put a capsule containing a cell phone into the OCTOpus and sent it through the tentacles at the speed of light in order to record the heartbeat of the giant from the inside (the video is on Youtube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VeNTJjk4F1g>).

The panel of the Telekommunisten highlights the theoretical concepts built in the materialization of a completely centralized communication system, along with the unlimited possibilities it generates of easily collecting and using for marketing purposes the data supplied by its users.

FEBRUARY 1ST

By now we have seen a sufficient number of visitors to be able to affirm that children are the ones who with the utmost speed and flexibility have figured out how to use and master the monster.



PHOTO: TATIANA VILLANI / MANUEL PERNA

The scheduled activity of the OCTOpodous system for today is to be accompanied by two events that concern it closely.

The first one is the encapsulations/openings @ *PNEUMatic circUS*: a workshop held by Karla Sachse and Lutz Wohlrab and involving the making of new capsules that have been individually decorated and intended for a one-to-one type of communication. This has allowed us to acquaint the visitors with the system and with the circUS itself: a collection of 109 capSOULEs created by a large web of mail artists that ahas been woven and directed from afar by deus ex machina and curator Vittore Baroni.

The second activity, scheduled for the early afternoon, is the panel entitled “Disrupting the Bureaucracy, Rethinking Social Networks”, moderated

by Tatiana Bazzichelli, with Stevphen Shukaitis, Craig Saper and Dmytri Kleiner, along with “A performative intervention” by K. Sachse and L. Wohlrab, which have widened the scope of the conversation to include many more mail artists from around the world, in order to highlight the paradoxes implied by the networked systems both within centralized systems and within alternative models of decentralization.

FEBRUARY 2ND

After the “capSOULe performance” the visitors were asked to leave a feedback to the artist with whom they had been interacting long distance, by marking the back of the instructions sheet with a rubber stamp designed by Jonas Frankki: a small OCTO ready to embrace with its tentacles the name and the email address of the visitor.

These rubber stamps proved irresistible since the early days of the exhibit, and have remained as traces on a multitude of pieces of paper, as obviously, few among the visitors have worried over privacy issues about the circulation of their personal data, which instead they have generously and abundantly scattered throughout the HKW.

Today, among the diverse and extensive dialogical exchanges with the public, there was one in particular that rather impressed us: one involving a lady who like many others knew nothing about Mail Art, but who, nonetheless, talked for a long time about art, networks, and about the OCTO. An elementary school teacher by profession, she reported all her doubts and concerns regarding the misuse of networks, the spam produced by chain letters and the secret bullying lurking in many virtual exchanges, only to realize how uncomfortable she felt once transported by these reflections, both futuristic and nostalgic, as through a big swamp lost in some gray zone.

FEBRUARY 3RD

Everyone can breathe nostalgia in the air. We all can, all of us: artists, curators, volunteers, visitors, *transmediale* employees. We make our last toasts, we exchange one last time emails and impressions. We don't want to quit but we know that today the circus will be dismantled. What excitement,

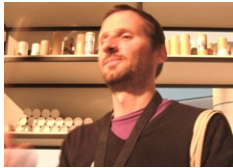
sweat, joy, fear, how much miscommunication and deep communication as well... Ours has been a chorus of many voices, at times cacophonous and at times sublime. Now it becomes clear that we must snatch the tentacles and bring them out into the world again, a possibility that has already been showed to us by Topsy Qur'et, with his photographs of the yellow pipe invading the city.

And then, a big hug to Theis Vallø Madsen, who, together with the public and with ourselves, has performed and chatted for days.

Bye bye HKW, Tatiana Bazzichelli, Inga Seidler, Georgia Nicolau, Heiko Stubenrauch, bye Telekommunisten and raumlaborberlin. See you *trans-mediale*, and Berlin.



TATIANA VILLANI is an Italian artist who works with different media (painting, photography, installation, video) on projects that she carries out around the world, often centered on the relationship between man and the environment.



MANUEL PERNA, born in Viareggio (Italy) in 1978, is an artist active in painting, drawing, graphics, street art and photography.

Thanks to Lola Savino for editing the English text.

Notes

- 1 We do not use this multiple-meaning word at random; we refer to its meaning in computer science: "An exploit (...) is a piece of software that takes advantage of a bug, glitch or vulnerability in order to cause unintended or unanticipated behavior to occur on computer software, hardware, or something electronic (usually computerized). Such behavior frequently includes such things as gaining control of a computer system or allowing privilege escalation or a denial-of-service attack (Wikipedia page "Exploit"; retrieved on the 18th of February 2013 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exploit_%28computer_security%29).



UNBOXING

THEIS VALLØ MADSEN



PHOTO: ANNA SCHIWITZA

There is a phenomenon on the internet called “unboxing”. People videotape themselves unboxing or unpacking a commercial product, usually a high-tech purchase like a new Apple product. Some videos are getting millions of views on social media platforms creating a community of people, who share a common desire for unpacking, touching and hold-

ing a new thing for the first time. Of course, this can be regarded as another perversion of consumerism where mainly white western consumers exert a cultural rooted desire for a pure purchase.

Nevertheless, the desire for unboxing is interesting. It is familiar to the unboxing, unpacking, and opening of letters and packages we receive in the mail. This unboxing is a big part of mail art, including the receiver's excitement and anticipation when getting a piece of mail art in the mailbox. American mail artist John Held Jr. said that "...the mailbox is a museum, so this is like going to the opening of a show."¹, and another American mail art-



ist, Crackerjack Kid, took his alias from the snack company's "a surprise in every package" slogan ², and the same emotional effect could be experienced and observed at first hand in Berlin at transmediale 2013 with Vitto-
re Baroni's *PNEU-
MATIC circUS*.

BUREAUCRACY PUNK

The whole setting was bizarre. Intersecting yellow tubes hanging from the ceiling like a weird, plastic octopus. If "steam punk" refers to a science fiction sub-genre picturing steam machinery, and "diesel punk" to a sub-genre picturing diesel machinery, then this squid-like machine could be describes as "plastic punk" or perhaps "bureaucracy punk". As one of the bureaucrats in this machinery - a *transmediale* supervisor - it was interesting to observe people's reactions when going to one of the OCTO Stations, calling the Central Station, receiving the capsule, and then opening the capsule to unpack the instructions and the tools and accessories inside.

The bureaucratic performance - from the initial request to the final re-packing of the capsule - was a very physical experience. Picking up the phone, listening to the sound of the capsules going through the tubes, and finally unboxing the individual capsule was very different than for example walking through a museum gallery or watching unboxing videos on a screen. This is obvious, but nevertheless an important part of the pneumatic experience. People would light up when they heard the wind in the yellow tubes, and they would be a bit suspicious, though excited when unboxing the capsule not knowing what to expect.

This feeling of anticipation would usually stay with them until the instructions inside were carried out and the capsule was re-boxed and put back into circulation.



PHOTO: TATIANA VILLANI / MANUEL PERNA

THROUGH THE YELLOW TUBES

PNEUMatic circUS was another addition to the more than sixty year long history of mail art, and the entire circus recital in Berlin exemplifies an important quality of the art movement. The artworks are only parts of a system, and one needs to be part of the system to experience the artwork(s). One could, of course, exhibit the capsules on a white plinth in a gallery, but one would only see the remains of something now gone, like the findings from an archaeological site. The pneumatic capsules need to be blown through a yellow tube to a station in order to be part of a work of art. Then, you would experience something quite different than you would in a museum or in front of your computer.

Some of the capsules had one of Vittore Baroni's rubber stamps that read "BEFORE INTERNET WAS MAIL ART". In many ways, the mail art movement was a predecessor of the digital age embodying the quote of Gilles Deleuze: "[T]he machine is always social before being technical"³. Mail artists were building networks, sharing information, and creating open-ended, ever-changing works many years before it became an everyday part of our culture, at least in the Western part of the world. And here at *transmediale* in Berlin, observing people receiving, performing, and sending capsules, the sheer feeling of anticipation when opening a container is one of the extraordinary things that mail art, postal art, correspondence art, or "correspondance art"⁴ can generate.

However, what makes it different from the geeky media sub-genre of unboxing is simple. The voyeurs of unboxing might experience a release of dopamine in the brain's pleasure centre, but nothing extraordinary, unanticipated, or unexpected happens. In Berlin, the *transmediale* visitors were putting themselves out there, having no idea what might be hiding inside a capsule, and what the instructions would ask them to do. Dopamine might be released in both cases, but the latter - the *PNEUMATIC circUS* people - experienced something quite different: the feeling of surprise, oddness, baffle, disappointment, or sometimes even the threat of being put on the spot. The unexpected is part of mail art unboxing which is very different and much more interesting than other kinds of unboxing.



THEIS VALLØ MADSEN (born 1980) is an Art Historian and PhD Fellow at Aarhus University and KUNSTEN Museum of Modern Art in Denmark. The basis of his research is Mogens Otto Nielsen's mail art archive (<http://mailartarchive.com>).

Notes

- 1 John Held Jr. on KQED: Spark, January 2004.
- 2 Craig Saper: *Networked Art*, University of Minnesota Press 2001, p. 134.
- 3 Gilles Deleuze: *Dialogues II*, Continuum 2006, p. 52.
- 4 "Correspondance art" was a non-coincidental misspelling by American artist and founding father of mail art Ray Johnson.



PNEUMATIC CIRCUS PERFORMERS

This is a list of names (and nicknames) of visitors who created their own *OCTO* capsule and/or performed capSOULEs of the *PNEUMatic circUS* at *transmediale* 2013. Names and email contacts (not printed here for reasons of privacy) were transcribed after the festival by Georgia Nicolau from the “I performed your capSOULE” rubberstamps left on the circUS instruction sheets and at the *OCTO* stations (some names were illegible or quite hard to decipher). All the performers will be informed via email when this catalog will be available online.

Abadi	Christine Exner	Eva Susanne
Agnes, Mantas, Gregoire	Christoph	Evil
Alvaro Santisteban	Claire et Vincent	Ewa
Andreas	Clemence Seurat	Filippo
Anna-Lena Kichenbauer	Clemente Pestelli	Franzi Krueger
Anne Badorreck	Craig J. Saper	Gabi U Wolf
Anne Kettenburg	Da Da (Ramona Sonntag)	Gerke Vilain
Arnau Sala	Diani Barreto	Gesa
Bea	Diego	Giacomo Verde
Byrke Breuse	Efi	Halley Murray
Carla Cixi	Elisa Schonheir	Hannah V. Bulow
Caroline	Emil	Henrik Geal
Cecilie	Ernesto	Irena Pivka

Irina Hasnas Hubbard
Jacopo Janski
Jennifer Janski
Jes
Joakim Old Jensen
Jochen Krueger
Jonas Brockmann
Jonas Frankki
Juho Jouhtimak
Juliane
Kaspar Konig
Kristof Straubel
Lena
Lena Reisner
Lili
Lima
Lisa Jura
Lisa Simpson
LN
Lone
Lucia Graf
Mafalda Chaves
Magdalena Augustynide
Magdalena Wiewer
Magnus
Manuel
Manuel Perna

Marcos
Marcosnauta
Maria Clara Villas
Marie Louise
Martyna Nowicka
Mascime Rejui
Mathias
Mauriano
Maurice Weiss
Max
Mette
Michele Marmino
Milena Blandon
Miss Houlberg
Nanna Iansen
Natali Topliff
Natalia Fernande
Nathalie Nienkemper
Neda
Nick
Nico
Nikita
Octavia Allende Fried-
man
Onen Hulme
Patricia Breves
Pia

Plouk
Robert Feben
Robert Haber
Sabina
Sabine Weies
Sandra
Sibylle
Simone Simonato
Sina Seller
Sitha Reis
Sophie
Sven
Szilvia Kovats
Tatiana Cel'haigia
Tatiana Villani
Theis Madsen
Theresa Schmalenbach
Tina
Tini
Tito
Tracy Rolling
Vicks
Warbear
Xname
Yoana Buzova



OCTO+ RISING

TOPSY QUR'ET



IMAGINATION MAKES CONNECTION POSSIBLE









PHOTO: ANNA SCHIWITZA

TOPSY QUR'ET was born in Canada, grew up in England, studied Landscape Architecture in Scotland and Thai Buddhism in England. He has since worked as an artist in Newcastle for the past 20 years and is currently looking into possibilities of moving to Berlin. Topsy's project *OCTO+* is an imaginary network, the source being the Telekommunisten *OCTO P7C-1* project that was first demonstrated at *transmediale 2013 - BWPWAP*.



PNEUMATIC CIRCUS CREDITS



PHOTO: GIULIA BACCOSI

INSTITUTIONAL

OCTO P7C-1 and *PNEUMatic circUS* are projects of transmediale - festival for art and digital culture berlin, with the kind support of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

 **transmediale 2013 BWPWAP**

giz Deutsche Gesellschaft
für Internationale
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

PHOTO

Many thanks to all the photographers who kindly gave us permission to use their images in this catalog. In the photo galleries (*OCTO Structure, Panels & Workshop / OCTO Performances*) the initials of the author of each image can be found in the file name:

Giulia Baccosi = GB

Julia Grachikova = JG

Julia Gruessing = JGRU

Sabine Kelka = SK

Galya Kovolova = GK

Andrew Maximilian Niss = AN

Juan Quinones = JQ

Veronica Santos Ruiz = VS

Anna Schiwitza = AS

Felipe Tofani = FT

Melanie Twele = MT

Tatiana Villani / Manuel Perna = VP

Lutz Wohlrab = LW

In the *CapSOULes and Instructions* slide-show, all the photos of the capSOULes and the scans of the instruction sheets (unless differently specified) are by **Georgia Nicolau**, and they are creative commons, so you are free to share them. Some photos provided by the authors of the capSOULes are indicated with an "A" in the file name.

Georgia Nicolau together with **Julia Grachikova** made a preliminary selection of the photos; **Vittore Baroni** made the final choice, reduced the size and sequenced all the images. Sincere apologies for any mistake in the attributions.

VIDEO

Many thanks also to the authors of the short video included in the catalog:

1 - raumlaborberlin - *Testing OCTO*

The first (and successful) long distance test of the OCTO system.

2 - Jonas Frankki - *Introducing OCTO*

A short animated promo for the OCTO crowdfunding.

3 - Interactive Design - *Transmediale 2013 - BWPWAP*

A few glimpses of the festival (thanks to Tito Cetroni).

4 - Filippo Gianetta / transmediale - *Inside OCTO*

A quick voyage inside the pneumatic tubes.

5 - Christian Grasse - *OCTO in action*

One capsule is sent from the Central Station to the nearest *OCTO* station.

GRAPHICS AND TEXTS

Jonas Frankki was the incomparable designer of the *OCTO* and *PNEUMatic circUS* logos, as well as the mastermind behind the coordinated look of the *OCTO P7C-1* project. He also provided the layout of this catalogue and cannot be thanked enough.

All the texts were skillfully edited by **Katharina Gratzl-Karnitschnig**.

ORGANIZATION

Tatiana Bazzichelli was the curator of the *OCTO P7C-1* project and the programme curator of the correlated events at transmediale festival (workshops and conference).

Vittore Baroni ideated the *PNEUMatic circUS* and coordinated “at distance” the event and the preparation of the catalogue.

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OCTO P7C-1 INTERTUBULAR PNEUMATIC PACKET DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

29.01.-03.02.2013 | FREE ADMISSION

On the occasion of *transmediale* 2013, *transmediale* and Telekommunisten unveil the most radically disruptive project in the history of telecommunications to potential investors and partners, bringing the transformative power of digital communication to the physical sphere with a global sharing platform for the transmission of physical objects.

OCTO is building a global system to interconnect every household and place of business with pneumatic tubes, which permits high-speed delivery of packages to and from any subscriber worldwide. The first *OCTO* prototype system provides unprecedented vacuum-speed, physical, capsule-packet communications, enhancing the social experience and creativity of the *transmediale* visiting public. The *OCTO* prototype system is installed throughout the Haus der Kulturen der Welt, connecting all the event spaces, integrating thematic activities like never before. A functional prototype of central capsule router/distributor P7C-1 demonstrates advanced performativity, and elegant modular remote stations inspire a new generation

to imagine the effortless experience of the future of pneumatic messaging right in the comfort of their homes or offices!

OCTO-P7C-1 Intertubular Pneumatic Packet Distribution System is *trans-mediale* 2013's Official Miscommunication Platform and is the result of a joint collaboration between the reSource transmedial culture berlin/*transmediale*, the Berlin-based collective Telekommunisten and the raumlaborberlin collective of architects.

Be one of the first to invest in the next wave in social, making the social physical: *OCTO*!

This project is supported by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

Opening Times:

Tuesday 29 January: 20:30-22:00

Wednesday, 30 January: 13:00-21:00 (incl. breaks)

Thursday, 31 January: 13:00-21:00 (incl. breaks)

Friday, 1 February: 13:00-21:00 (incl. breaks)

Saturday, 2 February: 13:00-21:00 (incl. breaks)

Sunday, 3 February: 13:00–19:00 (incl. breaks)



INVITATION

TRANSMEDIALE 2013 | BWPWAP PRESENTS

PNEUMATIC CIRCUS

A PROJECT OF NETWORKED ART
CURATED BY VITTORE BARONI FOR THE
P7C-1 INTERTUBULAR PNEUMATIC PACKET
DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

INTRODUCTION

A very special project of Networked Art will take place in January-February 2013 at the *Haus der Kulturen der Welt* in Berlin (www.hkw.de), part of the well-known *transmediale* festival for art and digital cultures “*BWPWAP - Back When Pluto Was a Planet*” (www.transmediale.de) coordinated by Tatiana Bazzichelli and others.

Berlin is one of very few cities in the world that for a long time offered a public service of Pneumatic Tube Transport, with messages dispatched in small cylindrical containers propelled by compressed air through a network of tubes. The local *Rohrpost*, that reached a total length of 400 kilometres, was created in 1865 and has remained operative until 1963 (in West Berlin) and 1980 (in the East). As a tribute to the original *Rohrpost*, a functioning pneumatic mini-network will be set up by the Telekommunisten organization (<http://telekommunisten.net/octo/> - logos and promo video by Jonas Frankki) inside the *Haus der Kulturen der Welt*, connecting different rooms and spaces of the museum with the ramifications of an octopus-like installation called the *P7C-1 Intertubular Pneumatic Packet Distribution System* (in short, *OCTO*), the official miscommunication platform of *transmediale* 2013.

The *OCTO* network will be used to activate various kinds of communication between different areas of the festival, but will also host the first ever Networked Art project by Pneumatic Post: *PNEUMatic circUS*, an interaction at distance between international networkers and the visitors, activists and artists present at *transmediale*.

A social network is a small media “circus” where the “I” becomes “US” (circUS). When you register to be part of a social network, you sign a small Faustian pact with the devil: you will probably gain something from the experience, but you will also lose some of your time and with it a piece of your soul (or PNEUMA), while Big Brother keeps a watchful eye on your activities.

In a creative clash of innovative and obsolete technology, *PNEUMatic circUS* is a living kinetic sculpture, a do-it-yourself prototype and parody of a corporate social network, a (usually) virtual experience turned physical

through 3D messages that travel in hand-made cylindrical containers and real live action: a challenge for all involved to expose themselves in the circUS ring.

Over a hundred networkers, including members of the Mail Art network, will be invited to contribute texts, visuals and other materials (pieces of their soul) that will be dispatched by pneumatic post and used by visitors of the *transmediale* festival for small performances and simple interactions. These materials will be made available in a series of canisters (or capSOULes) that the users will be able to request at the *OCTO* stations. The receivers will be invited to carry out the instructions contained in each capSOULe inside small performing areas (circus rings) located at each *OCTO* station. A collaboration at distance will be therefore activated between networkers and audience, and the whole process (including the canisters darting through the tubes) will be documented with photographs, videos, etc. in a catalogue sent free to all the participants after the event.

PERSONAL INVITATION TO PNEUMATIC CIRCUS

The *OCTO* platform cannot operate an unlimited number of capsules, so this is a personal invitation directed to a selected number of networkers. If for some reason you cannot take part in the project, please let us know with a simple email, enabling us to invite another artist in your place.

WHAT

You are invited to submit a piece of your soul (pneuma) in the form of images and/or texts and/or 3D materials (and relative instructions) for the execution of a small performance, a reading, a brief mini-show, a temporary installation, a fluxus gag, a sound poetry piece, a circus number, etc. There is no fixed theme, but contributions that reflect critically upon the phenomenon of centralized social networks will be much welcomed.

All the materials will have to fit inside a single cylindrical capsule size cm. 15 of length (6 inches), diameter not larger than cm. 6,5 (2,9 inches) and not smaller than cm. 6,00 (2,6 inches). Maximum weight: 500 gr. You are also invited to build your own openable capsule (see attached photo with suggestions of materials that can be recycled): to prevent travelling incidents, fit securely a cap on the open end of the container (you can put some tape on it). The external surface of the capsule must be smooth and without bulges. If you encounter problems building the capsule, send us the contents in the specified sizes and we will provide a standard canister.

Members of the audience at *transmediale* will receive randomly the capsules in the *PNEUMatic circUS* and will be able to perform singularly with the contents, following your instructions. A form for the performance instructions is attached to this invite, to be printed, compiled and returned together with your contribution.

WHEN

Deadline for the arrival in Berlin of your contribution is December 10, 2012.

WHERE

Mail your contribution to:
Tatiana Bazzichelli - *PNEUMAtic circUS*
c/o *transmediale*, festival for art and digital culture berlin
Klosterstr. 68
10179 Berlin
Germany

DOCUMENTATION

The materials submitted will not be returned, but will remain part of the OCTO installation in the archives of the *transmediale* festival. All the participants will receive a catalogue as a free documentation of the project, so do not forget to include a postal address with your contribution.

ABOUT TRANSMEDIALE

Transmediale is a Berlin-based festival and year-round project that draws out new connections between art, culture and technology. The activities of *transmediale* aim at fostering a critical understanding of contemporary culture and politics as saturated by media technologies. In the course of its 25 year history, the annual *transmediale* festival has turned into an essential event in the calendar of media art professionals, artists, activists and students from all over the world. The broad cultural appeal of the festival is recognised by the German federal government who supports the *transmediale* through its programme for beacons of contemporary culture.

VITTORE BARONI

Music critic and explorer of the counter-cultures, since the mid-1970's Baroni is also one of the most active participants and promoters of the planetary Mail Art network. He has written various books on aspects of Correspondence Art and the networking cultures that anticipated Internet. In the past three decades he has organized several exhibitions, events, publications and collective projects in the areas of mail art, audio art, visual poetry, underground comics and street art. Baroni was the co-originator of seminal networking projects such as the TRAX modular system, the multiple names Lieutenant Murnau and Luther Blissett, the F.U.N. (Funtastic United Nations) organization and the Art Detox 2010 campaign.

DOUBTS

If you need further clarifications on this project, just
drop an email: vittorebaroni@alice.it
Thanks in advance for your participation!



(form to be compiled and returned)



CAPSOULE BY:

TITLE (FACULTATIVE) :

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE:



All the 109 contributions by 94 authors from 16 countries are included in the photo gallery *CapSOULes* and *Instructions* attached to the multimedia version of this catalog.



 **transmediale 2013 BWPWAP**

