

YOU OWN ME NOW UNTIL YOU FORGET ABOUT ME.

Opening reception 15 May 2008, 8 p.m.
Exhibition duration 16 May 2008 - 22 June 2008
Location Mala galerija—Moderna galerija, SI-1000 Ljubljana, Slovenska cesta 35
Curated by Birgit Rinagl & Franz Thalmair / CONT3XT.NET
Website www.youownmenow.net

With works by Mary-Anne Breeze (mez) | Codemanipulator® | Christina Goestl, clitoressa.net | Karl Heinz Jeron & Valie Djordjevic | carlos katastrofsky | Jörg Piringner | Martin Wattenberg & Marek Walczak

Speech and the faculty of meta-reflection about one's language are inherent characteristics of human beings. All projects shown in the exhibition YOU OWN ME NOW UNTIL YOU FORGET ABOUT ME. are originally Internet-based artworks. The main common ground is their starting point in the exploration of our language with its arbitrary systems and rules, its corresponding functions within society, as well as with its absurdities and restrictions for the individual. Rather than to focus on the isolated—literary/literally—artwork, the exhibition highlights more general artistic tendencies leading to a discursive process, which originates from the Internet and finds its way back to the "virtualities of our real life".

According to Ferdinand de Saussure (*Cours de linguistique générale*, 1916), human language can be divided into three fundamental aspects: the biological preconditions for speaking (*langage*), the fixed system of rules and signs (*langue*) and the act of speaking itself (*parole*). The supposition that the language system—thought as a collective institution of norms—and the speech act—thought as an individual, coherent and meaningful utterance—are linked reciprocally and that there is no backflow into the system without speaking, it becomes clear that human language withdraws itself from an immediate observation. Contrariwise to Saussure the exhibition YOU OWN ME NOW UNTIL YOU FORGET ABOUT ME. examines language in the course of the reconstruction of the process of its appearance, that is, its articulation. Considering this point of view of our communication system, the question arises if, accordingly, language is an exclusively virtual product, the existence of which begins and ends with its realisation.

In parallel, digital artworks are predetermined by the binary (linguistic) code, but do not become "real" (commonly comprehensible) until the code is transformed into text, image, and/or sound (by opening the data file and executing the commands). Both language and digital artworks are based on processes, transformations, and a continuous fluidity. The creation of digital artworks is built upon the active participation of the user just like the existence of language is built upon a speaking person.

Hence, word and image are no longer integer parts of the artwork, or *langue* and *langage* (as thought by Saussure) are no longer part of *parole*. The individual elements of both are entangled in a performative act making interpretation obsolete. The "Open Work" (Umberto Eco, 1989) manifests itself by intermediation and is created individually through every new reception. But what happens if the user closes the data file, or if the speaking person stops talking?

"In the end there is nothing of an object here, just a process, a set of rules that leads you to the point of questioning unicity, ownership, and the object-like nature of digital art works and what you can own is nothing more than the memory of it." (Luis Silva, 2005)