

Hactivism / E-Music / New Media Art

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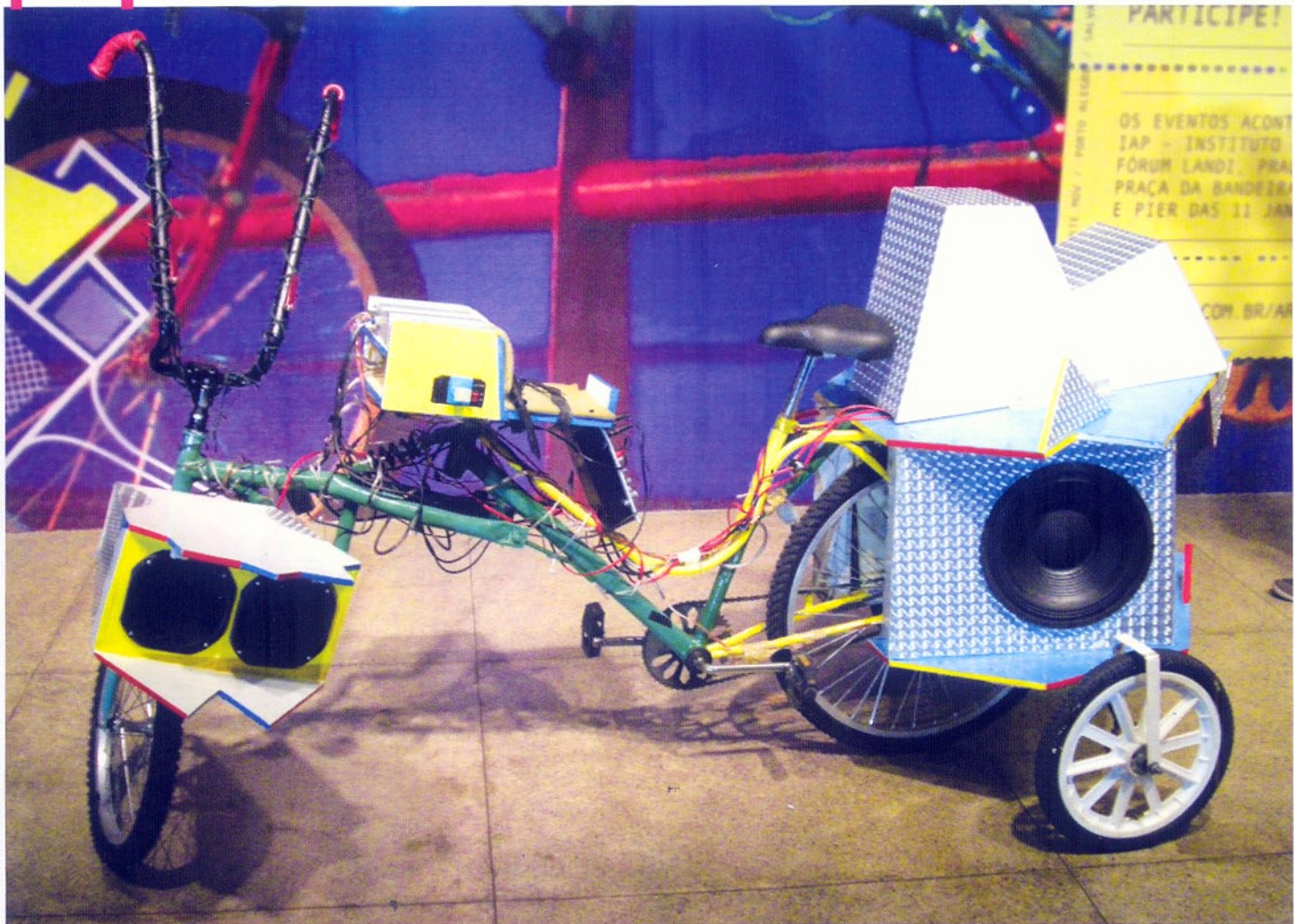
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The Force of Sharing / The Sound of Network Topologies / Netless Dead Drops

interviews > Michel Bauwens / Dmytri Kleiner, Telekommunisten / Superflex

Platoniq / Mattin, Free Software Series / Anders Weberg

report > arte.mov Belém 2010 / Electrohype 2010 /

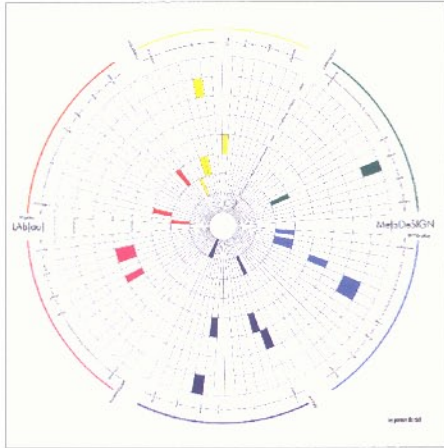
>reviews

Edited by LAB[au]

MetaDeSIGN,

Les presses du réel <book>

ISBN: 978-2840664048



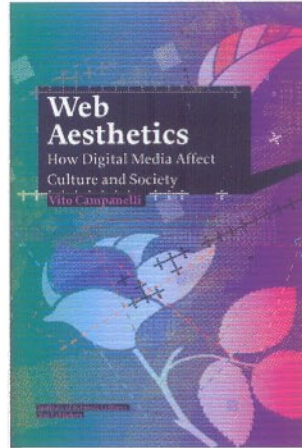
This is a comprehensive monograph of LAB[au], laboratory for architecture and urbanism and artist group founded in Brussels in 1997. The group's name merges two different meanings: a phonetic and a written one: that of the French and Dutch pronunciation of "labo" which relates to an experimental approach and that of "bau", the German term for construction. LAB[au] has a rigorous approach to design that seamlessly deals with generative processes as well as interactive public architecture, or biology as well as kinetic sculpture. Their "MetaDeSign" is defined as a "practice grounded on the inherent logic of computation and communication technologies in the visualization and formalization of information, processing data into textual, graphical, spatial and sonic representations." Analyzing their artworks it is perceptible that they usually construct sense through structures, painstakingly composing elements and exploiting technology, developing their own software and interfaces. The works speak a universal language through various media and strategies, because of the self-discipline and rigor used in designing. This rigor is also reflected in the structure and the graphic design of this luxury book: the works all share a few common concepts (among them "data scapes", "binary states", "screenography" and "spectraum"). They serve as a compass to help orientate in what the group defines as "parameter design", or a proper language and aesthetic that derives from applied technologies. And here lies their peculiarity.

Vito Campanelli

Web Aesthetics,

NAI Publishers <book>

ISBN: 978-9056627706



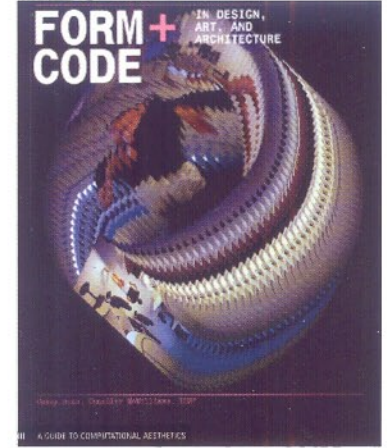
The aesthetics of networks and the web, approached from the most acknowledged definition of aesthetics, is an underdeveloped field despite more than a decade of web design and hundreds of web-based artworks. What can be called "Web Aesthetics" is the main research focus of Vito Campanelli (media theorist and Neural contributor), who analyzed the web and its role since the beginning. The pervasiveness of what he calls "web-related forms" is taken as the main territory from which to start and to come back to after every digression based on social, political, historical, and aesthetic speculations. Campanelli argues that the net art movement has introduced new and confrontational aesthetic canons, but he valuably connects a variety of different concepts like (just to name a few) the importance of dialogue with memes, the optical and haptic experience of the web (explained through web-based art), the Aby Warburg's "engram" and the "remix". These fluid connections are sometimes intertwined with fascinating parallels, like the one between the space of contemporary frequent flying and moving in airports and the kind of "travel" we do in peer-to-peer networks. Campanelli winds his theoretical path through plenty of philosophical ideas, finally building something that is properly aesthetic. And his commitment to analyze digital media with a philosophy of aesthetic language is impressive, as is the amount of research involved - very visible through the abundance of quotes - that makes this text a pivotal one.

Casey Reas, Chandler McWilliams, LUST

Form+Code,

Princeton Architectural Press <book>

ISBN-13: 978-1568989372



This book is based on the sharing of knowledge between two colleagues at UCLA (Reas, one of the two Processing creators, and McWilliams) and the Dutch LUST collective. It is divided into five chapters that take their names from actions that sound like powerful programming language instructions: Repeat, Transform, Parameterize, Visualize and Simulate. It could be mistook for a purely educational book, because it clearly explains concepts and techniques, with plain code examples that can be downloaded from the book's website (not wasting precious printed space). But, in Reas' tradition, it also provides plenty of excellent examples of artworks, mentions more sophisticated concepts (like "procedural literacy"), and turns out to be a compendium, a textbook and a collection of ideas. In fact the best quality of this hybrid book is that it is one hundred percent "inspiring", instead of simply instructional. It goes through contemporary art, design and technology without any formal distinction, only grounding concepts and exploring them effectively. The description of the processes used to accomplish aesthetic goals is critical for developing original works, so this book works as an ideal introduction to how software can be used in visual arts. The "processual aesthetics" that is explored here is a nodal topic, as it reflects the contemporary complexity and the need for constructing and deconstructing it in order to understand and communicate it. And dealing with processes is always the starting point from which to depart for other domains of sense.