

SELECCIÓN CURATORIAL

POR | Régine Debatty

A DECADE THAT GOES FROM LOCATIVE MEDIA TO RESISTANCE TO THE PRIVATIZATION OF THE PUBLIC REALM. A FRAGMENTARY AND SUBJECTIVE WALK INTO THE CROSSOVER BETWEEN PLAY, TECHNOLOGY AND URBAN SPACE

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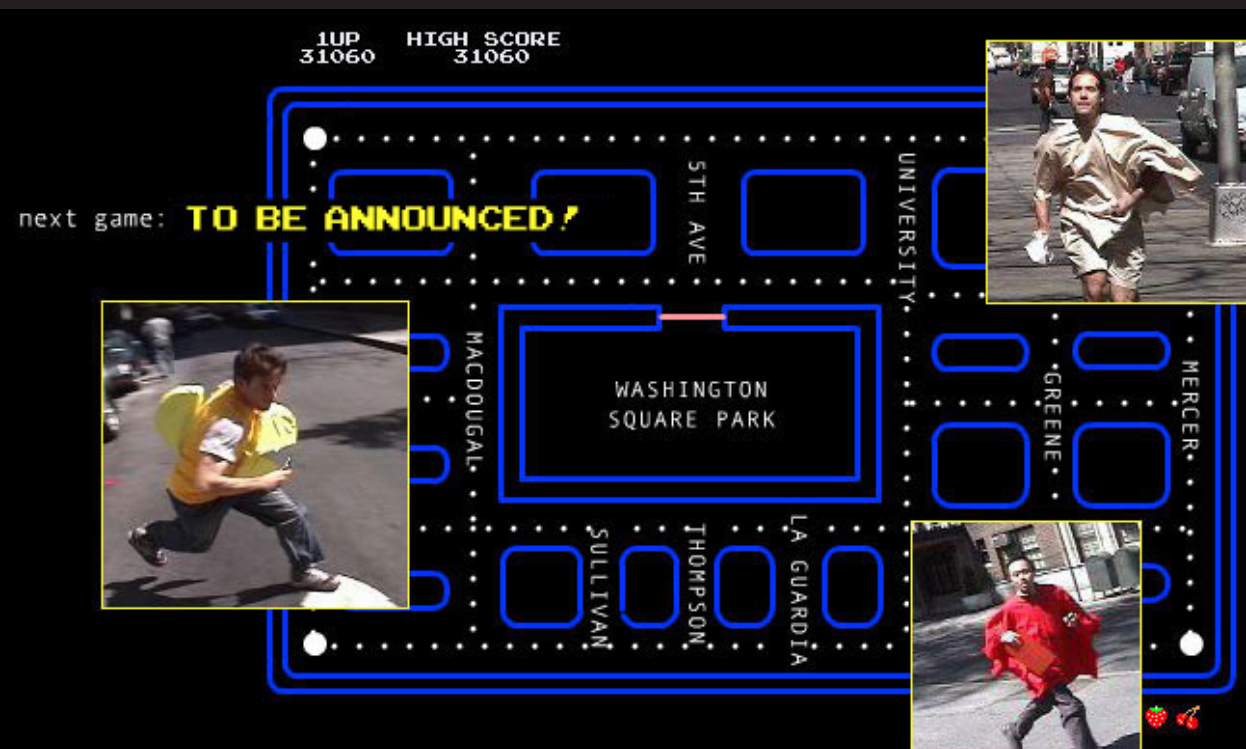


Figure 1. Pac-Manhattan. Frank Lantz and his Big Game students in NYU's Interactive Telecommunications Program.

Pac-Manhattan¹ (Fig.1) is probably the most iconic location-based game ever created. Back in 2004, graduate students at the Interactive Telecommunications Program in the Tisch School of the Arts in New York transposed the classic 80's game Pac-Man into what was still called "the real world." **Pac-Manhattan** is played by ten people: "Pac-Man" and his "controller", and the four ghosts and their controllers. Dressed as the original game characters, Pac-Man and the Ghosts play out the game on the streets of Manhattan while their controllers give them information and strategy advice via cell-phone from the control room.



Figure 2. Gordan Savicic, *Constraint City: The pain of everyday life*, 2009. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 3. Gordan Savicic, *Constraint City: The pain of everyday life*, 2009. Image courtesy of the artist.

The pain of everyday life² (Fig.2) is a performance that reflects on public and private space and the way abstract information layers impact on our everyday life. Artist Gordan Savicic straps himself into a jacket equipped with servo motors and a wifi enabled gaming console (Fig.3). The motors tighten the straps when an enclosed encrypted wifi network is detected: the better the wifi signal is, the tighter the jacket gets and the more bruises the wearer is marked with. Each walk is recorded into a pain-map. 'Constraint City' is both a tongue-in-cheek comment on 'locative and wearable media' and a masochistic, contemporary contribution to the tradition of psychogeography.

Gordan Savicic is a researcher and Critical Engineer. His works investigate game cultures, digital and urban interventions, architecture, pervasive computing as well as open source technologies.



Figure 4. Michel de Broin, Keep on Smoking, 2005. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 5. Michel de Broin, Keep on Smoking, 2005. Image courtesy of the artist.

Michel De Broin³ modified a mundane bicycle so that the kinetic energy produced by the pedaling cyclist is turned into smoke (Fig.4 and 5). As the artist explained, *"It's the reverse of how ecology is used normally, the smoke produced is not polluting. It's the sign without the effect."*

Michel De Broin is a New York-based artist whose work ranges from assemblage to video and photography. Under their whimsical guise, his pieces explore energy flows, entropic devolution, and the forms of visual, spatial and technological paradox that derive from these forces.



Figure 6. Garnet Hertz, OutRun, 2010. Image courtesy of the artist

OutRun⁴ is an 8-bit arcade driving game released by Sega in 1986. Artist Garnet Hertz outfitted an original arcade with wheels, the chassis of a golf cart and a motor so that he could literally drive the gaming machine into the streets. (Fig.6)

A custom-built software renders the real world in the style of the vintage video game. Which means that the driver doesn't have a direct view to the road, he only perceives its 8-bit translation on the screen.

Garnet Hertz is a contemporary artist whose work explores themes of technological progress, creativity, innovation and interdisciplinarity. His projects utilize robotics, software and performance to highlight and complicate conventional knowledge through humor and paradox. Hertz is also Canada Research Chair in Design and Media Art at Emily Carr University of Art and Design in Vancouver Canada.



Figure 7. Bradley Garret, Place Hacking (exploring a drain in Detroit). Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 8. Bradley Garret, Place Hacking (Airplane graveyard at George Air Force Base-The Southern California Logistics Airport). Image courtesy of the artist.

Urban explorers⁵ trespass into derelict industrial buildings, sewer mazes, construction sites, deep shelters, drains, transportation networks, skyscrapers and other tall structures. Mostly for the unique perspective they offer on the city below. Urban explorers enter where they are not supposed to set foot, they avoid security guards and often operate at night. (Fig. 7 and 8) They never, however, willingly cause damage nor commit criminal offences.

Bradley Garrett, a writer, photographer, researcher at the University of Oxford and urban explorer, compares urban explorers to computer hackers: both groups *assist in strengthening security by exposing systems' weaknesses through benign exploration.*



Figure 9. Radeau de Sauvetage, Géographies variables, L'école européenne supérieure d'art de Bretagne, Lorient, 2013. Image courtesy of the artist.

HeHe's artistic automated transport experiments project ⁶ are inspired by ARAMIS, a research project for the development of a network of on-demand, non-stop, automated cars to carry up to 4 people along guided rails around Paris. Aramis was a fiasco, much like many of the Personal Rapid Transport projects that emerged in the second half of the 20th century. PRT research projects proposed an alternative to both cars and collective transportation by operating small automated vehicles for 1 to 6 persons on specially built guide ways.

HeHe's personal automated travel vehicles (Fig. 9) piggyback on existing transport infrastructures. For example, one rode on The Petite Ceinture (The little belt), a rail track that draws a circle around Paris. Much of the rail tracks and the stations were abandoned in 1934. Another version took the form of a battery-powered Flying Carpet driven on the tram track that runs along Istiklal, a pedestrian shopping street in the western part of Istanbul.

HeHe is a Paris based art and design partnership set up in 1999 by Helen Evans and Heiko Hansen. Their work aims to rethink the existing technological systems that surround us, namely transport, public advertising and pollution monitoring, to give them a new social and critical usage.

Do you want to play “hide and seek” with a political refugee?

You can play “hide and seek” with a political refugee. Cover your eyes and count up to 20 while she will hide to avoid being found. The game ends when the other was discovered. She is a former policeman, who has been hiding from the police.

Offside. Too much melanin is a project by Núria Güell

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Figure 10. Nuria Güell, *Demasiado Melanina*, 2013. Image courtesy of the artist.

In 2013, Nuria Güell asked the art biennial of Goteborg to hire Maria, a political refugee from Kosovo who had been living illegally in Sweden for 9 years. Maria’s job was to play “hide and seek” with the public visiting the biennial⁷. However, Maria is always the person who is hiding and the public remains the seeker. Güell’s objective was to enable María to obtain a work permit and therefore become a legal person in the country once the game ended. (Fig. 10)

Nuria Güell graduated from the University of Barcelona with a degree in Fine Art and continued her studies under Tania Bruguera at the Behaviour Art School in Havana, Cuba. She immerses herself into the mechanisms responsible for social injustice and unethical practices and then turns them upside down in order to develop projects and alternative models that will foster a critical understanding and independent thinking of the public.



Figure 11. Benjamin Gaulon, L.S.D / Sonic Graffiti (Paris performance). Image courtesy of the artist.

L.S.D / Sonic Graffiti⁸ feeds on light produced by ubiquitous visual displays and screens that cover our cities via two LDR (light depending resistor) mounted on a suction cup, allowing the sensors to be mounted on any screen surface. An analogue synthesizer converts the light input to sound waves. The result is a strangely compelling soundtrack that accompanies and disrupts luminous ads and other urban sources of light. (Fig. 11)

Benjamin Gaulon -aka *RECYCLISM*- is an artist, researcher and art college lecturer. Both playful and critical, his projects involve printing messages on walls using a PaintBall Gun, collecting video streams from wireless surveillance cameras, turning your videos into animated GIFs, developing radio controlled cars that physically react to messages sent on Twitter, giving an architectural dimension to the 1970s game PONG, circuit-bending, hacking, deconstructing and re-purposing “obsolete” electronic devices.



Figure 12. Wow workshop/performance at Laguna Art Museum 11.7.2009. Image courtesy of the artist.

The WoW project⁹ is a workshop and intervention in public space that highlights the changing ways people deal with privacy and identity in the public sphere. Every day, millions of people spend a great deal of time in online virtual worlds like the massively multiplayer online role-playing game World of Warcraft.

In World of Warcraft, each player is represented by an individual avatar and identified by a nickname that constantly floats above the avatar's head. Aram Bartholl's WoW (Fig. 12) transports the floating names into the physical world. Participants of the WoW workshop simply craft their own name out of cardboard and then parade around in public with it hovering above their head. "What happens when a person's customary anonymity in the public sphere is obliterated by the principles operative in virtual worlds online?"

Aram Bartholl's work looks at the overlaps between internet, culture and reality. In public interventions and public installations Bartholl examines which and how parts of the digital world can reach back into reality. Aram Bartholl is also a member of the Internet based artist group *Free, Art & Technology Lab - F.A.T. Lab*.



Figure 13. Steve Lambert, Capitalism works for me! True/False, Intervention at the Labour Party Conference, 2014.
Image courtesy of the artist.

As part of Politika, a series of exhibition, workshops, screenings, talks and public interventions which invited citizens of Greater Manchester to reflect on possible alternative and resistance to *consumerism and the disempowerment that it represents*, Upper Space collaborated with artist Steve Lambert and drove his gigantic sign 'Capitalism Works For Me! True/False'¹¹ on a truck tour to the Labour party conference in Manchester on September 21st. (Fig.13)The objective was to *engage citizens of Manchester in conversations about our relationships with the 'C' word - Capitalism.*

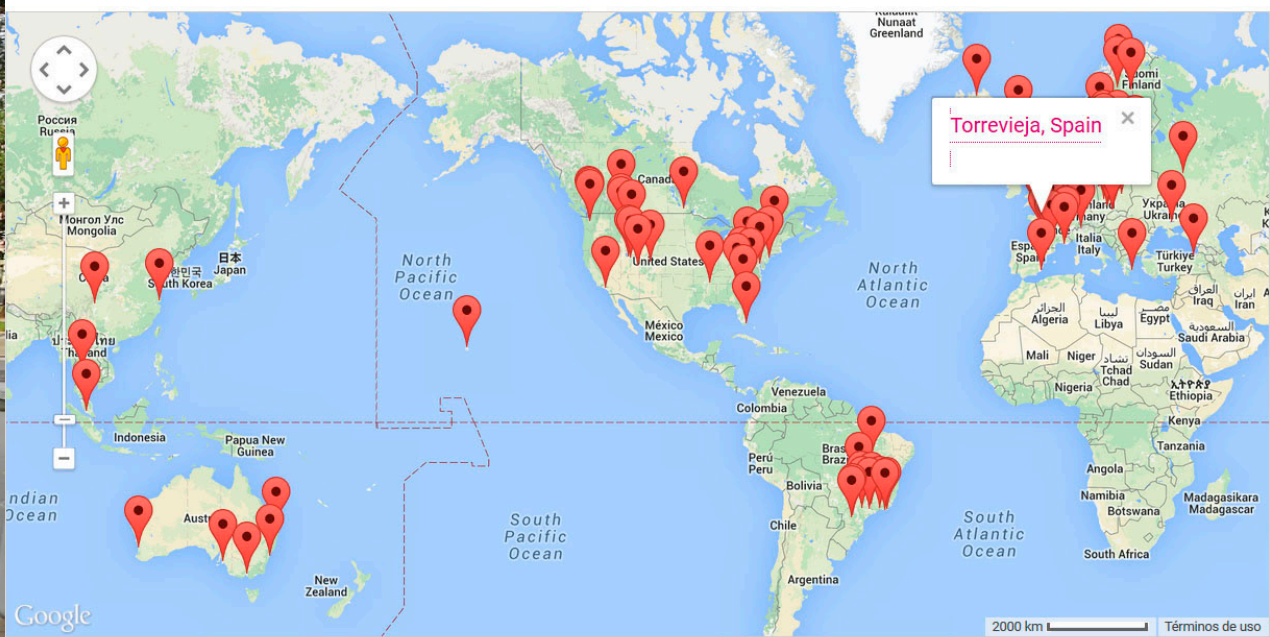


Figure.14. Paolo Patelly and Giuditta Vendrame, Friction Atlas. Image courtesy of the artist.

Friction Atlas¹² makes visible some of the rules and constraints that regulate the circulation of citizens within urban space. For example, any reading or picnic gathering over 20 persons in one of New York city parks requires a special event permit. In Sweden, you need to apply for a permit to dance in public. In Cairo you're allowed to spontaneously discuss public matters only if you are fewer that 10 people.

The designers from La Jetée drew 1:1 diagrams onto the pavement of the streets in Ljubljana to illustrate rules that control the use of public spaces in cities across the world. They then invited the public to perform staged choreographies while discussing issues of public space, law and legibility. (Fig.14)

Giuditta Vendrame is a designer. Paolo Patellu is an architect and researcher. Together they founded the design and research studio La Jetée.



Map of cities with free public transport

Figure 15. Fare Free Public Transport website.

And finally, because it's easier to play in and with a city when we can move around it freely: Fare Free Public Transport¹³ believes that free public transport is the way to go if we want to fight climate change and reduce our oil dependency.

With just a marginal tax-raise, the public transport system could be made free at the point of entry. In cities where a free system has been introduced, such as Hasselt in Belgium, Ockelbo in Sweden and Changning in China, there has been an increase in passengers as well as a large decrease in car-traffic – rendering some investments in new roads unnecessary. The website maps the cities that offer free public transport and lists organizations campaigning for it. (Fig. 15)

NOTAS

1. <http://gamecenter.nyu.edu/pac-manhattan/>
2. <http://www.yugo.at/processing/index.php?what=constraint>
3. <http://micheldebroyin.org/keep-on-smoking>
4. <http://www.conceptlab.com/outrun/>
5. <http://www.placehacking.co.uk/>
6. <http://hehe.org.free.fr/hehe/RadeaudeSauvetage/index.html>
7. <http://www.nuriaguell.net/projects/31.html>
8. http://www.recyclism.com/lsd_sonicgraffiti.php
9. <http://datenform.de/woweng.html>
10. <http://visitsteve.com/made/capitalism-works-for-me-truefalse/>
11. <http://upper-space.org/politika-capitalism/>
12. <http://frictionatlas.net/>
13. <http://farefreepublictransport.com/>