

Natalie BOOKCHIN

Databank of the Everyday

(1999)

USA

Biography

Natalie Bookchin is an artist who works in new and old media. She exhibits her work, lectures and performs frequently in the States, in Europe and in cyberspace. In 1998 and 1999 she exhibited her work in France, Switzerland, England, the United States, Spain, the Netherlands, Germany, Macedonia, and Canada. She was included in the first exhibition of electronic art organized by New York City's Creative Time Inc. for their annual show at the Brooklyn Bridge Anchorage.

Her recent works have been reviewed in dozens of national and international journals including The New York Times on-line and off line, Artforum, the Berlin Tax, die tageszeitung, ABC National Radio in Australia and French Canadian television. She studied in the Whitney Independent Studies Program in New York and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Conceptual Description

Databank of the Everyday addresses the death of photography in the electronic age, where photography finds itself as just more data in a database. The project borrows its form from both a computer database and a stock photography catalogue. Following current rhetoric surrounding the computer, with its promise of an endless flow of information, Databank presents the ultimate databank, one with no conceivable limits: a databank of Life Itself. Moreover, just as twentieth century media forms - film and photography - provided unique models for representing human motion and the body, (frozen or captured in photography and caught in the linear movement of film), Databank proposes that the computer has its own particular model for representing the body- a loop. Life is represented as a series of loops performed by the body much like the simple loops performed by a computer program. The body, stuck in its loops, is like a flawed machine, rendered inefficient by desires, habits and compulsions.

Featuring the latest in amplified fin-de-siècle rhetoric, the Databank vehemently perpetuates the current hysteria surrounding new technologies. Again we witness a revolution, and again we hear loud claims about the universality of the change and the transformation of everyday life. (History, as we know, also repeats itself like a loop.) Thus, in keeping with the tradition, and in compliance with early twentieth century avant-garde movements, the Databank heralds its very own Twenty-First Century Manifesto.

(source : http://contactzones.cit.cornell.edu/artists/natalie_bookchin.html)

Databank of the Everyday (CD-ROM 1996)

Databank of the everyday takes as its subject the real everyday uses of computers in our culture: storage, transmission, dissemination and filtration of massive bodies of information.

The project reflects on what media -- from photography to computers -- have always attempted to do: represent, organize and catalogue life into well defined lists and categories. Photography, for example, begins and ends its life as a catalogue, from photography's inventor William Fox Talbot's photographic inventories of bourgeois collections to its final condition, digitized into electronic image banks.

If photography and the desire to voraciously collect visual data emerged from 19th Century Positivism, 21st Century information fetishization and the subsequent need for control leads to a new more efficient method of cataloguing and storing information: the databank.

Databank of the Everyday,,presents the ultimate databank, one with no conceivable limits: a databank of Life Itself; not in an altered idealized state, but rather, at its most prosaic. Modeled after commercial image databanks with their all encompassing and generic categories such as "People at Leisure," "Nine to Five" and "Nature," Databank's categories are no less all encompassing and include "Wasting Time," "Nervous Habits," and "Antonyms."

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Databank can be thought of as a catalogue of flawed movement studies of the everyday standing in opposition to the historical motion studies of Muybridge, Marey, Taylor, and the Gibreths.

The primary graphic interface of Databank is a loop, (the most elemental form used in computer programming). Users loop between various sections which reorganize similar data arbitrarily, modeled on that 18 Century proto-databank, the encyclopedia. One section is a subject catalogue featuring a diagram of the subject that jerks as her buttons are pressed, triggering access to an action. Another section is a dictionary of loops where multiple miniature actions take place simultaneously, choreographed by a user's selection. Yet another organizes the data as a series of antonyms.

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As digital media replaces film and photography, it is only logical that the computer program's loop should replace photography's frozen moment and cinema's linear narrative. Databank champions the loop as a new form of digital storytelling; there is no true beginning or end, only a series of the loops with their endless repetitions, halted only by a power shortage.

(source : <http://jupiter.ucsd.edu/%7Ebookchin/databank/databank1.html>)