



## ANNETTE SCHINDLER AND REINHARD STORZ DIGITAL ART COLLECTION / STORE

February 2010

A COLLECTION OF DIGITAL MEDIA ART WITH AN INTEGRATED ART STORE IS COMING INTO BEING IN BASEL UNDER THE NAME OF DA COLLECTION AND DA STORE. AS LOCAL SPACE FOR THE COLLECTION IS NOT YET AVAILABLE, THE DA INITIATIVE USES ITS WEBSITE AS AN ELECTRONIC DISPLAY ROOM AND CATALOGUE. IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE IT WILL HAVE FACILITIES AT THE «HOUSE OF ELECTRONIC ART» TO BE BUILT IN BASEL. THE IDEA FOR THE DA COLLECTION / STORE WAS DEVELOPED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE **OOA** APPLIED RESEARCH PROJECT.

**DA Collection** collects international, national and local works that are illustrative of the development of digital media art. It also sees itself as a national archive that documents the history of Swiss media art and the net art scene. It is available for use by diverse study projects. Lines of enquiry and texts that have emerged within the framework of a research project, parallel to the development of the collection, will also be used for this purpose.

There are few collections of digital media art in the world today. **DA Collection** is therefore seen as a model that in practice presents a range of possibilities regarding owning, archiving and conserving digital art. The stock collection includes work owned privately by the two founders (the authors of this article), purchases made with the help of third parties, work loaned by artists and work from the archive of the Swiss cultural server Xcult. For the time being, DA Collection will have its own display room where, in addition to its own permanent collection, it will also regularly display larger pieces on loan from artists and museums. Works or parts of the DA Collection can be lent to institutions in Switzerland or abroad for installation and presentation. Along with setting up the collection, the focus will be on developing restoration techniques and strategies with the aim of preserving media art. We are therefore looking to collaborate with experts from Switzerland or from parts of Germany and France that border Basel.

The **DA Store** is the second pillar of the DA project. Here we offer a growing selection of digital art works for sale, including objects and installations, Internet-based productions and computer-generated animation. In the interests of collectors of digital art, we have combined with the artists to identify work packages for the DA Store, which deal with the issues of ownership, reproduction and restoration. The revenue from the DA Store is used to run DA Collection and to acquire new work.

**DA Collection/DA Store** sees itself as a pioneer project that extends beyond the borders of Switzerland. There have for instance been few practical answers to the question of how to collect Internet art. Such artwork is contrary to the traditional understanding of ownership in art and fundamental categories are challenged, such as work concept and reception, as well as the permanence of art works. The DA Store endeavours to motivate collectors to include art projects that are universally accessible via the World Wide Web and, in their interactive form, can also be influenced by the observer. As we often do not know how long these works will last, we offer conservation and restoration know-how and services or provide suggestions on how work can continue to exist in documented form.

In contemporary art, similar questions are already being asked of other formats such as photographic imaging techniques, art videos, land art and performance. Much like digital media art, works in all these media are also part of our cultural heritage. Public collections in particular are entrusted with the task of preserving this heritage and are therefore under increasing pressure to turn their attention to the aspect of conservation as well. In the process DA Collection/DA Store seeks to support the rationale and to provide practical assistance.

One of the motives for launching the DA Store/DA Collection project is the observation that although there is always an interest in buying media art – for example on the part of municipal purchasing commissions – it is considered risky because of the many uncertainties involved. Museum curators also appear reluctant to display media art because of apparently insurmountable technical hurdles. Yet digitalisation has radically changed most of the techniques of production, culture and imaging in our society to an extent that is perhaps comparable in the history of images only with the impact of the invention of photography. Internet usage continues to soar. Digital media is shaping the cultural practices of a new generation just as television and cinema shaped earlier generations. Art – often digital art – explores the means and strategies of imaging in society and reflects on their limits.

The prospects of the DA are good. As part of a «House of Electronic Arts» in the Dreispitz area of Basel, the DA Collection/Store – together with **Plug.in** and the **Shift Festival** – will soon be able to move into rooms of its own. Also in connection with Plug.in in Basel and the Conservation and Restoration Department of the Bern University of the Arts, the DA Collection is part of the Swiss-European research project **Digital Media Art on the Upper Rhine. Conservation-Restoration-Securing the Future**, which is supported by the fund for Territorial European Cooperation. Thanks to the assistance of Tabea Lurk, specialized in the archiving and conservation of digital media art, the DA Collection/Store project will be able to continue expanding in the coming years.

In the meantime, the DA Collection/Store is making its first public appearances in a beta version. In September 2009, the DA Store was invited to show works by six artists and group projects at **eARTS beyond – International Gallery Exhibition of Media Art Shanghai**. Within the framework of the international art fair **Shanghai Contemporary** and the **eArts Festival**, the DA Store was able to present works in an exhibition space at the Oriental Pearl television tower in Shanghai (together with 13 renowned Asian, American and European galleries). From January to March 2010, net-based artworks are being presented on six computer consoles developed in connection with the **OOA Research Project** at the exhibition **Beam me up** at Plug.in Basel. With the **Beam me up** project, these will be

part of the DA Collection and, in some cases, offered for sale at the DA Store.

[www.digital-art-collection.net](http://www.digital-art-collection.net)

[www.digital-art-store.com](http://www.digital-art-store.com)

Translated from the German by Tolingo, Hamburg

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studied Art History and Sociology at the universities of Zurich and Madrid and wrote her thesis on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of taste. Annette Schindler directed the Swiss Institute in New York (1997–2000) and the Kunsthauus Glarus in Switzerland (1992–1997). Her exhibitions, publications and projects have contributed to contemporary discussions of feminist approaches, critical art practice, digital cultural production and techno-culture. In 2000 she became the director of Plug.in in Basel, a new media art space devoted to the dissemination of new media cultural production. She is a co-founder of kunstfreiheit.ch. <http://www.weallplugin.org> [03.2010].

#### REINHARD STORZ

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