

## slide 1: homepage

### Introducing Constant

Constant is an association for arts and media based and active in Brussels since the late 90s.  
from curational structure, representation of video in institutes  
to critical research oriented collective of multidisciplinary artists and thinkers

[http://video.constantvzw.org/Final\\_Sigma/all\\_in\\_one/network/](http://video.constantvzw.org/Final_Sigma/all_in_one/network/)

### Perspectives

#### slide: 02 - 08

The artistic practice of Constant is inspired by the intersecting themes of:

collaborative work,  
promiscuous networks,  
data exchange,  
(cyber)feminism,  
algorithmic culture,  
hybrid language practices,  
experimental archives,  
free software,  
copyright alternatives,

#### slide 09: Cyber feminism

Haraway: situated knowledge quote  
Gender as a dispositive,  
add to quote Ernst from program

#### Free software-practice:

##### TOOLS

A long interest in investigating the way digital tools and creative practice might co-construct each other. For example by exploring techno-political and socio-emotional relationships between activist and technological practice. Or how design practice might radically change once you change toolbox.

Four freedoms of free software  
Richard Stallman, 1984  
GNU

Linux Linus Torvald  
Linux is een open-source-, Unix-achtig besturingssysteem gebaseerd op de Linuxkernel.

#### slide 10: Free / Libre Open Source Software.

allow the software users to  
run the software for any purpose  
to study it,  
to change it  
and to distribute (and even sell) the software.

What is even more interesting, is the viral character: once FLOSS, always FLOSS  
geneologies of knowledge – feminist project.

### **Multi-disciplinary research through artistic practice**

**slide 12:** Extra-academic research. Speculative, wild, un-disciplined  
Disobedient action research

Jara , undisciplined quote

Constant considers artistic research as a political gesture, a practice of attention and care that is  
process-oriented and does not aim for products. This does not mean it has no results of consequences.

### **Copyleft**

**slide 13:**

Share work online through open content licenses  
such as:  
Free Art license  
GNU General Public License  
Creative Commons  
....

Release early release often  
Eric Raymondt

Making digital files non-copyable is like making water non-wet  
Bruce Sterling

Copying is not theft video  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IeTybKL1pM4>

**slide 17:** graphic in application 5 years 2021B.ps

### **Organisation**

Structural 5 year programme. Funded as research oriented labo for professional artists.

People first, infrastructure second;  
on location with partner organisations  
office

**WTC (27)**

webbase:  
[www.constantvzw.org](http://www.constantvzw.org)

softwares running on our servers:

example: blogs

verlag  
**(30)**

etherpads  
**(28)**

gitlab  
**(29)**

Hosting the universe of constant:

list of websites on our server  
pad openzetten

### **CONSTANT Activities (31)**

Research threads  
Interests develop over time and usually have an afterlife, inside constant or outside.

### **Active Archives (32)**

Scandinavian institute for computational vandalism – computer vision, face recognition

Michael Murtaugh, Nicolas Malevé, Ellef Prestsaeter

#### **Constant-V (34)**

Libre Objet – Diverted design

Claire Williams – an electromagnetic walk

Antje van Wichelen – Anthropometric image reversal

Katrien Oosterlinck

Exhibitions

**Iterations**, case study in the future of collective work in digitally networked contexts

#### **Workgroup Algorit**

Algorithmic Literature workgroup.

Gijs de Hey, Manetta .. ,

## Worksessions (54) (55)

Collaborative disobedience through action-research makes truly generative situations because it stays with the trouble.

We—all of us on Terra—live in disturbing times, mixed-up times, troubling and turbid times. The task is to become capable, with each other in all of our bumptious kinds, of response. (...)

Staying with the trouble requires making oddkin; that is, we require each other in unexpected collaborations and combinations, in hot compost piles. We become-with each other or not at all. That kind of material semiotics is always situated, someplace and not noplacé, entangled and worldly. Alone, in our separate kinds of expertise and experience, we know both too much and too little, and so we succumb to despair or to hope, and neither is a sensible attitude. Neither despair nor hope is tuned to the senses, to mindful matter, to material semiotics, to mortal earthlings in thick copresence.

As a result, this generates performative publishing, curatorial processes, poetic software, experimental research and educational experiments.

*Staying with the trouble, Dona Haraway, Duke press, 2016*

To test the premise of working together, we have two years ago decided to shift our attention away from public programming (frontal) to something called worksessions.

Since 2014 5 Worksessions

Worksessions are intensive transdisciplinary moments, organised twice a year by Constant. We aim to provide conditions for participants with different types of expertise to temporarily link their practice and to develop ideas, prototypes and research projects together.

We primarily use Free, Libre and Open Source software and material that is available under Open Licenses and we have developed specific hardware and software setups that allow for a temporal immersion, and for the collective to build around the archive and documentation of the work.

30-40 people  
selection plus open call  
one week

slide : picture **GenderBlending**

GenderBlending invited body hackers, 3D theorists, game activists, queer designers and software feminists to experiment at the contact zones of gender and technology. Starting from the theoretical and material specifics of gender representations in a digital context, GenderBlending was an opportunity to develop prototypes for modelling digital bodies differently. More specifically, it allowed us to look at the way software conditions social readings and imaginations of gender.

With printing, scanning and modelling as points of departure, the worksession aimed to develop proposals for modelling digital bodies differently. Throughout the week we organised discussions, screenings, excursions, small workshops and presentations.

### *Reference library*

A collection of games, video works, documents, objects and images that was compiled as a reference library for the GenderBlending worksession. Featuring the Diversity Kickertable, a modded kicker game that reflects on issues of representation.

*slide: MakeHuman*

**slide: picture cQrrelations werk**

**Cqrrelations: Poetry to the statistician. Science to the dissident. Detox to the data-addict.**

Cqrrelations we described as “poetry to the statistician. science to the dissident. detox to the data-addict.”

**Cqrrelation is a typo-enhanced notion. It can also be pronounced as**

**crummylation,**

**crappylation,**

**queerylation...**

**A cqrrelation is a correlation with impurities, with missing, invisible, broken or suspicious data.**

**Differently from a correlation, a cqrrelation does not pretend to be neutral, its relation with digital traces is not innocent.**

These words try to hint at different shadowy elements of statistics and computing, and more specifically, at the problematic use of those disciplines to correlate big amounts of data and create models to determine reality and life based on parameters, criteria, numbers.

Allowing irony and speculation to contaminate empirical models and logical truths, a cqrrelation questions its capacity to produce models or truths, and happily undermines its own authority. It can also obstaculate the practice of a correlation, if deemed necessary.

During this work session a group of artists hackers, theorists, researchers looked into ways of inserting their intuition, senses, bodies and voices as more parameters in the calculations.

**Technogalactic Software Observatory (55)**

June 2017. Constant, association for art and media opens the Technogalactic Software Observatory (TSO) in the World Trade Center in Brussels.

Serving as a temporary study center, poetic training camp and walk-in clinic, the TSO invites artists, activists, engineers and designers to dive deeper into the social, economic and political/ideological aspects of the various softwares they practice.

The TSO is looking for performative and collaborative action-research methods for intervention in technological processes.

Planetary computing, inevitable progress of technology  
throw hands in the air, or disconnect.

Extend Software studies by asking if there are ways to talk about technology beyond programming languages, innovation-speak and solutionism?

What if we study digital networks, software and services based on their artistic quality, solidarity or intersectionality?

Bringing an intersectional perspective to those situated realities may bring both a problematisation and a complexity that nevertheless implies the recognition of mutual affections and shared potentials.

Seda Guerses computer-scientist, working on the consequences of the agile turn

Martino Morandi works at the intersections between art, technology and politics. His interests and projects revolve around the material conditions of technologies and their genealogies, using non-hegemonic paradigms like conviviality, semi-efficiency, dys-functioning. He collaborates with [LAG](#) in Amsterdam and [Constant VZW](#) in Brussels.

quotes:

*Organizing information is never innocent.*

*Colonization without archives is a purely military affair, a barbaric enterprise. How would Google look without a Cultural Institute whose mission is helping to “preserve and promote culture online to make it accessible to the world”? It merely would be pure accumulation and profit. The Capitalocene, as articulated by Donna Haraway, following Jason Moore, is a term that describes the spirit of accumulation on a planetary scale, or “profit above all else” and “the logical extension of the surplus value accumulated through colonialism and slavery.”*

*(Intercolonial technogalactic, Geraldine Juárez. in Mondotheque, Constant Verlag 2016)*

*The interface replaces the conflict behind the construction of the collections and the violence of taxonomy. The interface is the opposite of complexity; its goal is to make the exploration of information convenient. An interface will always fail at communicating the context of the information it displays, in other words, its history. Interface*

*simplicity as a new type of colonial monu-mentality. What's behind the interface is the database.*

*Mike Pepi asks in an essay in e-flux: Is the museum a database? (2) No. Is the Google Cultural Institute a database? Yes. The impulse driving the database is that of the archive. The database does not replace the archive or the collection; it merely evokes it, to paraphrase art theorist André Malraux. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, knowledge was centred around the table. (1) The database—full of tables—is still the centre, and like the archive “is very much a human problem, not a system problem.” (2)*

*1: Michel Foucault, The Order of Things: An Archeology of Human Sciences, trans. Alan Sheridan (London, Routledge, 2002), 82*

*2: Mike Pepi, “Is the Museum a Data-base? Institutional Conditions in Net Utopia.”*

*Institutional culture is part of a specific way of “seeing art,” and museums have always organized information in an imperial way. In Wallace’s period, objects brought to Europe from the colonies were used to create museums filled with what colonizers considered “cultural treasures” and “heritage.” Google is merely the techno-colonial version of this same spirit, offering “tools” to preserve and make accessible their particular version of art and history, organized in their own way through their own agenda for their own purposes, which happen to include economic benefits for their “partners.”*

## **WOLFGANG ERNST**

*The digitisation of vast amounts of archival records brings a creative chance. Applying creative algorithms to experiment with new forms of navigating enormous amounts of archival signals and data (textual or audio-visual) results in new insights by mathematical intelligence like entropy values, stochastic analysis and similarity-based retrieval. Such operations are possible in computational space without destroying the material and symbolic order of the existing archive.*

## **L’INTERNATIONALE ONLINE – WOLFGANG ERNST – 10RADICALLY DE-HISTORICISING THE ARCHIVE – WOLFGANG ERNST**

*Contrary to the archives of physical memory media (paper records, celluloid film, magnetic tape) characterised by limitations of access due to the fragile nature of these documents (Prelinger 2009, p. 271), the current liberal, broadened, electronically-biased (thus liberated from spatial and material restrictions) use of the term archive, the online data collections labeled archives could in fact, as Frank Kessler and Mirko Tobias Schäfer proposed, be better characterised as perpetual transmission rather than permanent storage (Kessler & Schäfer, p. 276). What used to be sacred spaces, secluded from public insight – the arcana of political administration and of their archival memory – is now directly wired to the communication circuit of the present. The archive*

*loses its temporal exclusivity as a space remote from the immediate present.*

AN

### **Diversions: collaboration, divergence and the digital archive**

DiVersions is inspired by the way versions are inscribed in daily software-practice, and explores how parallel to their conventional narrative of collaboration and consensus they can produce divergent histories through supporting difference. This one week session is organised by Constant and hosted by the [Royal Museum of Art and History](#) in Brussels.

The Museum was at that moment, like all other federal museums in Belgium, in the final stages of digitizing its very diverse collection: some 330,000 objects including clay tablets, tapestries, mummies, ancient jewellery, vases, coins were inventoried by the time we arrived.

Their concrete practices of art-history and digitisation technologies were put in relation with the reflections, prototypes and other types of experiments generated during the worksession.

Version-control systems, Wikis, Etherpads and other digital writing tools save log files and 'diffs' routinely, potentially changing linear relations between original and copy, redefining questions of authorship and the archive through technological conditions.

Meticulously logged workflows promise to make the process of shared editing a transparent process because any action can be reversed or repeated at any time, and errors or unwanted inputs can be later corrected.

But what types of alternative collectivity do they make possible and impossible?

How can we use these timelines, histories, traces not just in terms of safeguarding production, but for other ways of inscribing multiplicity and variety?

Situated post-colonial critique

A rethinking of the digital collections along the lines of possibility and uncertainty

A catalogue rewritten from the perspective of the object

## DISOBEDIANT ACTION RESEARCH

Yesterday: a meeting with academic researchers and artists and designers. We tried to come to grips with how to change our research strategies so we could have something to say back to the omnipresence of The Cloud.

At the last round, one of the participants sighed: I wished there were more spaces like this. Where you could come as you are, without the need to battle for your discipline, and your position.

Need to build situations for extra-academic research. Or Artistic research, (not the artist research) that is designed from the ground up for every new situation.

Transdisciplinary, interdisciplinary – or even better: rigorously undisciplined.

Where intersectionality coincides with interdisciplinarity and collaboration in order to produce 'things' or has consequences that are not there to be appropriated, because they belong to the situation itself that produces them.

Where you can come as you are, to work on collective, speculative, wild but urgent kinds of research

This kind of research only influences the daily social, political, economic or scientific reality by detour, by unsettling its self-reflection and imagination(s).

This is where we started to think about the term Disobedient-action research.

It invokes disobedient practices of mediation, from activist discourse entering an academic paper, to a bugreport on systemic issues in a software platform, from interface experiment to a “critical fork” of a project that deserves to be interrogated, commented upon and re-narrated.

As my partner-in-crime Jara Rocha would have it:

In an action-based approach, the passive imaginaries of the probable mutate into active imaginations for what is possible.

It is all a matter of imagination:

when calling for not-only-representational approaches, the passive imaginaries of the probable are too often overloaded with active imaginations of the possible. It is precisely through an act of disobedience that the potentiality of the possible opens up.

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