

Design Fiction: "Speculative" exhibition, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions

***WELL, THIS THING** is so entirely of-the-moment that it rather obviously had to happen. LACE is the place.

<http://www.digicult.it/digimag/article.asp?id=2179>

"Speculative", a collective exhibition organized at LACE – Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions – on display from last June 16th to August 28th, (((that was quite some time ago, so it must be "atemporal" as well))) finely resonate with the uncertain and psychotic times we are living in, shaken by financial breakdowns, massive firings, and environmental disasters.

While the so-called "establishment" (the one percent of people gaining huge earnings from financial speculations) (((that part figures))) is trying to hush protesters occupying tens of American squares with the help of condescending mainstream networks (see the "Occupy Wall Street" movement spreading all over the world – <https://occupywallst.org/>), artists, researchers, and designers are wondering about the present and looking for future scenarios.

"Zach Blas and Christopher O'Leary, curators of the exhibition, have put

together a team of artists and designers – the most part students from UCLA's Department of Design Media Arts (((that figures, too))) – who use strategies and aesthetics borrowed from science fiction, speculative design, and situational practices in order to underline the disorders of contemporary era and try to define alternative exit strategies. (((Okay, now I want you to sit down and define the current difference between "science fiction, speculative design and situational practices." No no, not there. You have to do that at a demo, with a mobile, with Twitter and a camera.)))

"That's what the statement for the exhibition catalogue runs:

"Nowadays, we see this world as an unliveable place on the edge of a total reconfiguration. (((Especially if you're leaving your school and facing a job market.))) From the world economic crisis to the growing forms of hate and control, until the wasting of the heart, new frontiers and cages scare the world as well as the field of information technology and biology. The commercialization of life, culture, body and heart is the same all over the world. Notwithstanding this, we believe that inside such un-liveability lies the potential to act and programme new worlds and lives."

"Actually, we are watching new kind of protests emerging everywhere, from the call to arms of militant groups like The Invisible Committee (authors of The Coming Insurrection, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Coming_Insurrection) to the student protests, to the insurrections of the Arabic spring, and the activism of WikiLeaks and Anonymous. "Speculative" is a unifying force joining the work on display and calling up the potential of political, cultural, sexual, technological, biological, economic, and ecological world we all want." (((That program's chances of success might soar if that sentence was grammatical. However, given that this is from Digicult, it may have been written in Italian.)))

"Almost all the works are world premiere, or produced in the last two or three years, and they are characterized by different techniques, styles, and perspectives. Among the most "situational" works for style and language, the work by Casey Alt (who's used to investigate the way computer interfaces transmit power and culture) pivots around a caustic criticism of commercial design intended as strategy to engineer a social control.

"In his project Slightly Sociopathic Software (2007), Casey Alt uses the aesthetic feature of detournement to underline the (psycho) social and schizophrenic aberrations emerging from the lethal blending of corporative ethics and amoral use of social networks. The author makes up a fictitious brand, VacilLogix, whose mission is, in his words, "to encourage sociopathy, one of the main driving forces of human evolution."

"The mission of VacilLogix runs: "the best way to make a profit is contributing to deep cultural problems with innovative solutions, after all, it is not so hard to understand that our world is facing huge cultural problems. Anyway, we see such challenges as terrific chances to profit. Our confidence in the project is based on the conviction that sociopathy has ever existed since social network came along." The main products of VacilLogix are softwares "taking advantage of social networks' power in order to get around social rules." The company produces four killer-applications (Deceptionist™, EntitlementManager™, StalkBroker™ and StatusGuard™) "giving to people the sociopathic attitude leading to success".

"Claudia Salamanca's piece, Material Evidence (<http://www.laclud.com/?p=116>) is similar in intent less "situational" in the approach. Claudia, a Colombian artist currently working on her research doctorate at the Rhetoric Department at the Berkley University, investigate notions of death and body in relations to politics

and power structures. In Material Evidence, she employs a video-document of the Colombian Government's Technical Investigation Team showing a standard identification procedure of a policeman. Her revision proposes the introduction of a disturbing element, a sort of "black hole", moving in the video frame.

"The inquiry on the relationships between man and environment, is central to the work of Pinar Yoldas, a Turkish artist graduated at the UCLA in 2009. Her project SuperMammal™ , NeoLabium™ and other species of excess (2011) - <http://pinaryoldas.info> is a series of specimen in small chemical-lab-like transparent vases, whose forms and physiologies are inspired by possible reproductive mutations of Mother Nature...."