

## **A Third Place: the And Or Project**

### **Introduction**

And Or (&/) is a research project and digital space reimagining the relationship between art, interpretation, exhibition, and theory. We are a collective of three: an artist, literary studies scholar, and art historian who, during the course of ongoing interdisciplinary dialogues, opted to generate a collaborative space rather than remain eternal guests in each other's domains. And Or is both an online exhibition project and itself an investigatory work, inviting collaborators and commissioned contributors to critically experiment with one another's work in an online context. In establishing new ground within the dematerialized realm of digital, we seek to create a third space where writing and art can be brought together in new configurations. As the conditions of communication and information-sharing have been irrevocably altered by the digital, it has become necessary to reconsider the structure and function of the museum/exhibition space and to redefine the roles of both creator and user. This is particularly true as more "digital natives" and millennials enter the realm of art-making/viewing and bring to it their expectations for individualized and interactive content. As part of our approach, we have confronted the necessity of interrogating the relative positions of the curator and the viewer.

The realm of And Or is designed to function tangentially to existing modes of circulation, touching on curation, exhibition, publication, and art without coming firmly to rest within territory occupied by any one of those familiar enterprises. In this laboratory setting, we have sought to re-envision the triangular relationship between artist, curator, and viewer. Our projects are designed to allow for open exploration of component units without the linearity of a published text, yet we do not conceal our curatorial role, nor do we assume a pretext of neutrality. Through content, design, and implementation, it is our goal to create a space that has been markedly mediated and yet remains open to reinterpretation, rearrangement, and renegotiation.

This essay discusses the theoretical and artistic underpinnings of the And Or project and traces the formulation of our current, past, and future production in this exploration of a third space and an alternative art experience. While the three editors function independently within their disciplinary spheres, in our collaborative efforts we exist in between these modes of scholarship. We exhibit art, but we are not simply an exhibition space; we theorize and research, but we do not publish traditional scholarship; we interrogate the relationship between image and text, but we ask more questions than we resolve; we generate new work, but we are not necessarily artists. Instead, we forge a new hybrid of interactive visual space, where we continually negotiate our role in relation to the artist/writer and viewer.

We wish to share some reflections on how this type of experiment fits within the current institutional structures of publication and exhibition. Current institutionally validated structures strongly favor sequences of journal articles, museum exhibitions, exhibition catalogues in which the text stands as interpreter and validator for art. This, after all, is how canons are made. The And Or project seeks to test whether other structures and formats can hold the same level of importance, authority and rigor. We are not, of course, a lone voice in this endeavor, and we acknowledge that we are able to enter this discussion as a result of our negotiation of these existing validations. We are all early-career scholars, with defended doctorates and peer-reviewed publications behind us, who aim to challenge a perceived status quo—not to demolish, but support reflexivity.

As a collective without a basis within a single institution, we form interstitial networks between and beyond our individual institutions in order to locate and source funding, publication opportunities, research possibilities, and technical resources. We are able to maneuver independently, yet our independence is not complete. Questions of funding, partnerships, infrastructure, and review form a central axis of our research and inquiry. In this article we will trace two strains of research that are central to the And Or project. The first is the formulation of this third space and our continuing renegotiation of a series of binary relationships, including those between art and text, viewer and work, exhibition and publication, digital and analogue, stimulus and response. The second line of

questioning revolves around the institutional structures of exhibition, publication, and archival practices. These research goals continually intersect and diverge, providing the common thread between our exhibitions and our future goals.

### **What is the And Or project?**

And Or is a collective research project, with three permanent members and a rotating cast of collaborators. We collaboratively produce essays, manifestos, and conference presentations with two main research goals: (1) rethinking the relationship between the art and the viewer and (2) rethinking the structure of exhibition/publication/archive practices. And Or is also a practice-led investigation of these research aims centered on our digital exhibition space, a speculative forum that seeks to bring together art and writing in a non-linear manner, avoiding an authoritative subject position and authorial voice and allowing the user to navigate content on equivalent terms. The genesis of the project was our desire to explore alternatives to online art magazines, which are all too often digital transpositions of traditional print forms, without any disruption to the order of image and text, or the relationship between information presented and the viewer. While some projects, notably Triple Canopy, have innovated the design of their website beyond the static page or screen, we wish to further dismantle and rethink how these components can be assembled. We also wanted the form of the project to reflect our interest in research practice and the attempt to make transparent the processes of investigation and collaboration that lie behind the documents and artworks that meet the public eye in exhibition.

The first of our key points of investigation was to ask how this virtual space should be structured to allow for an anti-hierarchical system of presentation. Having editors from the three fields of art history, fine art, and literary studies—fields which are sometimes considered to be in conflict, but which are also interdependent—has required co-authoring strategies and a reconciliation of the varied research interests and methodologies that we each bring to the table. We have also needed to negotiate the physical and psychical complications of collaborating across geographic locations and time zones (we are currently based in Germany, the UK, and the US) and beyond the

confines of the institution. Our projects to date (outlined in detail below) have only been possible online, and our existence as a digital space is critical to this exploration, provoking questions of site-specificity and digitality. The notion of the site-specific was central to our second exhibition, *Pacific Binaries*, which focused on both the myths and the spaces of Los Angeles, but also questioned the online site of its own exhibition, engaging in a playful relationship between the analogue form of the photo book and the digital tiles of a WordPress template.

### **Previous and upcoming exhibitions**

The initial phase of the *And Or* project took us approximately two years, during which the editorial team defined key research questions around architectures of power, disciplinary boundaries, and practice-led research and identified potential collaborators. These discussions led to the commission of our opening show, *Command Plus*, which was available online for three months, from February to May 2014. The project comprised a series of programmed animations by code artist Molly Morin based on poems and critical texts; a series of written responses by Welsh poet Nia Davies; a critical essay written by the co-editors; and website design by Nora O'Murchú and Alice Poulalion.

<FIGURE 1 HERE>

The process of putting together the show was profoundly collaborative, and involved getting not only the right people together but the right texts. We sought writing that suited Morin's vision, and which we hoped would provoke an innovative response. Morin was specifically seeking texts with a strong sense of place or landscape that spoke to her own work, and Nia Davies' writing, marked by abstraction combined with strong sense of place, stood out as a potential match. Taking the texts of Davies' poems, Morin used a web-crawler to wander link by link through the internet, to locate each word on other sites, using both the method and the material of the internet to form her work. The echoed words were represented in the animation by a pattern generated by complex numerical data referring to the geographical distances between host servers. The experience was different for each user dependent on their

geographical location, which was established using a geolocator—a feature that emerged as a key outcome of the conversations between artist and designer.

<FIGURE 2 HERE>

The concept of a feedback loop, which we now consider central to our curatorial practice, emerged from the collaborative processes of this show. The animation responded to the text of poems, and was itself responded to by new writing by Davies; this new text was then reentered into the process. The collaboration of equals—not only between poet and visual artist but between the editors/curators and participants—allowed the project to slide from image to text and back, smudge the clearly demarcated lines of authorship and exploit the morphology of code, further blurring the boundaries between text and image. Our web designer chose to present the works using simple navigation buttons and hyperlinks to move through the exhibition. This simplicity recalled a Web 1.0 aesthetic, and promoted a textual interface over the visually driven design more commonly seen today.

<FIGURE 3 HERE>

For second online exhibition, from August to October 2015, we presented a photo series on Los Angeles by Berlin-based photographer Anja Schaffner. New response writing was commissioned from Alison J. Carr, Roddy Lumsden, Monica Steinberg and Isabella Streffen, which responded to and reflected on the photographs and the imagined Los Angeles they invoke. The show considered the transformation from analogue to digital in considering whether such transitions are less problematic for photographers emerging since the 2000s. Schaffner shoots exclusively in traditional film, and her images prompt a longing for the tangibility of traditional photographs, or perhaps for the marker of difference between two modes. The distinction regained central importance as the exhibition provided access to Schaffner's images only in digital form. This paradox echoes the tensions of hosting an exhibition driven thematically by location, existing in the non-place of digital and coordinated by global participants external to the site.

<FIGURE 4 HERE>

New writing probed the issues of parafictionality, analogue vs. digital, placelessness, and the meaning of light that emerged in our editorial discussions about the photo series. We sought to open up an imaginary and re-imagined idea of Los Angeles in the interaction between word and image. This exhibition provided fewer opportunities to establish a “feedback loop” as the photo series was already complete, and there were limited options for the photographer to respond to the writing. Hence, this iteration of our project relied more heavily on the editorial dialogue in order to emphasize our collaborative goals. With regard to our web design, our choice to use a WordPress template was informed by budget constraints as well as our interest in using extant, easily accessible internet architectures to share and promote our content. We chose a non-linear presentation, with viewers required to click through a menu of photos to reveal the text behind each relevant image, establishing a circular relation between text and image that refused to set up a hierarchy between them.

<FIGURE 5 HERE>

In 2016 we published a remixed and re-evaluated recap of the exhibition, Pacific Binaries: Redux, in the *Journal of Images and Culture* theme issue “The Photobook in Digital Times,” strengthening our curatorial voice by adding our own commentary, at times both explicatory and obfuscatory, via the barely-graspable medium of audio. In remixing the show, we aimed to explore the nature of the digital photograph and the issues involved in its exhibition, emphasizing the inaccessibility of the photographic archive and the original materials from which the digital exhibition is extracted. In our new version of the show, we intensified our engagement with the themes of inaccessibility and distance by providing screenshots of the texts that formed part of the original. Despite being accessible to everyone with an internet-capable device, regardless of location, the exhibition deals with distance and inaccessibility: distance from the city; inaccessibility of the dreamed city; and the geographical separation of contributors (a separation that takes place also in time, from CET to PST). The show’s paradoxes echo

the tensions of hosting an exhibition driven thematically by location, existing in the non-place of digital and coordinated by global participants from outside the site. While the digital exhibition was only a temporary site, the trace of that show as preserved through this remix is highly subjective, mediated through low-resolution screenshots and disconnected audio, facing the fact that an archive cannot fully contain nor faithfully document the original exhibition.

<FIGURE 6 HERE>

Our third exhibition, tentatively titled *Work in Transit* and scheduled for fall 2017, will bring new work by artist Sara Schnadt into dialogue with authors and artists interested in mappings of circulation and mobility. The exhibition will involve the commission of a digital art project by Schnadt, *Travel Patterns*, which will provide an interactive web of flights between cities built through the viewer's navigation of the space. This new artwork will allow us to raise new and challenging questions about interactivity and digital presentation, and the relation between visual representation in the fine arts and the sciences. We have received funding to support the development of Schnadt's new work, including hiring a software engineer to collaborate with Schnadt to build the application. This represents a much more direct intervention into the potential of digital and a more expert engagement with the space than we have previously attempted, and we look forward to exploring these new avenues in theory and praxis. The show also engages with the question of how to publish or manifest the artwork in the physical realm, which represents the flip side of the Pacific Binaries process.

### **Background to the project**

As early career academics, we grew up with an initial iteration of the internet that was based on texts; we produced and shared writing via IRC channels, personal homepages, or Livejournal, for example, filling message boards with text and learning the operating systems and forum dialects that facilitated our connections across space and time. Web 2.0 has given pre-eminence to the visual, with its emphasis on live streaming and interactive virtual environments; still, this sparkling visual environment is still at a basic level made up of text. Code is text, after all, and WordPress's motto is "Code is Poetry."

The playing field may not be perfectly even in the way we typically engage with the internet, but digital media force an entirely new interdependence between written and visual forms of communication.

The digital realm is still comparatively fresh terrain for artists, art historians, curators and critics, particularly those involved in interdisciplinary exchanges, and we continue to wrangle with the uniqueness of the medium, its questions of public and private exchange, and the impact of its structures on the way we think and work. Neither the museum nor the exhibition catalogue have ever been ideologically or structurally neutral; They have always spoken authoritatively, ordering our experience of art through language and the controlled manipulation of our visual access to the work. With the explicit intent of neither replicating nor mirroring the historically-weighted hierarchies between our fields, And Or explores modes of interaction that address the locality and materiality of the digital. We wish to contribute to the changing spaces of exchange between creator, exhibitor, critic, and viewer, as discussed elsewhere in this anthology. Furthermore, rather than seeking to control or predict the outcome, we consciously allow for the space to grow and shift as new connections and possibilities are unveiled—rather like a constant feedback loop.

Working online and internationally, our collective and our collaborations are made possible and complicated by the digital. We aim to recognize and engage with the nature of these interactions, laying bare the frustrations and failures, but also the beautifully preserved conversations and messages that capture ephemeral ideas and exchanges that would be lost in recorded face-to-face conversations. We are able to facilitate conversations between collaborators, opening up the psycho-geographic space of the museum into an open realm where more unpredictable encounters may take place. Where the museum might reach a limit due to lending practices, or security (both of which are highly important to its symbolic status), and where interactions might be restricted by an organizational structure or by a tight curatorial programme, And Or's structure allows it to be flexible and improvisational. Where the required long planning times of museums naturally restrict their capacity to be responsive in the shorter-term, And Or is able to

move comparatively quickly and informally. Yet this space also requires careful tending, and we must be much more deliberate about inviting and maintaining contact within this collaborative digital space. Although the internet is, by nature, a network, we tend to experience much of its terrain as individuals, communicating through the intermediary keyboard and webcam; while wonderful surprises can emerge from the disembodied exchange of emails and Skype calls, there also exist the dangers of isolation and stagnation. Without the physical gravitas and gravitational center provided by an office, or the material traces of personal encounters, it requires a different kind of effort to produce the necessary momentum.

### **The digital museum**

As a relatively new space for museums to inhabit, the digital promises opportunities to create innovative systems of relationships between various actors and their work. A useful example is the structure of The Wrong digital art biennial, which uses social media sites to develop “digital pavilions” and echoes the temporary nature of the physical biennial by removing content completely outside the exhibition dates: as in Venice, if you show up a day late, you have missed it. Many but by no means all conventional digital-museum spaces attempt to replicate the experience of their physical space: an experience that is so highly constructed that its construction is almost invisible to the casual visitor. The strictures of the museological encounter, characterized by the constant reminder “do not touch”, still echo in legal notices that we cannot reproduce the imagery, and in missing hyperlinks. Of course, significant and ground-breaking work has been done to transform the museum from the apparently neutral and objective handmaiden of imperialism it once appeared to be, though there is still much work to do.

Digital spaces have a flexibility and fleetness of foot that traditional museums cannot emulate because of the needs of materials and personnel. However, just as a physical space has operations and structures that are appropriate, so does a digital space, and they do not necessarily overlap. Many of the world’s most prestigious museums have exquisitely ordered online representations of themselves, where a viewer can tour artifacts, search and request from catalogues, watch video demonstrations and talks,

retrieve images and buy from the shop at their leisure. They are brilliant and costly architectures that exploit some of the opportunities offered by digitality. They do not however address their own materiality (or demateriality) directly, and so the user is not led to question what they are made of, or why they are made like that; we are not encouraged to question their meaning; these spaces do not get to be temporary, or unruly; and they do not reflect on the accidental archives created by individual users on their own hard-drives. Failing to address their own materiality is equivalent to ignoring the symbolic power of museum architecture and spatial design.

The art we feature within the And Or project is split between works that originated as analogue objects and new media apps and programs. To compliment this play between the online and the physical, we have begun to explore the possibility of a non-digital record or exhibition. This is also integral to questions of the archive, discussed below.

### **The digital exhibition and the viewer**

One advantage offered by the digital space in contrast to the physical museum space is its greater potential for interactivity, turning the control of an experience to the viewer in a non-linear fashion. And Or's exhibitions are staged so that there is no directed path, no overarching thesis or argument. Instead, we aim to display the results of the collaborative and responsive process in a circular experience that allows for multiple points of entry, exploration, and departure. Our curatorial hand is constrained by our conscious choice of simple, cost-effective designs, yet we are also deliberate in revealing our process by including statements, reflections, and conversations from our planning process as part of the final result. In this, we seek to make transparent some of the decisions that are often obscured in a final product, but we also acknowledge that we obfuscate and complicate the space by not providing the viewer with a clear trajectory or cohesive intention. In Pacific Binaries the user was free to navigate the exhibition without much direction from the curators. Texts were hidden behind images and were revealed only when the user clicked the link; thus the show encouraged its viewers to undertake a process of discovery that in many cases left parts of it unrevealed.

### **And Or: A two-pronged investigation**

By embracing the uncertainties of a collaborative, digital, nonlinear approach, and incorporating these ambiguities into the structure of the project itself, And Or seeks to redefine curating as practice-based research. The resultant investigation produces a constellation of meanings that cannot be made known by other methods, which seek to articulate the implications for site-specific exhibition. This methodology is distinct from both the traditional notion of the artist (whose research is embodied by the art work) and the curator/scholar (whose research is in selecting artists, artworks, artefacts for exhibition), allowing us to experiment with methodologies from both disciplines. It also provides us the opportunity to investigate the processes and products of exhibition and publication; how they are legitimized and become sites of power in themselves; and to consider how these institutions might behave differently within the digital space.

A second strain of our investigation explores architectures of power in relation to the academy and the internet. This includes questions of democratic access and the authority that remains vested in print media. This issue of peer review is a critical one. We seek to function as a research group within the parameters of conventional academic enquiry. This means that our work needs to be explicable in terms of the tenure system in the US and the UK's Research Excellence Framework, which requires that research be assessed against a bench-mark of "international significance". Guidelines published by the College Art Association in January 2016, the result of a grant by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, have provided some information to how digital works should be evaluated for promotion and tenure within the American system. The institutional structures of tenure and promotions at the individual university level and the academic bias for print publications and physical exhibitions, however, complicate the rapid adoption of these recommendations.

Thus, while artists are still required to show, and writers and academics to publish, in the eyes of many institutions the online forum has not yet achieved the credibility of print or the museum. Neither have comprehensive criteria been established for the evaluation of creative projects that deviate from the traditional gallery exhibition or catalogue. With a project such as ours, which crosses disciplinary boundaries and positions itself outside of

any legitimizing institution, we are forced to construct a new critical space supportive of the scholarly seriousness merited by our collaborators and necessary for their research profiles. Independent as we are, our limited funding requires us to rely on academic institutions to fund our collaborators; this obliges us to produce measurable evidence in terms that can be understood within more traditional scholarly contexts. We aim to emulate rather than discard the conditions of peer review, even as we question their current configuration. And Or functions as a method of research into what experimental work can be done within these structures. It is an investigation into the possibilities and complexities of early career academia, as we—all emergent scholars—identify our routes to excellence through traditional research forums, as well as those which have more recently been admitted into the academy. We are aware that our ability to successfully navigate these waters will have an impact not only on our own careers, but on those scholars who come after us, working at the margins of what is approved. The stakes then are unusually high.

Two important interconnected issues must be mentioned: finances and time. As early career scholars we are still building our experience in grant capture. Having recently received our first academic grant, and in the midst of preparing future applications, this has been a productive line of contemplation; now that we are deciphering this institutional language, we are better able to secure the funding that will allow for further exploration in this vein. The amorphous nature of our project disqualifies us for certain types of institutional funding, therefore restricting our collaborations and research to those who are comparatively economically and educationally privileged, and we are simultaneously grateful to those who have given their time and expertise. Time is also a valuable and contested commodity.

### **From Web 1.0 to the post-internet museum**

It is possible to trace the generation of And Or's investigation back to the frustrations of a slow internet connection. Our intention to post images of work-in-progress devolved into small pieces of text posted on the Twitter platform: attempts to share and disseminate were frustrated by technology operating at a glacial pace, reminding us of the hardware skeletons under the virtual skins of Web 2.0, re-situating us where images are replaced by words. The relationship

between art and words, and the authority of both as embodied by the cousin disciplines of fine art and art history, is a foundational enquiry for And Or. The context and practice of art production has been profoundly changed by the fact of the internet. Artists have been making digital works since the 1950s, but since the development of Web 2.0 and a broader access to internet technologies, there has been an explosion in the range and volume of digital works produced, and subsequent questions regarding the quality and authenticity of such works. Art is more accessible than ever. From artworks that draw on digitally-collected data to create distinctly analogue objects, to those created by computer viruses and social media bots, to images of museum collections and virtual tours of virtual galleries, we can see and experience every possible permutation of art at the click of a mouse.

The internet has reinvented our experience of art, replacing the ubiquitous viewer with a user, a participant, a number, a node, a protocol, splicing the vocabulary of dialogical and relational art practices with a terminology of the network. The “viewer” as articulated in art writing of the twentieth century is now the one who accesses: we load, we scroll, we watch, we follow, we pay, we inhabit the unreal spaces of Oculus Rift, we visit alternative versions of galleries in game-spaces without leaving our desks, our personal internal museums (to borrow a metaphor from Ralph Rugoff in “The Scene of The Crime”) are less structured by geography than ever before. It is the repetitious click that brings us these experiences: could we argue that the “clicker” is the new “viewer”?

This shift brings us to territory that is both familiar and unfamiliar. We have not made a complete break with the conventions or rituals of the physical art world; indeed, one could critique the digital for its failure to affect significant change in the power structures of art exchange and the art economy. So if these dynamics mirror those of the traditional art world, what is it about the digital that makes for such a different experience? After all, we still encounter many online artworks with our eyes, and the structure of diverse organizations and occasions that comprises the world of post-internet art is still an uncanny echo of the chains of salerooms, galleries, and collectors with which we are so familiar. The digital realm does not operate independently of its analogue counterpart and its value-creation practices function in a parallel fashion. Paddle 8, for example, has demonstrated that there is a trade in the

dematerialized as well as in large paintings, and in 2016, the Whitney Museum of American Art acquired the post-internet work *Ways of Something*, conferring on it a value in dollars as well as cultural capital, as though the act of collection immediately converts intangible binary code into a material trace.

Another of our key enquiries, then, is into the encounter with the material that is accessed by the click, which we might call a reimagining of the viewer. In our second exhibition, *Pacific Binaries* (August 1 – 1 October 2015), photographs by Anja Schaffner were displayed in a grid format that the reader could navigate at will. Some of the images were duplicated, and clicking on these duplicates led to another page featuring a response text commissioned from one of our collaborating writers. The three editors considered that click—that deliberate act of requesting access—to be the completion of the artists’ work, almost as though access was a form of accessioning (to toy with Rugoff’s metaphor a little more). In the exhibition *Command Plus*, the collaboration of a commissioned artist and writer generated a geo-location tool: what the viewer saw was dependent on their physical position in the concrete world, bringing an essential but largely unremarked aspect of the internet into sharp focus. Historically, our opportunities to see art have been predicated on our economic power and ability to both travel and cross borders, and disperse time. Here, our opportunities to access the work are truncated by different geo-physical conditions, political regimes, and still, as always, economics. If internet art represents a democracy it is a deeply flawed one.

Similarly confounding questions of real and digital space with the exhibition *Pacific Binaries* (August 1 – 1 October 2015), *And Or’s* editors encouraged viewers to explore an imaginary pre-vanished Los Angeles from their ambulant devices. Our artist—Berlin-based photographer Anja Schaffner—works exclusively in analogue media and this was her first foray into shifting her chemical burns and dodges into a string of noughts and ones. The writers that were commissioned to complicate Schaffner’s proposed representation of this site were located remotely, may never have travelled to Los Angeles except in their imagination, and may never be eligible to travel to Los Angeles at all. Their experiences of the Angeleno twilight may have come from film, television, or Google Street View, options that are equally open to our “clickers” depending on our capacity to pay for hardware or access public libraries. They can

move between image, and text, and other open tabs to try to locate the exact site of the image, luxuriating in the possibilities opened to them by the click.

Each of our exhibitions or outputs (as we are encouraged to describe their institutional function) articulates a different relationship between art and viewer, drawing on the theories and propositions of relational practices. It is worth reminding the reader here, that as well as a “we” we are three distinct “I”s, who have different perspectives on questions of viewing and value, nurtured through our own disciplinary conventions. And Or is a space for investigating and synthesizing these differences and tensions, and each editor not only holds a different interpretation of how the works operate, but brings a different set of critical tools, and a different relationship with both internet and click. It is our hope, through the practice of constructing this experimental space and writing about the implications and results of our collaborations, to contribute to how future artists, writers, and curators might consider the creation and staging of artist encounters.

Another issue, bound to institutional review and questions of scholarly repute, is the durability and archival presence of our work. Unlike a printed publication or physical object, there is no permanent mark created by our contributors, the planning processes, or the exhibition. Understanding that the internet is not an eternal repository, but a system that requires maintenance and ongoing support, we, And Or’s three editors, do not intend for our projects to live indefinitely in the digital. They are, like their concrete counterparts, scheduled to be on show for a certain period and then removed. Given that much of what we show, however, is new material that has been generated by the collaborative process, when the show is removed from the internet, the work is in danger of disappearing.

### **And Or and the archive**

And Or’s future plans include an investigation into archiving the digital experience in a mode that will differ from current models of digital or print archives. The preservation of some element of the original experience itself will generate an independent work, creating the possibility that the archive will become another artwork. This inquiry mirrors

our curatorial interest in transparency, obfuscation, and mediation: our proposed archives will not merely replicate exhibitions in their entirety, nor present as firmly edited and static an entity as a catalogue. The conditions of these archives will likely only emerge as they are developed and released, but this preservation of the non-linear experience as well as the material of the exhibitions will be central to our investigation. Any archive is a curated product, as decisions are made in terms of content and format; the three of us intend to overtly mediate the archives of our exhibitions, to engage with that process of document and creation in terms visible to the viewer.

Connected to the concept of the archive is the return to an exhibition, the creation of a second or third iteration of the show under new conditions and in a new context. We are equally invested in our enquiry into the archive, and like Cummings and Lewandowska in “From Enthusiasm to Creative Commons” we embrace “taking liberties with the endless process of interpretation” to challenge the notions of “curatorial responsibility” and deference to the artist’s imagined intent (see *Pacific Binaries Redux*, discussed below). And Or’s editors seek to reflect the experience both of the “meat-space” exhibition and the conditions of being online with our approach to the archival.

It can be argued that the archive has been a key trend in contemporary art for the last hundred years, as Foster has in *The Archival Impulse* (2004). Artists have predominantly subverted and mirrored the processes, aims, and aesthetics of museum collections to discuss the value and importance of materials, and objects and how they are defined; to propose new affective associations; to foreground the partial and the fragmentary; to reveal implicit power relations. The challenge of gonzo archiving, however, is clearly shown by the internet’s cacophony of unregulated, unapproved, and unreliably-sourced information. There are no blanket conventions for peer review online. From crowd-sourced pseudo-encyclopedias like Wikipedia that academics routinely dissuade their students from citing, to archive.org and the Wayback Machine, the decisions that are so critical for material archives are circumvented, creating a huge archive with no coherent organizing principles. It is difficult to know how to assign value and importance to any material in this context.

## **Conclusion**

As a research project, our investigation runs along the dual exploratory tracks of reimagining the relationship between art and the viewer, and rethinking the overlapping structures of exhibition, publication, and archive practices. As an active exhibition space, And Or's editors seek to provide an innovative digital collaborative forum situated at the interstices between online and offline, designed to allow us to process and product, image and text, viewer and work, exhibition and publication, and between multiple institutions. Our re-imagination of the exhibition space explores the transformative potential of the internet on concepts of the museum, the work of art, and collaborative creative and curatorial practice. The project has provided a valuable research outlet for its three central editors and for our collaborators, generating unexpected and innovative encounters between code artist and poet, performance artist and software engineer, or academic and art writer. The project has formed a counterpoint to our individual research that has both pushed us in new directions and allowed us to establish interstitial, inter-institutional networks and connections that have enriched and enlivened our personal specialisms. To our readers, viewers, and users we offer an innovative body of research on exhibition in the digital era by publication and practice within a range of forums.

Our commitment to exploration of an interstitial digital space as a locus for research, collaboration, and exhibition has led to its share of frustrations, delays, and failures, as we have grappled with unreliable technology, patchy video calls, and budget constraints. On the other hand, our exploration of the digital space has allowed us a deep flexibility and freedom in our working practices as well as our research directions and outcome. We hope our work will provide a model for future projects, and our learning curve within the space will enable us to develop best practices for digital collaboration, exhibition, and access to peer review. And Or began in 2012 and we presented our first project in 2014, not so very long ago. But Internet Time is rather like dog time, seven years for every calendar year that passes. The aims, context, organizations, and methodologies to which we initially responded have significantly changed. If a year is a long time in politics, it is almost forever in the digital realm. We look forward to developing our practices of collaborative intervention into digital space in the future.

### **List of illustrations**

Figure 1. Landing page, Command Plus

Figure 2. Molly Morin, *Blue Line* (2014), interactive code.

Figure 3. Molly Morin with text by Nia Davies, *Second Response (A Reworking)/Reflecting on Code* (2014).

Figure 4. Anja Schaffner, *Rebecca on El Centro Avenue. Hollywood*, 2009.

Figure 5. Pacific Binaries Landing Page.

Figure 6. And Or Project, Screenshot from “Pacific Binaries Redux,” *VASA Journal on Images and Culture* (2016).

## Suggested Readings

And Or Project. "Pacific Binaries Redux," *VASA Journal on Images and Culture*. doi: [http://vjic.org/vjic2/?page\\_id=4767](http://vjic.org/vjic2/?page_id=4767).

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