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non-western* and *garland
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As an artist and curator I greeted the eruption of the internet with enthusiasm, seeing it as a medium with specific qualities and materialities. By 1994 I was using email-address-like titles for an exhibition in Singapore, and the CeBit, Germany in 1995 heralded a trajectory where internet artworks formed an integral part of all my new media curated projects to come. My interest in the material possibilities of different media began with photography, 16mm film and super 8, to analogue Hi8 video, moving into digital photography, video and internet.

Two videos I made exemplify a moving towards this digital/online worldview. *lovehotel: formulation for the emergence of the new* (2000) combined Hi8 and digital video footage with a variety of texts written from 1994 to 1997 by frontier cyberfeminist Francesca Da Rimini focusing on her online experiences at LambdaMOO (founded in the early 90s, it is the oldest text-based virtual reality system to which multiple users are connected simultaneously); and *eurovision* (2001) which I saw as template for the possibilities of online video in terms of the intersections of narrative, composition and non/linearity.

My 1995 MFA looked at pre-internet art and technology in southeast Asia. I was curious as to what kind of spaces different technologies and mediums invited, particularly those relating to identity and geopolitics. These spatial and aesthetic qualities, opening up new ways of seeing-*through* the medium, formed the basis of my 2003 PhD dissertation and were also explored in curated projects such as *PROBE*, the first new media arts exhibition in China in 1999. Such questions continue today in my work. *non-western* was part of the Video Vortex Split 2009 exhibition and what follows here is the gist of the presentation about that work and another project, *garland*.

I finished *non-western* in December 2008. It is a video for three-screen installation and is also on the internet where the five parts or 'chapters' can be accessed in any order, via five different websites.

The genesis for *non-western* goes back to March 2005 with *LivingTomorrow*. Produced as artist-in-residence at NIMk it was a three-screen video database work with a random-access overlay. The idea was that one could access it directly from the server in gallery space but also bring it to an (urban) screen near you via the internet. *LivingTomorrow* pivoted centrally around the murder of

Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh by Mohammed Bouyeri in Amsterdam in 2004. I cut-up scenes from the American soap opera *The Bold and the Beautiful* and added my own subtitles to create a narrative that could be seen in any order. There were also images of the Dutch urban and rural landscape and those which spoke to the migrant culture I was surrounded by, and indeed part of – focusing on the swirling glorious colour and pattern in muslim women's headscarves.

In 2006 in Berlin I made a short video *TOR*, looking into the largely immigrant faces of people in the home-crowd gathered to celebrate their win over Argentina in the semi-final of the World Cup. *TOR* begged the question: 'who, now are the Germans?'

non-western built on this interest in national identity and migration. In late 2006 I was invited into a project set in the 'Green Heart', an area bounded by Utrecht, Amsterdam, Den Hague and Rotterdam and stretching south to Gouda. Containing the remnants of what was once a strong farming community the Green Heart still feels a bit wild but is rapidly filling up with highways, train lines, electricity poles and new housing developments. What was striking was the almost total absence of migrants living there. *non-western* began as a response to this.

Early in 2007 I'd registered a number of URLS without knowing exactly why, with names like undergrowth.eu, the-shadowlands.eu, allochtoonen.eu. mysafehouse.eu and off-the-radar.com. These later became the 'chapter headings' of the five sections of *non-western*. At the time I was unsure of the spelling of allochtonen. Allochtoon, in Dutch, signifies 'foreigner', and allochtonen.nl was taken, however the mistakenly spelt 'allochtoonen' was available. Checking on the internet I found hundreds of cases of the same mistake, mainly made by other allochtonen. I registered the mispelling.

I started gathering fragments for the work, video footage from the train to Gouda from Amsterdam and also vast amounts of photographs that I'd taken in the area. I had the idea *to rinse this material through the internet*, give it a wash out there and then bring it back in to dry. The photographs were strung together into QT H262 movie files at various compression rates (ie high, medium and low), uploaded to YouTube -- going through their proprietary compression -- then downloaded and inserted into the work's video fabric.

In the first part of *non-western* these stills are accompanied by a voice, my voice, reciting the Nicene Creed, written in AD 325. I had my reasons. Mainly they were to do with the power of the voice, and how, in this religious context it can invoke embodiment of those past, and of communities past. It was to do with the relation of the voice to the embodied imagination. This incantation of the ancient Christian creed is set against images of what could be thought of as classic Dutch landscapes. The fact that the creed was adopted by the first ecumenical council in Nicaea, Turkey is a curious irony given that Turkish (and all) migrants

in The Netherlands (NL) were being increasingly 'othered' in Dutch society – 2008 was the time of the rise and rise of Geert Wilders.

Fragments from the Dutch soap *Goede Tijd Slechte Tijd* were combined with facts found online to do with the attitude of the Dutch towards migrants. A few scenes from *Floris*, a Dutch series from the sixties directed by Paul Verhoeven and starring Rutger Hauer as medieval knight was added to the mix. A theme began emerging around the entity of Rutger Hauer, performing the quintessence of Dutchness. This was then enhanced by including a scene from another Verhoeven film *Soldier of Orange* where Hauer has to prove to the German occupiers he is genuinely Dutch by saying various difficult Dutch words.

And then there was *Blade Runner*. I would say that the whole work pivots on these included fragments. In the film from Philip K. Dick's book, Rutger Hauer plays replicant leader Roy Batty. Instrumentalising Hauer-as-replicant in this way in *non-western* calls into question what is Dutch and what is not, a debate which was then and is still raging in NL.

The image meltdown of the Blade Runner fragments occurred when the film changed formats/codecs and seemed to get jagged on the code signaling movement within the frame. I enhanced this accidental effect by running it backwards and forwards again in After Effects in high resolution. *non-western* plays with various codecs throughout the piece, plays with their translation from one to another and with the aesthetics of their misinterpretation. You could also say that this mistranslation serves to make the images strange, to 'other' them, to render them allochtoon(en).

non-western seemed to fall neatly into five sections. The URLs became chapter headings, and each was uploaded onto one of the five sites, able to then be viewed in any order. There was also the linear three-screen installation version.

The second project I will discuss is one curated by Marina Fokidis for the Pulse Art Fair NY in 2009. Participant artists had to devise a playlist up to 30 minutes of YouTube clips, blurring the roles of curator and artist.

How to approach YouTube? I had in mind a whole lot of different ways to go. I sat down in front of YouTube to begin, and absent-mindedly played a 'favourite' from my own YouTube site, the Laughing Clowns song *Eternally Yours*. YouTube, as it does, spat up a few suggestions based on my selection. I clicked through their suggestions -- listening and looking at clips of bands from the eighties in Australia while still working on my paper list of where I thought I wanted to go. Soon I stopped writing ideas on the paper list and followed links. Selecting the song *I Touch Myself* by the Divinyls I was startled to find hundreds of versions of people covering the song, with attitudes ranging from hilarity to poignancy. Intrigued, I knew I'd found my playlist.

Then it was just a process of sorting and selection, settling finally on clips where people actually sing, not just mime. This song, with lyrics 'I touch myself, thinking about you' was seemingly a private fantasy rendered public. One after another people were seen in their rooms singing to an unknown you. There were also choirs singing the song, bands, tipsy singers in bars and at weddings, but mainly it was the solitary singer at home that interested me. Reaching out, sliding across windows and doors, seeking with their voice transformation through embodiment. The selection seemed to say a lot about YouTube, about the banality and ordinariness of most of the uploads but...the humanity!

I called the playlist *garland*, like a garland of flowers strung together on the same rope, echoing the internet's world of self-similarity, the same yet with variation, where being is pursued by automated software shadows.

Upon receipt of the playlists from the artists, curator Marina Fokidis immediately downloaded the clips and strung them together in video files for playing in the Pulse exhibition. Quite quickly clips were taken offline by users, not because they were on the playlists (at least I don't think so) but just because this is how it is with YouTube. Gaps and jumps began to appear in the 'live' playlists of all the artists. What would it mean to have re-uploaded the absent clips? Where and what was the real work? Was the video version played in the exhibition a *documentation* of an ephemeral moment in YouTube time, or was it the work itself? Or are the playlists themselves as they are now the real works, full of omissions and gaps, continually breaking down further over time? Perhaps in fact there are numerous versions of the playlists and of the entire exhibition, with exponentially infinite variations over time.

This presentation was part of a talk at VideoVortex in Split, Croatia, 2009

non-western by Linda Wallace (Dec 2008)
see: www.lindawallace.eu

garland playlist (Feb 2009)
see: http://www.youtube.com/profile?user=randomrules09#p/p