RAWWAR

Charles Csuri, DISNOVATION.ORG, Joan Leandre, Patrick Lichty,
Antoine Schmitt, Casey Reas

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In the group exhibition "RAWWAR", DAM Projects approaches the currently
omnipresent topic of war. The six artistic positions deal with this topic on a
superordinate level. With their general validity beyond time and place, they are
intended, on the one hand, to create a certain distance to the current and very close
events in Ukraine. On the other hand, however, it is precisely by their meta perspective
that they open up new aspects for the discussion about this specific war.

The installation artist, programmer and theorist **Antoine Schmitt** (FR) deals with
processes of movement and analyses them in spatial, social and philosophical terms.
At the core of his works lies the analysis of dynamic interactions of the human with
reality, that is, how they influence each other and which forces are at work in the
process; software is his preferred artistic medium. In the exhibition, he shows two
generative software works from the series "War" (2015), which simulate war dynamics.
Inexhaustible armies of programmed pixels clash like soldiers on the battlefield, fighting
and displacing, surrounding, attacking and eliminating each other, being endlessly
replaced. In this manner, Antoine Schmitt points out that wars are a destructive but
ever-existing part of the human condition. Like a force of nature, they seem to follow
dynamic physical laws.

Patrick Lichty (US) is a media artist, curator and author. He works with various classic
and newer media such as video, graphics, digital tapestry, virtual reality, augmented
reality and artificial intelligence. One characteristic of his approach is the bridging of the
analogue and the digital, of handcraft and software calculation, of materiality and

immateriality. This is particularly apparent in his digital tapestries, wall hangings in Jacquard weaving style, which embody digitally generated images with technology-related content in a historic semi-mechanic handcraft technique.

His tapestry exhibited here shows the large-pixelated "Space Invaders" from the video game of the same name, one of the first gaming world hits from 1978, attacking the White House. Beneath this friendly and playful surface lies the deadly serious questioning of the reasonableness of wars, showing their fatal absurdity as a continuation of simplistic, infantile competition.

Charles Csuri (US), pioneer of computer art and a World War veteran, who died only a few weeks ago aged 99, is represented in "RAWWAR" with the iconographic lithograph "Random War" (1967–1968). It is the result of a software work that was first shown in 1968 in "Cybernetic Serendipity" at the ICA London, one of the first major exhibitions of digital art. The work is considered a trailblazer for the computer game.

Scattered on the white sheet are red and black outline figures of soldiers with their rifles at the ready. It is immediately apparent that it is the same countlessly multiplied figure of the same soldier in the same rigid posture throughout. Like tin soldiers, they are affixed to base plates, incapable of movement beyond the prescribed scheme. Variance exists in the aleatory positioning of the figures, their horizontal mirroring, change of size and colour. The image information is fed from a computer-generated list of soldiers' names, in which software randomly decides who is killed, injured, missing or commended. Created at the height of the Vietnam War, this work is a factual and accurate commentary on the objectification and dehumanisation of soldiers on the playing field of war.

Casey Reas (US) is a media artist, software developer and professor. He primarily creates software-generated art that is manifested dynamically as moving images or statically as a graphic. In recent years, he has often taken the opposite approach, reducing existing image material instead of constructing it from scratch.

In the case of his video work "Operation Teapot" (2017), he uses historical television images of atomic bomb explosions that are highly simplified but still clearly recognisable as such. The juddery playback of black shapes on a red background is frequently interrupted by full-screen displays of Cyrillic words in loud capital letters. This imagery is complemented by a narrative musical composition. But it is not only the

high degree of representationalism that is unusual for Casey Reas, making this work stand out from his oeuvre. It also displays a personal reference to the artist that is otherwise not as pronounced. Born in 1972, he grew up as a Cold War child in the immediate vicinity of an atomic bomb test area in Ohio. The atomic threat was doubly existent there, by the bomb tests in the neighbourhood as well as by the danger of a nuclear attack of the USA by the USSR. The feeling of an all-encompassing menace by an aggressive power is encapsulated visually and acoustically in the highly densified iconography of this work.

The work of **Joan Leandre** (ES) is, like his artist personality, hard to grasp. Shapelessly wafting and oscillating on multiple layers, both at times reveal themselves or withdraw from unambiguousness, appearing on several interconnected layers at once. These properties of transmutation and synchronicity are very clearly discernible in his motion renderings.

Joan Leandre mainly works with computer games, which he deconstructs by software modification and reassembles in own narratives. In each case, he focuses on certain elements typical of games such as flight simulation, jungle landscapes and warlike actions. The series "In the Name of Kernel: Magic Line" (2019) outlines a narrative of war, a recurrent element of computer games, acute and confrontational as the central action or subliminal as a latent threat in the background. Dream-like fractured and layered set pieces of imagery are complemented by an ambient sound design that adds a strangely aesthetic and intriguing tone to the unsettling, apocalyptic atmosphere.

DISNOVATION (FR) is an international collective of media artists. The group sees itself as a critical force at the intersection of art, science and hacking. They analyse reciprocal effects between technology and the human, more precisely: which influences the technology-driven idea of innovation, as a characteristic of our era, has on all big areas of life such as society, politics, education and culture.

In the video work "War Zone" (2013–2014), they used Google Earth to retrace launches and trajectories of war missiles from different eras and conflicts around the world, for example, that of a Scud missile from Kuwait to Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War. Seen like through a camera from the viewpoint at the tip of the missile, only the globe, the open sky, the space between A and B and the own movement are perceptible. However, one sees nothing of the missile itself or its impact. This enables

both a clear recognition of the situation and an inner distancing from the process. Without displaying the missiles themselves or the destruction they cause, they are shown in brutal clarity as instruments of disaster. Particularly in flight, detached of all that is terrestrial and human, it becomes apparent how abstract and far away a missile impact must seem in the mind of the person commanding its launch, whereby its devastating effects are presumably easier to justify.

"RAWWAR" shows positions with work-specific references as well as timeless validity and current relevance. Withal, there is not a single mention of the currently all-dominant aggression war of Russia against Ukraine.

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