DIGICULT PANEL
"WE'RE ON THE ROAD TO NOWHERE"

Curated and introduced by: Marco Mancuso (Digicult Director)
With: Alessio Erioli, Bertram Niessen, Domenico Quaranta, Valentina Tanni

..and we're not little children, and we know what we want
and the future is certain, give us time to work it out
David Byrne

We are on a road whose final destination is unknown. We can barely distinguish its edges, its borders, its rules of travel. But in the end we do not care that much. We are jauntily adapting our professionalism, our interests, our fields of research and analysis, in order to understand the complexity of contemporaneity.

We are not worried, we are not confused. We observe art, culture, markets, design in our Information Age, envisaging future scenarios and comparing them with past experiences, noting overlapping elements between disciplines, materializing in the folds of possible differences between research areas. We are living in a mature age, aware of the social, economic and creative limits of technologies, but also looking at their development and impact on society through a professional and curios perspective.

So, we are on a road of inconsistencies, of sudden changes, of at times destabilizing extremes. We live its complexity and are not only keen to analyse it, we try to make it part of our lives and work. We seek to illustrate it through exhibitions, meetings, articles, round tables, readings, educational activities. We are no longer children and we know what we want, we know out of which material our future is made and which kind of technology it will adopt in order to acquire a new shape, a shape which we still do not know. But give us the time to find this out: our curiosity is everybody's curiosity, and reflects that aspiration to understand the society we live in.

Alessio Erioli, Bertram Niessen, Domenico Quaranta and Valentina Tanni will guide us along this road. They will tell us about the dynamics related to information dissemination, about networks and channels promoting professional and artistic collaborations. They will explain to us how to observe nature and landscapes around us, for us to replicate their shapes, approaches and parameters. They will lead us towards technological complexity and variety of styles, expressions and languages that characterize contemporary art, while reflecting on the meaning of identity and medialisation which is part of us, men and women of the XXI Century. Jump on board, the journey has just begun ...

Sono stati evidenziati 4 differenti processi rappresentativi del contemporaneo:

DECOSTRUZIONE: la morfologia della cultura contemporanea è un territorio complesso caratterizzato da una progressiva decostruzione di strutture espressive, disciplinari, linguistiche, creative e progettuali, a discapito di quel processo di progressiva apparente omologazione di codici (sociali, politici, produttivi) ed estetiche (visive, sonore, espressive in senso ampio) che caratterizzano l'universo online e offline nel quale operiamo e viviamo

COMPLESSIFICAZIONE: gli sviluppi tecnologici, i network, le scienze moderne, contribuiscono a un progessivo assottigliamento dei paradigmi quasi dogmatici che governavano (e in parte ancora governano) la creazione di significato nelle società Occidentali: separazione, specializzazione, caratterizzazione sono parole chiave di un passato che tende rapidamente a scomparire a favore di un linguaggio nuovo e complesso, i cui confini sono ancora sconosciuti e che sottende il mondo dell'arte, del design, della scienza e della società contemporanea

NON IDENTIFICAZIONE: nell'ambito dei mercati contemporanei, quello della cultura, dell'arte o del prodotto, i soggetti in gioco hanno ruoli professionali meno caratterizzati, determinati e modellati da differenti esperienze ibride, studi transdisciplinari e ricerche cross mediali. Creativi, artisti e designer, critici, curatori, esperti ed operatori culturali in senso ampio, interiorizzano e modellano il concetto di brand, sia esso estensione del modello corporate, di quello cultural-istituzionale o persino di quello reputativo-personale. Aiutati in questo dalle dinamiche di valutazione collettiva su internet, dalle reti sociali condivise, dalle strutture produttive in network

OSSERVAZIONE: si dice che l'artista osserva, traduce e interpreta il mondo e la società che lo circonda. Mai come in questa epoca contemporanea, grazie alla diffusione di tecnologie software e hardware, di dinamiche open e peer-to-peer, gli artisti e i progettisti di oggi sono quasi "oltre" il ruolo di tramite, vivendo una completa identificazione di mezzi espressivi, linguaggi e dinamiche di lavoro che sembrano replicare e identificarsi completamente con la complessità di dati, informazioni, strutture che caratterizzano il panorama, naturale, urbano o sociale che viene osservato e interpretato

Come si ricolloca il concept in un panorama culturale più ampio

Le tematiche e gli ospiti selezionati, in funzione delle loro ricerche e percorsi professionali, riflettono una serie di considerazioni che collocano il corpus teorico, nell'ambito di un contesto culturale i cui punti nodali sono stati così individuati:

CRITICA UFFICIALE: la necessità di categorizzare, identificare, racchiudere dentro confini linguistici, espressivi e culturali precisi e definiti, la difficoltà di comprensione degli strumenti tecnologici utilizzati e dei loro codici rappresentativi fa si che la critica ufficiale, i media generalisti, gli spazi espositivi, le istituzioni facciano spesso un po' di fatica a comprendere il livello di complessità raggiunto nell'espressione creativa contemporanea

PROFESSIONISMO: il contesto contemporaneo spinge spontaneamente verso l'ibridizzazione, la collaborazione, la condivisione di esperienze, studi, capacità tecniche e linguaggi. Gli ambiti non solo della media art, ma quelli del cinema, dell'audiovisivo, del design, dell'interaction, delle tecnologie elettroniche e diy, delle stesse scienze moderne, conoscono oggi un momento di estrema compenetrazione e collaborazione

FORMAZIONE: si rivela una certa difficoltà degli istituti formativi, dei corsi accademici sulle nuove tecnologie, degli stessi workshop di artisti e designer, nel focalizzare l'attenzione sulle complessità tecnologica, sulle dinamicità nei linguaggi nonché su un tipo di progettazione ibrida (teorica e pratica) a favore di un tipo di formazione basata su dinamiche standardizzate e ancora troppo settorializzate di un insegnamento iper-specializzato a livello hardware e software o altresì teorico sugli studi dell'arte mediale

Marco Mancuso
Marco Mancuso is a curator, critic and consultant in the field of digital technologies applied to art, design and contemporary culture. Founder and director at Digicult and Digimag Journal (http://www.digicult.it), he teaches “Linguaggi delle Arti Multimediali” at NABA, “Sistemi Interattivi” at IED in Milan, “Nuovi Sistemi Editoriali per l’Arte” at Academy of Fine Art in Bergamo, “Digital Media Management” at IED Masters in Milan and is visiting professor at Transmedia-Postgraduate Program in Arts+Media+Design in Brussels and MAIND Interaction Design Master at SUPSI in Lugano. With the Digicult Agency he curated and co-curated a number of exhibitions, round-tables, meetings and events including Mixed Media (Milan, 2006), Screen Music (Florence, 2006-2007), Otolab ‘op7’ (Bergamo, 2008), Graffiti Research Lab (Rome, 2008), Sincronie Festival (Milan, 2008-2009), Thorsten Fleisch Retrospective (Milan, 2009), The Mediagate (Lodz, 2010), he presented his screenings and productions at art and cultural events, including Dissonanze (Rome, 2006), Cimatics (Brussels, 2008), Strp (Eindhoven, 2008), Sonic Acts (Amsterdam, 2009), Nemo (Paris, 2009), Elektra (Montreal, 2010), Subtle Technologies (Toronto, 2011) and he lectured among others at Market for Digital Arts/Elektra (Montreal 2008), Fabrica Workshops (Treviso, 2009), Laptop’r’s (Madrid, 2010), Subtle Technologies (Toronto, 2011) and Isea (Istanbul, 2012). Marco Mancuso partnered with most of the main media art festival in Italy and worldwide and he recently developed the “Digicult Editions” open-publishing online service. Marco Mancuso has been expertising from years on wider subjects like open communication, social networking and digital publishing. While collaborating with many editorial magazines, Marco Mancuso also curated the publication “The Open Future” by "MCD-Musiques et Cultures Digitales" magazine / Issue#68 in 2012 and he was included in the publication “Cultural Blogging in Europe” by LabForCulture.org in 2010.

Guests:

Alessio Erioli
Alessio Erioli is Engineer and Senior Researcher at Università di Bologna where he also teaches Architectural Design, MArch in Biodigital Architecture, PhD in Architectural Engineering, co-founder and coder at Co-de-iT (www.co-de-it.com). He has been advisor of many Master Thesis in Engineering and Architecture; he has lectured for (among others) IaaC (Barcelona), AA Visiting school in Paris, Accademia Belle Arti Bologna, TU Innsbruck, Universidad Iberoamericana (Mexico). His interests gravitate in the orbital that interweaves teaching & design ecologies in Computational design, articulating the force fields of complexity to trigger emergent potential. His recent interests regard the relations among matter and agency: Agent-Based modeling simulation of Complex Adaptive Systems in architecture coupled with form-finding strategies. He is also skilled in computational design & modeling on several platforms (Rhinoceros, Grasshopper, Processing, 3D Studio, Ecotect; scripting skills in C#, Python, RhinoScript).

Bertram Niessen
Bertram Niessen (http://b3rtramni3ss3n.wordpress.com/), researcher, teacher and electronic artist. He researches, writes, teaches, designs and advices about a (somehow) wide range of topics: urban contexts, cultural economy, DIY 2.0 & desktop manufacturing, network economies and bottom-up innovation. At the core of everything there is an interest for the matching points of culture, technology and society, and the belief that there is the

need for new forms of social and political action. In 2012 he was the designer and project manager of cheFare a 100.000 euro contest for cultural innovation projects. As a sociologist Bertram Niessen teaches since 2003 in several graduate and post-graduate courses of methodology, sociology of culture, urban sociology and new technologies for social sciences. In 2009-2010 he was a post-doc researcher at the University of Milan (UNIMI) working on the EU projects EDUFASHION and Openwear, dealing with P2P economies, crowdsourcing and fashion. Previously, he hold a PhD in Urban European Studies at the University of Milano Bicocca (UNIMIB); his research in urban sociology investigates the relationships among city, creative economy and social innovation processes, with a focus on artists co-optation in post-fordist economies. In 2001 he was a founding member of the Milan-based experimental collective otolab with whom he investigates visual dramaturgic representation of sound. Bertram Niessen teaches Audiovisual Performance at NABA in Milan and in seminars, workshops and courses around. He collaborates with some research and activist groups like the Center for Digital Ethnography and Foundation for P2P Alternatives, and writes for doppiozero, Digicult and IL.

Domenico Quaranta
Domenico Quaranta (http://domenicoquaranta.com/) is a contemporary art critic and curator. He focused his research on the impact of the current techno-social developments on the arts, with a specific focus on art in networked spaces. As an art critic, he is a regular contributor to *Flash Art* and *Artpulse* magazine; his essays, reviews and interviews appeared in many magazines, newspapers and web portals. He wrote *NET ART 1994-1998: La vicenda di Äda'web* (2004), *Media, New Media, Postmedia* (2010) and *In My Computer* (2011). He co-edited, together with Matteo Bittanti, the book *GameScenes. Art in the Age of Videogames* (Milan, October 2006) and contributed to a number of books and publications. He curated and co-curated a number of exhibitions, including: *Connessioni Leggendarie. Net.art 1995-2005* (Milan 2005); *Holy Fire. Art of the Digital Age* (iMAL, Bruxelles 2008); *RE:akt!* | *Reconstruction, Re-enactment, Re-reporting* (MNAC, Bucharest – Skuc, Ljubljana; MMSU, Rijeka 2009); *Playlist* (LABoral, Gijon 2009 – 2010 and iMAL, Bruxelles 2010); *Italians Do It Better!!* (Venice Biennale Collateral Events, 2011) and *Collect the WWWorld. The Artist as Archivist in the Internet Age* (Brescia, Spazio Contemporanea 2011; Basel, House of Electronic Arts and 319 Scholes, New York 2012). He lectures internationally and teaches “Net Art” at the Accademia di Brera in Milan. He is the Artistic Director of the Link Center for the Arts of the Information Age, that he co-founded in 2011.

Valentina Tanni
Valentina Tanni (1976, Rome, Italy, www.valentinatanni.com) is a contemporary art critic and curator. Her research is focused on the relationship between art and new media, with particular attention to Internet culture. In 2002 she graduated in Art History from La Sapienza University in Rome with a master thesis on net art (Net Art.1994-2001) and in the following years she published a great number of articles, reviews and essays about new media art, web culture and contemporary art in general. She is the founder of Random Magazine, one of the first web columns entirely dedicated to net art (that gave also birth to a book in 2011. "Random", Link Editions), and she is the co-founder of Exibart and Artribune, two important italian art magazines. She also directed the online version of the magazine FMR (FMR Online). She curated the Net section of the art show Media Connection (Rome and Milan, 2001), the exhibitions Netizens (Rome, 2002), L'oading. Genetically Modified Videogames (Syracuse, 2003), Maps and Legends. When

Photography Met the Web (Rome, 2010), Datascapes (Rome, 2011), Hit the Crowd. Photography in the Age of Crowdsourcing (Rome, 2012) and numerous solo shows. She also collaborates with many digital arts Festivals and she's been one of the guest curators of FotoGrafia. International Photography Festival in Rome (photography and new media section, 2010-12). She wrote articles for italian and international magazines and she works as a teacher and lecturer for universities and private institutions (Università di Roma La Sapienza, Università di Udine, LUISS, Istituto Europeo di Design).