

The Internet Does Not Exist

Hito Steyerl et al.

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Exercises in Style

Raymond Queneau

PREFACE

The introduction to *The Internet Does not Exist* (Steyerl, 2012) discusses the development and contradictions of the internet, networks and online navigation systems. It argues that the internet as we now know it is “a blur” (pp. 5), and signifies something quite different to when it was first developed.

Taking the term ‘internet’ on face value, the authors of the text — Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood and Anton Vidokle — point out that this name, meaning between or among a network (inter + net), gives imaginary form to an invisible, shapeless structure (pp. 5). Though the name once owed to its function as a military information infrastructure for the US Department of Defence, the aims of the Internet quickly shifted to have economic benefit. This shift, in line with the USA’s liberal political and economic positioning at the time, gave rise to the idea that the network was democratic, open ended, and accessible by and for all. What the text highlights, however, is that this notion is contradictory; the freedom offered by a network only exists within the network. It is itself a boundary, a border; and one that is controlled and overseen by larger, concealed, structures of governance.

The idea of a democratic network depends on the processing of language — whether binary code or Facebook likes — that can be universally accessed, shared and understood. Because the internet seemingly allows for *anything to be anything*, language itself is transformed into a “currency” (pp. 6). Capital is assigned to language, and so its meaning, linguistically speaking, begins to “liquidate” (pp. 7), along with its intentions.

The authors ultimately argue that the “noise” (pp. 7) that this liquidation incurs has shifted the purpose of the network from archival to exploitative. No longer is the Internet simply a place *to* discover, but also a place that evidences *how* we discover; how we sift and “drift” (pp. 7) through the noise. The act of conscious searching is lost to this drift; thus encouraging new ways of navigating the network itself. In the process, we are re-wiring our brains to engage with these networks, form new connections between content, and share information within this contradictory, false, internet .

otation

The internet used to exist. Its function shifted from military usage to economic usage in the 1960s. The democracy it offered was a false pretext set by systems of governance for economic gain. It depends on language to be used, but the intentions of the language are no longer clear. We do not search the internet, we drift through it. We are forced to navigate in different ways because of this.

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My God, the internet has ceased to exist as we know it! But how could this be? Perhaps because it became a financial asset to systems of governance in the 1960s! And of course, they wanted to exploit this and paint the network as a democratic entity! Alas, this was completely false! The internet has always depended on language, don't you know! But once capital was assigned to that language, gosh! The language lost all meaning! Now the internet has become a realm of noise and confusion, what horror! But what has the internet become now, you ask? Why, it's evidence of the way we drift through noise and is only going and re-wiring our brains because of it! Now — can you believe it — we have to navigate the network in a completely different way!

What will happen next?!



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The internet met its target that was set and has kicked the bucket. A cabinet controlling fighter jets gave it to the market to beget prophets of languets. Internet, merely a soubriquet, epithet, for the net; something we misinterpret. The alphabet turns to racket, because we pickpocket this supermarket for its wallet, a gauntlet underset by budget. Now it is an outlet and from the outset we ricochet to retarget, through this upset branchlet.





Bibliography

Steyerl, H. et al. (2012) *The Internet Does not Exist*. London: Sternberg Press.

Queneau, R. (1958) *Exercises in Style*. London: Gaberbocchus Press.