

# SIMPLICITY

the art of complexity



## ARS ELECTRONICA 2006

Festival für Kunst, Technologie und Gesellschaft

# SIMPLICITY

the art of complexity

Edited by

*Herausgegeben von*

**Gerfried Stocker und Christine Schöpf**

## **Ars Electronica 2006**

Festival für Kunst, Technologie und Gesellschaft  
Festival for Art, Technology and Society

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## REGRETS Linz

Regrets are often the conceptual vehicle of self-improving tendencies, but they are rarely communally active in any meaningful way. The Regrets team seeks to intervene and enable such interaction. In particular, *remorse* is posited here as a positive entity, incorporating recall, reflection, and learning.

Five custom mobile computer units roaming public space in and around a chosen city, community, or event, collect anonymously submitted regrets from the public, gathering and comparing them to comprise a sociological database of contemporary regret. Instant feedback to the individual user based on other contributors' similar concerns is algorithmically generated to "share the burden". The backpack units deliver a metaphor: relieve your burden by placing it on another's back. Random selections of the regrets are made public via locally negotiated sites and existing signage, network, and broadcast facilities. The archive represents a glimpse of a given community at a particular time through the rubric of regret; its results are available for future studies.

Each unit houses a terminal with a wireless connection to a central database located on a remote server. Algorithms use keywords from the submitted text and other self-describing user input to define *similarity*. (*Chance* will also have a pseudo-poetic and perhaps comedic role to play in output). The booth/backpack-computer method of submission using GSM—as opposed to users' mobile phones and text messages for example—is intrinsic to the anonymity of the messages and also as part of the *display* function (since the collection units, when idle, feature random samplings from the archive). Other locally negotiated venues and networks for public display and broadcast also publicize sampled regrets from the archive.

It has been said that the submissions so far have been surprisingly poetic in their concision. Some phrases feel like they are the tip of the iceberg with a huge narrative unfolding underneath. The *REGRETS* team plans extensive and expansive future intervening collections within diverse communities, organizations, and situations.

<http://www.regrets.org.uk>

We would like to thank the *REGRETS* Linz team, Rama Hoetzlein, and the continued contributions of Dora Nemere. *REGRETS* Cambridge was the first local venue, resulting in over 1500 submissions. We have the following institutions and individuals to thank for the original siting: Carl Magagnosc, systems engineer; sponsors: Microsoft Research Cambridge [MSRC]: Richard Harper, Shahram Izadi, Tim Regan, Abigail Sellen, Vicki Ward, Pierre-Louis Xech [MSRC project manager]; University of Westminster [westmARC], Stephen Whaley [westmARC director]; University of California, Santa Barbara, [University of California Institute for Research in the Arts & the Interdisciplinary Humanities Center]: Dick Hebdige, Kim Yasuda.



## REGRETS Linz

Äußerungen des Bedauerns (*Regrets*) und der Reue stellen oftmals das konzeptuelle Medium für Tendenzen der „Selbstbesserung“ dar, sind aber nur selten auf irgendeine Weise für die Gesellschaft von Bedeutung. Das REGRETS-Team setzt Aktionen, um eine derartige Interaktion zu ermöglichen. In diesem Zusammenhang wird *Reue* als positive Größe postuliert, die sich aus den Elementen Erinnerung, Reflexion und Lernen zusammensetzt.

Fünf in einer Rucksackeinheit eingebaute mobile Computer „durchstreifen“ am Rücken ihrer Träger den öffentlichen Raum einer bestimmten Stadt, Gemeinde oder eine Veranstaltung und sammeln anonym eingereichte Äußerungen des Bedauerns und der Reue. Diese Äußerungen werden zusammengestellt und verglichen und in eine soziologische Datenbank aktueller Reuebekundungen eingespeist. Der einzelne User bekommt umgehend Feedback, das algorithmisch aus anderen Beiträgen mit ähnlichen Anliegen erzeugt wird, um dadurch „die Last zu teilen“. Diese Rucksackgeräte stehen für die Metapher: Befreien Sie sich von Ihrer Bürde, indem Sie diese auf den Rücken eines anderen Menschen laden. Eine zufällige Auswahl von Reuebekundungen wird vor Ort über bestehende Leitsysteme und Netzwerke sowie Sendeanstalten veröffentlicht. Das Archiv ist eine Momentaufnahme einer beliebigen Gemeinde und deren Reuebekundungen zu einem bestimmten Zeitpunkt; die Ergebnisse daraus sind für zukünftige Studien verfügbar.

Jede dieser „Rucksackeinheiten“ verfügt über ein Terminal mit kabelloser Verbindung zu einer zentralen Datenbank auf einem Remote-Server. Um Ähnlichkeiten und Übereinstimmungen herauszufinden, werden algorithmisch Schlagwörter aus den übermittelten Texten und Eingaben anderer User herausgefiltert. Die Übermittlung erfolgt über GSM, um die Anonymität der Nachrichten sicherzustellen – im Gegensatz zu von Mobiltelefonen abgeschickten SMS. Dies ist auch für die *Displayfunktion* wichtig, wenn etwa die Rucksackeinheiten im Leerlauf sind, wird eine zufällige Auswahl aus dem Archiv angezeigt. Darüberhinaus wird an bestimmten Stellen des öffentlichen Raumes und über Anzeigetafeln gesampelte Bedauernsäußerungen aus dem Archiv veröffentlicht.

Die bisher eingereichten Beiträge sind in ihrer Prägnanz überraschend poetisch. Oft vermitteln die Beiträge auch den Eindruck, als seien sie nur die Spitze eines Eisbergs, unter dem sich eine geballte Ladung an Geschichten verbirgt.

<http://www.regrets.org.uk>

Aus dem Englischen von Eva Gebetsroither



**Michael Nyman (UK)** musician and composer. In the early '60s he had abandoned composition preferring to work as a musicologist; he became the first to apply the word "minimalism" to music. Back to composition he founded the Michael Nyman Band, the laboratory in which Nyman has formulated his compositional style around strong melodies, flexible yet assertive rhythms, and precisely articulated ensemble playing. His music has reached its largest audience by way of his film scores, most famously for Peter Greenaway. Among his last operas count *The Commissar Vanishes*, based on David King's book about Stalinist manipulation of photographic documents and the opera *Facing Goy* (2000), which is a taut thriller taking genetics as its subject matter. Michael's latest venture is the launch of his own record label—MN Records. The label opened in Spring 2005 with 'The Piano Sings' the composer's debut solo piano album.

**Klaus Obermaier (AT)** is a media artist, director and composer who lives in Vienna and has been working with video and interactive media since the late 1980s. His intermedial performances, compositions and installations have been shown worldwide. In 2006, he has been a guest professor at the IUAV University in Venice, where he teaches new media in stage performances.

**Dietmar Offenhuber (AT)** graduated in architecture at the TU Vienna and worked as a key researcher at the Ars Electronica Futurelab. In 2004 he received a Fellowship from the Japan Foundation for the IAMAS Institute. From 2004 to 2006 he was professor for animation and interactive media at the University of Applied Sciences in Hagenberg (AT). From Fall 2006 he is researcher at the MIT Medialab.

**Karin Ohlenschläger (DE/ES)**, is an art critic and curator who specialises in contemporary art and new media. She is co-director of the MediaLabMadrid Program at the Conde Duque Cultural Center in Madrid (Spain) and a founding member of the Banquete Foundation. <http://www.medialabmadrid.org>, <http://www.banquete.org>

**Tsuyoshi Ozawa (JP)**. His activities are multi-faceted and spread across various domains, culturally and geographically. It's a constantly opening and shifting world. It is, however, also a world in itself. In Tsuyoshi Ozawa's work, one can never ignore an immensely important aspect: political commitment. His work clearly involves critical thoughts on issues such as history and reality in geopolitical conflicts. His works were exhibited at Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, 50<sup>th</sup> International Art Exhibition, Z.O.U. Zone of Urgency, Venice and he had solo exhibitions at Mori Art Museum, Tokyo and at Yvon Lambert, Paris.

**Dan Phiffer (US)** is a programmer and creative worker from California, currently residing in Brooklyn. As a student at NYU's Interactive Telecommunications Program Dan helps coordinate a weekly tutorial series called Drive-Bys. Dan is most interested in exploring the possibilities and limitations of the web as a medium of creative expression and shared cultural experiences.

**Claus Pias (DE / AT)**, born in 1967; professor of epistemology and philosophy of digital media at the University of Vienna's Department of Philosophy and Pedagogy; 2006: visiting fellow at Vienna's IFK-International Research Center for Cultural Studies.

**James Powderly (US)** has a masters degree from NYU's ITP program and comes to Eyebeam from Honeybee Robotics where he worked as the director of technology development and an engineer from 2002. At Honeybee, James developed technology for NASA's Mars rover that is currently on the surface of the red planet, and engineered an installation for the Architects Diller + Scofidio that was shown at the Whitney Museum of American Art. James has previously worked at Eyebeam as an artist in residence, he is a partner in RobotClothes, and the co-founder of the Robotics Society of America New York City Chapter.

**Carlo Ratti (US)** is a civil engineer and architect who teaches at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he directs the SENSEable City Laboratory. He is also a founding partner of the architecture office carlorattiasociati-Chiara Morandini, Walter Nicolino, Carlo Ratti.

**Regrets (Jane Mulfinger, US; Graham Budgett, US)**, both artists and faculty members of the University of California, Santa Barbara, have exhibited widely in the public arena and in commercial galleries including: Camden Arts Centre; St. Pancras Station; The British Library; The Victoria & Albert Museum; The Photographers' Gallery & the Mayor Gallery, London; Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin; Projects UK, Newcastle; Franklin Furnace Archive, New York; Orchard Gallery, Derry; Ben Maltz/Otis Gallery, Los Angeles; and Pasadena Armory Center for the Arts.

**Maren Richter (AT)** is a curator and author as well as a project developer in the visual arts field for Linz 2009—European Capital of Culture. Among the recent exhibitions she has curated are: "Wayward Economy," Maintrend Gallery Taipei, 2005; "Micronation Travelling Agency" partner project, Transmediale 2006, Berlin; "Wrong(ed) Attitude," Sparwasser HQ/Berlin, 2006; "Naked Life," MOCA Taipei, 2006.

**Luis Rico (ES)** is an artist and cultural producer who specializes in transdisciplinary cultural projects that bring together artistic, scientific, technological, and social practices. He is co-director of the MediaLabMadrid Program at the Conde Duque Cultural Center in Madrid (Spain) and a founding member of the Banquete Foundation. <http://www.medialabmadrid.org>, <http://www.banquete.org>

**Christopher Romberg (CH)**, born in 1976, BA (Hons); graduated from high school in Feldkirch, Austria; exhibition technician at Kunsthaus Bregenz and the Generali Foundation, Vienna; studied product & furniture design at the New Design Centre St. Pölten and Kingston University, London; recipient of an Award of Recognition in the Miele Design Competition; EOOD Design Bureau staff member; freelancer since 2005.