POSTINTERNET,
ITS ART
AND
(THE) NEW AESTHETIC

— A Conceptual Framework for Art Education
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Abstract

As one might expect from terms employing the prefixes ‘post’ or ‘new,’ combined with the words ‘internet,’ ‘art,’ and ‘aesthetic,’ postinternet, PIA, and New Aesthetic ((the) NA) are broad and disputable concepts. I started this study because I noticed that these ambiguous, yet widely-discussed terms were hardly acknowledged in art education.

This thesis provides a conceptual framework for postinternet, PIA, and (the) NA through a critical review of the literature. Postinternet and (the) NA are notions and phenomena that signpost an era and a condition of unprecedented pace of computation-driven transformations in the human culture. They continue the list of theoretical neologisms indicating the changes brought about by the post-conditions. This thesis establishes that postinternet, PIA, and (the) NA are characterized through their paradoxical relation to time and temporality at conceptual and thematical levels. Obsessed with novelty, these terms attempt to break off from their “previous,” while, starting from their titles, simultaneously anchoring themselves to the past.

Postinternet is a notion that describes the inescapable consequences of the intermixing of the online and offline, the omnipresence of the internet. It is linked to PIA that is a category, trend, and scene in contemporary art. Relating closely to the concept post-digital, (the) NA is a term that derives from the idea that the governance of computation and the implications of digital technology are demonstrated in culture through visual (e.g., design) and visually perceivable (e.g., glitch) phenomena. (the) NA is not only a social-media project (Tumblr blog) but also ‘theory object’: a polyphonic and theoretical discussion revolving around itself.

Chapters 2-3 encompass a vast array of voices that discuss the notions from various perspectives and in diverse contexts. The sources feature art world professionals, writers, and theorists from various fields in technology and across humanities. The categorizing structure of the literature review demonstrates recurring patterns emerging from the conversations on postinternet (art) and the (the) NA. The different voices are woven together through dialectic design that enables critical examination of the concurring claims and implied stances while disclosing the multiplicity of the interpretations.

In Chapter 4, the concepts are first brought together for comparison as parallel yet essentially overlapping. Their relationship is analysed by observing their thematic and conceptual leanings, resemblances and dissimilarities as well as their utilization and contexts in general. In the end, I reflect upon the demands and implications that postinternet, PIA, and (the) NA pose for art education. I also briefly present some ideas by researchers who have recently started working with the notions in art education. With a speculative and philosophical approach, I claim that the possibilities of these notions lie in fact in their fluidity. I arrive to assume that to take the notions of postinternet (art), (postdigital) and (the) NA seriously in art education will require attitudinal reorientations and radical alterations to the conventions of the discipline/substance. The ultimate objective of this thesis is to serve as a groundwork for future research and development of these notions in art education.

Keywords Postinternet, Postinternet art, New Aesthetic, Postdigital, Internet, Online & Offline, Post-conditions

Kriittistä kirjallisuuskatsauksesta metodina käytävän tämä opinnäytetyö tarjoaa käsitteellisen viitekehyksen termeille postinternet, postinternet taite ja (the) NA. Postinternet ja (the) NA ovat käsitteitä / ilmiöitä, jotka viittavat vallitsevien olosuhteiden aiakautena, jossa ihmisen kulttuuriasemaa määrittää ennenäkemättömän nopea, tietoteknisen kehityksen ajama transformatio. Ne jatkovat listaa teoreettisista uudissanoista, jotka viittavat post-ulosuhteiden mukanaan tuomiin muutoksiin. Tämä opinnoittanut toteaa, että postinternetteillä, postinternettaa taitteelle ja (the) NA:lle on tunnusomaista paradoksaalinen suhde aikaan ja ajallisuteen, niin käsitteellisellä kuin temaattisella tasolla. Uutuuteen pakonomainen orientointu, ne pyrkivät katkaisemaan kysymyksen "edellävänsä", kuitenkin samalla ankkuroiden itsensä nimenomaan menneistä ja nykyistä – tosikastoa alkaen.

Postinternet on käsite, joka kuvaa nk. online ja offline :n sekoittumista ja sen vääristamisesta seurauksena. Postinternet linkittyy PIA:n, joka on kategoria, trendi ja alakulttuuri tai ’skene’ nykytaiteessa. Liitteen lähiseisesti postdigitalisen käsitteeseen, NA on puolestaan termi, joka perustuu PIA:n käsitykseen siitä, että tieto- ja informaatioteknologioihin vaikutukset ilmentyvät taitteeseen ja visuaaliseen hajautuessa ilmiöissä (esim. muotoilu, glitch-häiriö). (the) NA on paitais sosiaalisen median median projekti (Tumblr-blogi) myös ’teoriaobjekti’: itsensä ympärille kiertyvää monia ja monia teoreettisia keskusteluja.


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1 INTRODUCTION

In 2016, when I started the process of writing this thesis, postinternet, postinternet art (PIA), not to mention (the) New Aesthetic (NA), were surprisingly unknown terms in the master courses I attended. Yet, by then postinternet (art) had already become a hyped and contested concept and a phenomenal trend in the contemporary artworld in widespread locations. For me, postinternet and PIA marked an unclear connection with that particular gloomy and super-cool aesthetic mode, style, and attitude, that I had begun to run into in galleries and online. Commonly connected to topics and notions like social media, neoliberal-capitalism & attention economy, corporational aesthetics, digital-natives, and internet-based (sub)cultures, I found the term postinternet to circulate in many kinds of texts and talks by artists, curators, critics and art journalists. Even art museums had started to adopt the term into their catalogues.

My curiosity on the meanings of postinternet (art) fast led me to another term: NA kept popping up in the same contexts. This concept is not similarly linked to any trend in contemporary art. Instead, I learned that it is a manifold and philosophically oriented notion originating from its namesake blog project. The NA Tumblr is a virtual archive of instances and items that visually and textually address the multiple meanings of the developing (information) technologies on the human society. Originally, the NA was not an academic notion referring to aesthetics the branch of philosophy. Yet, by appropriating this word, provoking conversation and being ‘collective’ by its form, the concept has gained leanings to that direction, as well. Also, like postinternet, the NA became a target of active and even emotional debates. However, if postinternet is already a rather well-spread term the NA has not been noticed to quite the same extent. Characteristically, the remarks and accounts on the NA feature fairly tech-informed crop of contributors. The specializations and approaches of these writers, critics, artists, and theorists draw on notions like postdigital, VR, code, computational media, digital humanities, software studies, political economy, and so forth.

Despite the countless contributions, I noticed that the conversations symptomatically revolve around themselves as the commenters continuously return to the vagueness of these concepts. I took this ambiguity as a challenge, and began to work with two open-ended research questions.

Firstly: What are the definitions of postinternet, PIA, and (the) NA, and how are these terms used? Secondly: How might they be important together in art education?

It soon became clear that the unfamiliarity of these terms and phenomena was nothing unique to my academic program. Theory is rarely the news, as topical
phenomena become something else faster than they are defined by academic research. None of the books and other edited readings that I found are institutional research. This is not to say, that there are no scholarly accounts published on the notions. In fact, since their birth these terms been applied and extended to various philosophical contexts and theoretical framings by contributors from a variety of academic backgrounds. In any case, as I did not come across any summarizing accounts that would have pulled the scattered conversations together for analysis, I needed to do the job myself.

Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis are a critical review of literature on the terms postinternet, PIA and (the) NA. A review of literature is a fundamental part of any scientific research and serves typically as foundations for the further development of the topic. It commonly focuses on compiling and comparing research texts on a specific subject. A literature review serves also in those cases, when an emerging issue needs to be tackled in order to examine its potential for theoretical foundations. This type of literature review is often relatively short, due to the narrower range of literature.\(^1\) Jane Webster and Richard T. Watson propose, that the contribution of the author might, in this type of reviews, lie in the “fresh theoretical foundations proposed in developing a conceptual model.”\(^2\)

According to Webster & Watson, a high-quality review should expose the accumulation of knowledge and be organized in a manner that emphasizes the topic’s central ideas. Structurally and by its focus, it should revolve around concepts and be designed with sufficiently broad framework\(^3\):

A complete review covers relevant literature on the topic and is not confined to one research methodology, one set of journals, or one geographic region.\(^4\)

This thesis features the second type of literature review that targets to establish a theoretical groundwork for emerging concepts. Hence, due to the lack of academic research on the topic, the voices referenced and reviewed here mainly represent so-called primary sources. That is, my literature does not consist of texts published in the scope of art education but encompasses a wide range of sources featuring artist, critics, curators as well as writers and theorists from humanities but also the field of technology and transdisciplinary research. Majority of the sources date between 2011-2017 and vary from blog entries, exhibition texts and magazine journals to uploaded talks and book articles.

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3 Ibid., xviii.
4 Ibid., xv.
This thesis demonstrates how the terms/notions of postinternet (art) and (the) NA defined through the arguments by their originators, commenters and users. As the ‘data’ and target of study, my pool of polyphonic sources poses particular demands for the methodology. Even if there are numerous structured methods for compiling a literature review, I felt that any fixedly-structured approach would not have served in this type of setting. Thus, I have not followed any previously established method in the selection of the literature or organizing of the content. This does not mean that the sources were selected or used randomly.

The complete process of working with the material is directed by an eclectic and exploratory approach. Particularly associated with qualitative research in social sciences, exploratory research attitude is a mode and approach that often directs all phases of the study. Exploratory research approach is based on open-ended questions and flexible methods. The main objective is to build a groundwork for future research: to illuminate the nature of a new or little-researched phenomenon or problem, or to re-think the approach to something that has been previously studied. The way of collecting, using or analyzing of the data/sources does not draw on an aim to explicitly answer the pre-given questions (or to prove the hypothesis). The core questions are often formulated and specified over the process of research. Review of literature/data is a commonly used method/tool in exploratory research. Explicit conclusions are rarely, if never, part of an exploratory research.5

“The exploratory researcher does not approach their project according to any set formula. She/he will be flexible and pragmatic yet will engage in a broad and thorough form of research. Those engaged in exploratory research are concerned with the development of theory from data in a process of continuous discovery.”6

Over the stages of searching, selecting, and re-contextualizing the sources, three broad yet clear principles began to guide the process. In the end, each voice reviewed meets at least one of the following criteria:

a) a popularly referenced utterance; e.g. the originator’s statements
b) a forceful approach that confirms or opposes another strong, or frequently given statement
c) an influential account: a devoted contribution applying or developing the concept


Similarly, and concurrently, the process of formulating the content began to pose demands for the text at large. In respect also to my initial research questions, the objectives of the review started to sharpen. Firstly, it targets to exemplify how the terms/notions of postinternet (art) and (the) NA are used and applied; it aims to capture the multiplicity of the interpretations. Secondly, it serves to carve out some of the terms’ key qualities similar to how they emerge as patterns found in the conversations. By patterns I mean some common (very alike, frequently given, frequently appearing) interpretations and some particularly influential analysis (theorizing, academic, profound).

As it would be unreasonable to paraphrase the countless interpretations and applications of postinternet, PIA, and (the) NA equivalently, the presented approaches are selective and thus inevitably reductive. Within the text, then, I attempt to be impartially critical. This means that all of the sources are implemented into an equally interrogative setting that imitates critical conversation. Each voice gets to challenge one another. Only the introductions are structured into a chronological order, otherwise the review is assembled into a thematically categorized design that follows patterns ascending form the conversations. For the sake of diverse and balanced architecture in the comment/commenter/context representation, concept-centric and author-centric approaches vary.

Even in a work like this where the literature has to speak in the loudest volume, also the writer’s voice remains inevitably present throughout the text. In this review, I do not attempt to hide my own persona or to be “objective” for the principle. However, I certainly use my voice rather as a critical narrator than a debater. Therefore, when it comes to my own observations and notes, I try to anchor them to the discourse level instead of focusing on taking strong stances on some specific remarks. On background there are, obviously, also my own, direct encounters with the phenomena and projects that the postinternet (art) and (the) NA signal/represent. Also, the argumentation of the selected sources has certainly had an impact on me over the process of writing. Even the locution of the encompassed literature leaks into the total thesis that, in terms of style, shows to some extent essayistic tones.

Through a profound and critical review of literature, the primary object of this thesis is to offer art education with an explicatory and conceptual framework for the terms/notions of postinternet, PIA, and (the) NA. That is: this study does not only strive to serve as an overview to some possible understandings of these terms/notions, but it also aims, from its part, indeed at defining them. The Chapter 2 deals with postinternet and PIA, and the Chapter 3 with (the) NA.

Chapter 4 on the implications for art education is expansive to the previous chapters. I begin by bringing together the concepts of postinternet (art) and (the) NA for further analytical comparison that examines the notions both from the “inside” (thematical orientations and focuses) and “outside” (leanings in and assumptions behind utilization). From these groundings I move the conversation into the context of art education. Not solely but also for my position and experience as a university student,
I focus on interrogating my second question, the implications of these notions for art education, primarily in the context of higher art education programs and university research. I do not endeavor to propose definitive answers but to take several, theoretical-speculative approaches in order to open thought-provoking perspectives. I also include a brief view to some ideas by the few art educators/researchers who have recently began to examine the notions of postinternet/postdigital.
2 POSTINTERNET AND ITS ART

a) A BRIEF BACKGROUND

In the foreword of the book ‘You Are Here: Art After the Internet’ critic/curator Ed Halter mentions how “certain aspects of culture become rapidly outdated” in the era of continuous change. This applies to language, too. Halter sets an example of the relatively new terms “‘new media’ and ‘net art’” that, despite still being in use, have become “hopelessly antiquated, clunky, uncool.” Considering Halter’s notion, it is not a surprise that also the term postinternet art (PIA) has already gained a reputation some time ago of a vague, awkward, and overused neologism. Nevertheless, as a compatible alternative is yet to be found, the term still circulates in artworld talk despite its stigma.

It was the year 2006 when the German artist/curator/theorist Marisa Olson first started to talk about ‘postinternet’ both as a condition in general and in art creation. Over the years, she has made variable remarks on others’ interpretations and updated her own take on the concept. In her article from 2011, Olson explains what she originally meant with the term – specifically with the prefix ‘post’:

I felt what I was making ‘art after the internet.’ Pressed for an explanation, [...] I said [in 2006] that both my online and offline work was after the internet in the sense that ‘after’ can mean both ‘in the style of’ and ‘following.’ For illustration, I referred to the concept of

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8 The term postinternet is known in several spellings such as ‘post-internet’, ‘post-Internet’, ‘Post Internet’, and also ‘PIA’, when used in reference to postinternet art. This thesis uses the spellings postinternet, PIA, and, in reference to both, postinternet (art).
postmodernity coming not at the end of modernity, but after (and with a critical awareness of) modernity.  

Michael Connor is one of the art world professionals who has resolutely attempted to unfold Olson’s term. In Connor’s quite literal interpretation, Olson’s earliest articulations of ‘post-Internet’ (art) positioned the creative art process “‘after’ or structurally outside of the internet.” Connor seems to suggest that back in 2006 Olson assumed rather clear distance or boundary in-between the online and offline realms.

Evidently, Olson’s configuration of ‘postinternet’ describes a societal and cultural mode or turn that she found contrasting to what was happening before. According to artist Artie Vierkant, the concept of postinternet was not a result of a particular event, but it could be argued that certain cultural shifts, namely the “introduction of privately-run commercial Internet service providers and the availability of personal computers” had a remarkable role in its development.

Connor argues that the contents and usage of Olson’s term have changed following the transfigurations of the internet. In Connors belief, the most notable shift in the very young concept of postinternet was encapsulated by the proliferation of smartphones, most notably, the release of the iPhone was released in 2007. The appearance of this new technology enabled continual connectedness to the internet and created a substantial channel for the attention economy. These changes irreversibly altered the former meaning of ‘postinternet’ because “‘after’ the internet became to merely stand for “during, during, during.”

The technological shift lucidly meant a whole new standpoint in art, as artists no longer could identify themselves as autonomous “participant-observers of internet culture,” but instead they began to operate as “knowing participants” within the “system of circulating data in which the line between artist-made, user-generated, and commercial content is decidedly blurred.” As the internet grew to host increasingly versatile and widespread uses, the seemingly nested or separate online and offline realms started to dissolve and artists began to postulate the two realities

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13 See: Olson, “Postinternet: ART AFTER THE INTERNET.”
17 Connor, "Post-Internet: What It Is and What It Was.", 63.
18 Ibid., 57, 61.
as one inseparable circumstance. Thus, the concept of postinternet (art) evolved (due to the new technology and the pervasive presence of the internet) to signify a creative and critical discourse that no more examined the issues under the closed category of ‘internet culture’, but that of culture entirely altered by the internet and neoliberal capitalism.

Artists associated with the postinternet trend are not an organized or uniform group, nor are they from the same generation. Many artists who were born before the internet, and are today producing something that might be recognized as postinternet art were part of the Net Art movement in the 1990’s. The youngest generation of postinternet artists are not pioneers of the early internet art, but were rather born into a world where the internet is a matter of course.

**ASSOCIATIONS TO ART MOVEMENTS**

Globalization might well be an overused term, but it does work in describing the multifaceted interconnectedness of many parts of the world. This ceaseless stir has also undeniably altered also the emergence and essence of what has been known as a movement in art and culture. On one hand, PIA is generally not considered a movement per se. Yet on the other hand, writers, curators, critics, and artists have largely been trying to define the term through (art) historical contextualization. Many of the analyses favor similar associations and art historical movements. Art critic Gene McHugh writes in his blog:

Dissolve the category of “New Media” into art in general by creating work that has one foot in the history of art and the other foot in the

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19 See: Connor, “What's Postinternet Got to do with Net Art?”.
22 See: Quaranta, "In Between.", 24-33.
23 Typically, commenters state that PIA is a scene, rather than a movement. There are exceptions to this: some sources insist that PIA is indeed a movement in contemporary art.
experience of network culture. Post Internet art is not about the Internet. It is not about art. It is about both.

According to curator/critic Karen Archey,

Post-Internet art must be contextualized by both the societal conditions it reacts against as well as art history, specifically an art history tied to Post-Internet’s forebears who often work through the screen.

Vierkant suggests that PIA is sort of a hybrid of New Media Art (emphasis on the technology as a media) and Conceptualism (emphasis on the idea, context, etc., instead of on the physical substrate). These ideas are not very far from artist/curator Jennifer Chan’s stand, as for her “Post-Internet is the bastard child of net.art and contemporary art.” Like the examples above suggest, Net Art is commonly referenced as the influential precursor of PIA. This assumption is not a great surprise considering Olson’s earlier quoted articulation that undeniably implies that the concept of ‘postinternet’ was outlined in connection to/in contrast with the fore-/ongoing practices of Net Art or New Media art at large.

The distinction between Net Art and PIA relies on the idea that Net Art is/was made purely in and for the internet space and its audience, whereas PIA is made to influence and be displayed both online and offline. The so-called Net artists had their peak years in the 1990’s. Even if the praxis of Net Art started to tilt during the first years of the new millennium, it was only around the year 2010 when the internet-based artists started to come together in greater numbers and to find new offline arenas for themselves. Nevertheless, the differentiation of PIA from Net Art is blurry: as Ben Vickers reminds us, early PIA was mainly found online.

The conversation around postinternet met its peak around 2013-2014. Since then, the term, and the art associated with it, had been noticed in countless well-established cultural venues and art institutions across the world. Vagueness marks the


26 Vierkant, "The Image Object Post-Internet.”


29 See: p.15.

30 See: Quaranta, "In Between.”, 28-33.

discussions on postinternet and PIA that certainly avoid fixed definitions. If we disagree with the stance that simply all art of today can be labelled as PIA, we must still assume that inconsistency and diversity are some inherent qualities of this complex category.

In the following sections, postinternet and PIA are approached through two headings that aim at encapsulating its key elements/qualities. The sections are formed following patterns that emerge from a broad repertory of sources discussing postinternet (art).

b) PIA IS ART OF/ABOUT THE ‘NOW’

POST-INTERNET IS A CONDITION IN ART AND AT LARGE

Today’s world is extensively complex and signified by rapid change. Since the late 20th century, worldwide cultural and infrastructural mutations have largely been a consequence of the evolvement of networked technology and the internet. If the changes have been swift and accelerating offline, the evolution has worked at least as fast online. As curator Brian Droitcour writes in his 2014 essay, The perils of Post-Internet Art: “the Internet of five years ago was so unlike what it is now, to say nothing of the Internet before social media, or the Internet of 20 years ago, or the Internet before the World Wide Web.”

Many descriptions find postinternet as an overall sociocultural condition and PIA as a product of it. Indeed, many articulations of postinternet concurrently outline the characterizing qualities of the concept as a condition both in art and at large. Take, for example, Vierkant’s ambitious text ‘The Image Object Post-Internet’, in which PIA is defined a “result of the contemporary moment.” In this often-referred account, Vierkant talks not only about PIA, but also about ‘Post-Internet culture’ and ‘Post-Internet climate’. Certainly, by summing up that postinternet is innately “informed by ubiquitous authorship, the development of attention as currency, the collapse of physical space in networked culture, and the infinite reproducibility and mutability of digital materials,” Vierkant’s description applies simultaneously on PIA and its circumstances.

Art critic Gene McHugh agrees that postinternet is an overall cultural condition in which the internet is not only “everyday for everyone,” but also “less a novelty and

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32 E.g. Vierkant’s account on postinternet suggests that, since the term refers not only to a certain artistic practice, but also on a societal condition, all today’s cultural objects influenced by “a network ideology” are postinternet. See: Vierkant, "The Image Object Post-Internet."


34 Vierkant, "The Image Object Post-Internet.", 3, 5.
more a banality.”

To join the consensus, Olson’s portrayal from the year 2012 finds postinternet “a moment, a condition, a property, and a quality that encompasses and transcends new media.”

Being in line with Vierkant, McHugh, and Olson, artist/writer Tyler Coburn accent the artists’ awareness of the sphere of hyper-connectedness where the “category of post-internet” refers to “an art object created with a consciousness of the networks within which it exists, from conception and production to dissemination and reception.”

Similarly, artist/writer Gary Zhexi’s relatively recent account on PIA leans on the recognition of the internet as a ubiquitous context of the everyday life. Thus, postinternet is

also a condition in the sense of a prerequisite, an injunction for contemporary artists to reflect upon the world in which they live, one in which metaphysical experience and social reality are guided by the vectors and velocities of technological change.

As satisfying as it is to find resemblance within the approaches, something disturbing calls closer attention here. Exactly where is the world that Zhexi and the others are referring to? Whose contemporary condition are they talking about? In spite of the world-wide economic connectedness and the emergence of global trends and viral hypes of all qualities, the internet and the socio-technological infrastructures are not

Figure 1. Anne Imhof. Angst II, 2016. Performance, Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin.

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35 McHugh, Post Internet: Notes on the Internet and Art.
36 Olson, "Postinternet: ART AFTER THE INTERNET.", 63.
the same everywhere. Beliefs, politics, and systems vary immensely depending on the location IRL. No matter how collective, no experience or situation is hardly comprehensive enough to pertain the entire globe homogenously. Yet, whether referring to postinternet as a trend in art, aesthetic, property, moment, quality, culture or climate, the interpreters repeatedly treat it as an internationally prevalent phenomenon.

Commonly (even systematically) the condition of postinternet is described without geographically situating, or meta-culturally contextualizing it. Those reviewers who do attempt to situate the postinternet phenomena tend to refer to the so-called global West. Archey, for instance, claims that postinternet “challenges contemporary art’s hermeticism via its built-in connection to the outside world, one that describes a cultural condition permeating Western society as a whole.”

Firstly, Archey’s idea about an inside(rs) and outside(rs) world appear problematic. Secondly, she does not even use the fluid concept of ‘Western culture’ but talks about ‘Western society’. Does contemporary art exclusively locate and belong to these so-called Western societies? With this logic the PIA scene(s) would solely exist under the current conditions of the ‘West’.

There is a clear temptation to take postinternet as a mutual ontological experience that even surpasses the importance of locality. Besides, it is undoubtedly difficult to localize the PIA scene that, in addition to belonging online, seems indeed to have spread all around. Doing just a simple study on postinternet discussions, many associated artists, critics, other commenters, and their activities appear to be part of scenes pinpointable to numerous cities spanning New York, Washington D.C, Los Angeles, California, Berlin, London, Amsterdam, Paris, Vienna, Venice, Moscow, Helsinki, Tallinn, Beijing, Tokyo, and so on. Fortunately, some projects have also been curated with the particular concern to bring together artists from around the globe. Writer/editor/journalist Steph Kretowicz’s article embracing a global perspective on art post-internet in the fashion magazine i-D, describes two projects worth mentioning. One is ‘Private Settings, Art After the Internet’, an exhibition hosted by the Modern Art Museum Warsaw in 2015. The exhibition was curated by Natalia Sielewicz, and it aimed to expand the West-centered perspective on postinternet by including not only well-known artists from the scenes of US and Europe, but also names like Sarah Abu Abdallah from Saudi Arabia, CUSS Group from South Africa, and Ada Karczmarczyk from Poland. The other noteworthy postinternet associated exhibition is the New Museum’s 3rd Triennial, ‘Surround Audience’ that also was held in 2015. Featuring also some already acknowledged US-based artists/collectives like Ryan Trecartin, DIS, and K-HOLE, the internationally broad exhibition presented works by artists from 25 different countries in total, including Basim Magdy from Egypt, Aslı Çavuşoğlu from Turkey, and others from Nigeria, Qatar, Georgia, Ukraine, Palestine and so on.

40 Archey, "Beginnings + Ends."
Here again it seems that the safest way to approach postinternet (art) is through a very open identification. Hence, postinternet might be described as a heterogeneous, continuously transmuting cultural condition, art scene, and irregularly framed category that principally penetrates, mixes-up and transcends locally and globally pinpointable phenomena.

**TRENDY AESTHETIC IS THE SINGPOST AND DRAG OF PIA**

Treating the internet both as a media and medium, PIA is commonly found to reflect the networked technologies and their meanings. According to the i-D magazine’s article *How Post-Internet Art Went Mainstream*, PIA went mainstream in 2014 by breaking out of its “underground network” and becoming increasingly realized in the art market as the aesthetic trend of the year.\(^4^2\) In the remarks on postinternet, the term aesthetic seems to principally refer to a set of certain (visual) styles, techniques and references that, unfortunately though, seem again slippery enough to be easily explained with ‘you'll know it when you see it’ type of non-analysis.

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Despite its undeniable convenience, the aesthetic-based detection and categorization is also problematic. It should not be forgotten that art associated with postinternet is essentially a pool of differing approaches and thus the individual artworks certainly vary—not only in statement, but also aesthetically. Some artists’ production draws a strong link to conceptual art, while other approaches are more flagrant to the extent that might be described as meme-art style. To find the common ground, the portrayals popularly identify the postinternet aesthetic as something that is inspired by the embedded postinternet motives: social media phenomena, advertising, design, brands and corporate aesthetics accompanied by the pervasive ambience of boredom, perplexity, anxiety and ironical attitude.

If curators and critics often emphasize PIA’s fetish-like focus on this so-called aesthetic, so do some artists. Chan, for instance, describes postinternet as “a lens and a bad-ass attitude that became a bastardized aesthetic.” Jaakko Pallasvuo similarly finds PIA recognizable indeed on the “aesthetic/attitude/detail level”:

 [...] i’ve always thought that bevel&emboss and drop shadow etc visual tropes and the distance from which people employ them were way more substantial and interesting parts of this whole post internet thing than the outlined ‘conceptual’ aspects of it (which feel self evident and boring tbh, and as outmoded as net.art is)

Also artist Dullaart emphasizes the photogenic quality of PIA:

These sculptures and prints, made to be documented in a gallery setting, will soon fill the pages of our favourite art blogs, and they will look just great. That is what they were meant to do, with and simultaneously without irony.

If trendiness is a positive label in mass culture phenomena, it might not have equally flattering connotations in art. Art trends are not epoch-making turns like movements, nor are they interesting like scenes with strongly distinct sub-cultures. Rather, they are mass effects with an inbuilt promise of freshness and inescapable ephemerality. Indeed, as early as in 2013, RHIZOME wrote that PIA “has come to be associated with certain techniques and styles more than any particular critical position.”

Even artist Coburn accuses postinternet artists as generally passive in comparison to the
previous generation of politically active net artists. In fact, for him the postinternet mode is principally market-oriented practices. He warns, “We should be careful [...] in assuming that the ‘Post-Internet’ artist’s ontological connection to the ‘outside world’ carries de facto critical freight.” In his opinion, it is appropriate to ask if and how PIA entails politics, and if its “prosumerist satires” might surreptitiously aim at delegating critical topics to activism. Vickers explains that postinternet became stigmatized by “premature canonization” because it got harnessed as a title of an art trend in which every single art student was suddenly imitating the aesthetic associated with the term. Similarly, in Zhexi’s take, the postinternet trend is primarily a social phenomenon; “a clique”:

To some it feels like a revelation of networked realities, dispelling our misplaced faith in the material; to theirs it’s descriptive of a routine contemporary banality, tedious and tautological in its obviousness. [...] For art students and digital natives everywhere, this slow awakening seemed to signal the happy realization that they had been validated in our very own art-historical ‘post-’. Whether riding down uncanny valley on a Photoshop gradient or drinking the Kool Aid on plastic beach, they had been Post-Internet practitioners all along.

Critiques commonly find PIA immature and pretentious: stuck at recycling ironical insiders’ jokes and repeating a truculent, uniform style inspired by the artists’ pathological fear of missing out. Observations like that by Zhexi who describes PIA “often seductively modish, a little bit frightening and sincere about being tongue-in-cheek,” demonstrate how the detectable postinternet aesthetic and its contained attitude have also become an indicator of lack of compelling content. PIA certainly does often look conceptual, hip, and interesting, but because to look like something is not to be something, the question goes: does it actually even aim

50 Coburn, “Beginnings + Ends.” Coburn refers also to Constant Dullard’s comment in the same article. See the footnote 49.
51 Berry Slater, "Post-Net Aesthetics Conversation, London, 2013.”, ?
52 Zhexi Zhang, "Post-Internet Art: You’ll Know It When You See It.”
54 Zhexi Zhang, "Post-Internet Art: You’ll Know It When You See It.”
55 Chan, "Notes on Post-Internet.”, 117.
for a level of profound content? In curator Droitcour’s sarcastic analogy, it does not. For him, PIA, suffering of total lack of insight, renders art similarly to how porn renders sex – by flipping it macabre or lurid. PIA is about “creating objects that look good online”; it is art “made for its own installation shots, or installation shots presented as art.”

Interestingly, when accused of shallowness, it is more a rule than an exception that PIA is denoted as merely amateurish stuff – art inherently naïve, indolent and insecure. However, many artists featured in postinternet associated shows are in fact far from being students or even freshly graduated. Iconic names like Hito Steyerl, Katja Novitskova, Jon Rafman, Ed Atkins, Ryan Trecartin, and so forth were all born before the world wide web.

![Image](image_url)

*Figure 3. Timur Si-Qin. A Reflected Landscape, 2016.*

**WE JUST CARE ABOUT WHAT WE CARE ABOUT. WE CARE ABOUT ’NOW’**

In his article The Perils of Post-Internet, Droitcour shares his account on PIA, that, in his words, “avoids anything resembling a formal description of the work it refers to, alluding only to a hazy contemporary condition and the idea of art being made in

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57 Droitcour, "The Perils of Post-Internet Art."

the context of digital technology. 59 Droitcour’s claim about the ambiguity of the descriptions has a truthful insight. Again, it appears to be impossible to find any clearly distinguishing property that would help to categorize the vast variety of differing approaches within PIA. However, some patterns do seem to ascend. For instance, it is popularly argued that the typifying concerns of PIA arise from the artists’ own realities. Certain themes have been and seem still to be representative to the scene across the globe.

In 2013, a group of artists, curators, critics, and writers 60 shared their thoughts on PIA in a joined article titled Beginnings + ends for FRIEZE magazine. In Archey’s description, PIA is art that is created and presented with a particular awareness and aid of the networks. 61 Dullaart similarly explains how “The attention economy on the web, as commodified extensively by [...] networks, has become an influence on contemporary artists.” 62 Novitskova, in turn, describes the artists’ playful use of topical material:

Many artists 63 [...] incorporate the existing pool of attention-grabbing stuff disseminated online as if it were paint or clay: trends, brands, technologies, products, images of animals, etc. They explore spaces and possibilities provided by the properties of contemporary things, creating new forms and thus approximating future realities. [...] What will be the forms of the post-austerity and new-prosperity world (from species to art works), and where will we locate the main sources of growth? 64

Art Post-Internet was an exhibition that Archey, together with Robin Peckham, curated in Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA) in Beijing in 2014. The exhibition presented currently well-known artists like Kari Altmann, Tyler Coburn, Aleksandra Domanović, GCC, Katja Novitskova, Marisa Olson, Jaakko Pallasvuo, Seth Price, Jon Rafman, Bunny Rogers, Ben Schumacher, Timur SiQin, Hito Steyerl and Artie Vierkant. In the description of the exhibition the curators explain the frame by which the artworks were assembled:

this exhibition presents a broad survey of art that is controversially defined as “post-internet,” which is to say, consciously created in a milieu that assumes the centrality of the network, and that often takes everything from the physical bits to the social ramifications of the

59 Droitcour, “The Perils of Post-Internet Art.”
60 Karen Archey, Constant Dullaart, Katja Novitskova, Chris Wiley, and Tyler Coburn, among others.
61 Archey, "Beginnings + Ends."
62 Dullaart, "Beginnings + Ends."
63 Novitskova mentions the artists: Timur Si-Qin, Pamela Rosenkranz, Jaakko Pallasvuo, Jogging, Anne de Vries and Energy Pangea (Iain Ball and Emily Jones).
internet as fodder. From the changing nature of the image to the circulation of cultural objects, from the politics of participation to new understandings of materiality, the interventions presented under this rubric attempt nothing short of the redefinition of art for the age of the internet.65

What comes to art historical contextualization and reflection, PIA associated artists have been accused of avoidance and even of complete ignorance.66 Certainly, as the *now* and the *new* are shorter than ever, things and thoughts expire unbelievably fast, and what is expired is not interesting in the postinternet era. It is all about that cutting-edge stuff and artists too must keep up with the pace of the technological and cultural evolution and phenomena, not to mention the ever-changing social media-generated micro trends.

PIA’s focus on the now appears declaratory, illustrative, and repetitive rather than powerfully responsive or imaginative. The characteristically apathetic sentiment and nihilistic slant have provoked divergent reactions, explanations, and interpretations. Some take PIA’s blatant disinterestedness toward the past as pure ignorance, a manifestation of the Y-generation’s cool kids’ lack of respect toward authority (or towards whatever) But to artists like Jennifer Chan the past is simply not interesting. PIA is art about today. For Chan “Post-internet practice […] navigates within popular systems to produce experiences that celebrate and critique (or more so, laugh at) the role of the internet in everyday life.”67 “Why not to make art that responds to online things that matter to me now,” Chan ponders.68

Some interpret PIA’s historical thinness as a tactic intending to oppose the traditions and conventions of the art history and those of the art world. Reading curator/art critic Domenico Quaranta, PIA’s indicated resistance to the past might be a follow-up to Net Art’s Avant-garde attitude.69 For Olson, the very originator of the term postinternet, sees the situation is a provision for a positive change:

> postinternet may be ahistorical insofar as it has no degree-zero, but if it could come to arrive at performing posthistorically – that is, to be critically aware of the problems historically reenacted with each new strata of historiographic sediment, then we might really get somewhere.70

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67 Chan, "Notes on Post-Internet.”, 112.
68 Ibid., 111.
69 See: Quaranta, "In Between.”, 27.
70 Olson, Marisa. "Postinternet: ART AFTER THE INTERNET."
Pallasvuo, in turn, finds any historizing of PIA very problematic and hesitates in at the idea that a considerable number of postinternet artists would draw an intentional reference to the precursory internet-based art. For him, PIA’s thematic similarities with the earlier waves of internet art do not mark any direct connection. Also Archey opposes the literal reading of the term PIA, even if the term does appear directly connected to its previous circumstance and movement. She suggests, in line with Olson, that the artists’ (ostensibly) indifferent attitude is in fact a systematic method endeavoring to break the patterns of the past. Even if a theoretical-historical framework might be necessary in saving such concepts from being merely linked to a “voguish aesthetic” or “fading trend.” Archey argues that the re-thinking of the relevance of historicizing is not, however, a job for the artists but for the system. The category of postinternet “challenges contemporary art’s hermeticism,” and that is something to celebrate. The traditional (art) world must update its conventions and turn to appreciate new art – not the other way around. The curator unfolds postinternet artists’ and the art world’s conflicting approaches to historical contextualization. The obsession for historicizing, she states, is a classic error in art institutions:

rather than understand a burgeoning art movement vis-à-vis artists, art historians often chain the future to the nearest-fitting moment of the past – no matter whether Post-Internet art and the egalitarianism of the Internet might be allergic to the canon’s endemic hierarchies.

The opponents argue that to criticize something (past, in this case) first requires knowledge about it. Wiley notes that a look backwards might also be crucial also for any speculations on our destinies.

Unfortunately, the escape from any “previously” visited horizons might have resulted in the new path to grow too narrow for all of those who suffer the same unease. Behind the façade of impersonal, repetitive aesthetic references and technical solutions, PIA is often accused of conceptual hollowness. Unquestionably, though, postinternet and its art are indeed effective in capturing something that is

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71 E.g. interest in topics like “circulation of the artwork, global networks vs local physical experience”.
73 Archey, "Beginnings + Ends."
75 Chen et al., "Art Post-Internet."
76 Archey, "Beginnings + Ends."
77 see the p.77?
78 Archey, "Beginnings + Ends."
79 Ibid.
apparently central and common to many contemporary cultures. Fear of time, antipathy for definitions, unescapable anxiety, and trust in the power of visual atmospheres – it is all there.

c) **PIA SITUATES WITHIN THE INTERPLAY OF THE ONLINE - OFFLINE / DIGITAL – PALPABLE**

*FROM THE INTERNET INTO THE WHITE CUBE AND BACK*

For curator Christiane Paul, the terms postinternet and postdigital[^1] most importantly denote our internet and digital-technology informed age. PIA, she describes, means art “conceptually and practically shaped by the Internet and digital processes” while being manifested “in the material form of objects such as paintings, sculptures or photographs.”[^2] In her article ‘Notes on Post-Internet’, artist Chan presents that PIA could ultimately be “interpreted as a philosophical translation of online culture and practices into the physical world.”[^3] Artie Vierkant’s argument is similar to the previous takes, as he claims that “Post-Internet objects and images are developed with concern to their particular materiality as well as their vast variety of methods of presentation and dissemination.”[^4] For Gene McHugh PIA is simply “art world art about the internet.”[^5]

Indeed, PIA is characterized by multilevel dialogue on and within the so-called online and offline. While being created around the idea of a rendition into the palpable, a postinternet artwork must, simultaneously meet the inherent requirement for a virtual version. Thus, a postinternet artwork might, for instance, be a social media intervention or virtual performance that is presented via art objects or

[^1]: Postinternet is not synonymous with, but closely connected to and comparable with the term postdigital that describes the current conditions by concentrating on the cultural, soci(et)al and philosophical consequences of the propagation, development and uses of digital technologies. Contreras-Koterbay & Mirocha define postdigital with a similar description that is commonly found on ‘postinternet’. According to them it does not mean anything literally ‘after digital’, but “rather strives to characterize new economic, social and cultural contexts that have been introduced in the last decade due to the general evolution of computational technologies towards even more autonomous systems, ubiquitous devices, real-time and cloud-based software and services. The term does not describe an era which is no longer formed by the presence of computational technologies.” Contreras-Koterbay, Mirocha, *The New Aesthetic and Art: Constellations of the Postdigital*, 39. See also Dufva: Dufva, Tomi. "Art education in the post-digital era."


[^3]: Chan, "Notes on Post-Internet.", 110.

[^4]: Vierkant, "The Image Object Post-Internet.”.

[^5]: McHugh, *Post Internet: Notes on the Internet and Art.*
screenshots in a conventional gallery space. The exhibition is photographed and the highly edited documentation is shared online.\footnote{See: Chan, "Notes on Post-Internet.", 110-114.}

Despite the assumption that the \textit{online} and \textit{offline} are inseparably interwoven\footnote{See THE EARLIER EXPLANATION ON THIS!!}, the two opposing words are still in common use and appear frequently in texts considering postinternet (art). The term ‘online’ is used to indicate connectedness of to the internet or a computer. According to Oxford dictionary, ‘online’ means “an activity or service” that is “available on or performed using the Internet or other computer network.”\footnote{See definition of “online”: Oxford Dictionaries. "Online | Definition of Online in English by Oxford Dictionaries." In Oxford Dictionaries | English. n.d. Accessed January 10, 2017. https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/online.} Offline, in turn, is a term that exists only after online became a concept: ‘offline’ defines as “Not controlled by or directly connected to a computer or the Internet.”\footnote{See definition of “offline”: Oxford Dictionaries. "Offline | Definition of Offline in English by Oxford Dictionaries." In Oxford Dictionaries | English. n.d. Accessed January 10, 2017. https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/offline.}

When the concepts of online and offline are mentioned in the context of PIA, they are generally treated as a) cultures whose languages are increasingly interwoven, b) environments whose traditions and conventions are contrasting, but gradually merging c) realities (containing the a) and the b)). Writers, curators and artists take differing stands when it comes to PIA’s two-folded whereabouts. The interplay means not only various concurrent forums to display, but it also places PIA in-between the schemes and cultures of the aggressively evolving internet and the stiff paradigms of the art world. The fact that PIA has taken over the institutional venues like biennales, museums, and commercial galleries, has provoked antagonistic takes that surely would not have occurred if it had settled for unconventional spaces like bars, DIY galleries, or independent artist run spaces.\footnote{Chan, "Notes on Post-Internet.",110-112.}

The 9\textsuperscript{th} Berlin Biennale 2016, \textit{Present in Drag} is a great example of a massive institutional show that was situated in four central venues (and a sightseeing boat) packed with nothing but the trendiest range of postinternet artwork by a broad selection of hot names. By describing the aesthetic line and confusing political stance taken by the \textit{DIS}-magazine’s curated biennale, Mohammad Salemy’s report about the BB9 takes a look into some critical issues considering a large body of then brand-new artwork. For him, BB9 is the first large scale institutional attempt to integrate contemporary art, not only materially [...] but also philosophically into the larger frames of creative design, commerce and popular culture. [...] DIS has created an exhibition version of what they do best online in their eponymous
magazine where they blur, if not all together remove, the distinctions between art, theory, advertising, fashion and start-up commerce. The Present in Drag both indexes Post Internet art and applies the logic of digital immanence to the organisation of the exhibition by offering a contemporary history of the rise of the Internet aesthetics through its artist selection.\textsuperscript{91}

\textbf{Figure 4. Anna Uddenberg, Droitcour, Transit mode - Abenteuer, 2014-2016. Swirl, 2016.}\textsuperscript{92}


In Salemy’s take, the Biennale’s commercial materials, “flat and digital representation of office equipment, luxury brands and fashion stereotypes,” do not work in the gallery space as they might online. Instead of criticizing it, the show turns to celebrate and even to advertise neo-liberal capitalism.\footnote{Salemy, "Berlin's belated Biennale: A response to the responses."., 5-6.}

The Present in Drag does offer a way to productively use contemporary art’s disappearance into technocapital for emancipatory objectives. The verisimilitude between the exhibition's materiality and the world of commerce makes it quite clear that DIS is not attempting to critique our sociopolitical systems but is acting out its very machinery.\footnote{Ibid., 6.}

Misgivings are common when it comes to the so-called postinternet artists’ collaboration with the art world’s venues. Many views support the idea that postinternet artists simply want to get it all – even at the cost of artistic value, unfeigned critical approach, and transparency. In his observation for FRIEZE, Dullaart, writing from an artist’s point of view, remarks, that some of his colleagues\footnote{Dullaart refers to the artists mentioned by Novitskova: Timur Si-Qin, Pamela Rosenkranz, Jaakko Pallasvuo, Jogging, Anne de Vries and Energy Pangea (Iain Ball and Emily Jones). See: Dullaart, "Beginnings + Ends."} “have started to translate the (culturally local) commercialization of the web into artworks fit to be shown in the most hierarchical and conservative medium the art world has to offer: the gallery white cube.”\footnote{Ibid.} From a curator’s perspective, Droitcour sees the situation seriously crooked, insofar as, postinternet “preserves the white cube to leech off its prestige.” It is

[...] the art of a cargo cult, made in awe at the way brands thrive in networks. Post-Internet art is in love with advertising, like a lot of art since Warhol, but it's the obsession with art-world power systems — as represented by the installation shot—— that irks me the most about it. After a century that has witnessed art in newspapers, art on the radio, art in the mail, art on television and art on the Internet, here's a self-styled avant-garde that's all about putting art back in the rarefied space of the gallery, even as it purports to offer profound insights about how a vast, non-hierarchical communications network is altering our lives.\footnote{Droitcour, "The Perils of Post-Internet Art."}

Droitcour clearly does not appreciate the encounter with a PIA object that “looks good in a browser just as laundry detergent looks good in a commercial”:

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\footnote{Photo by the author, 2017.}
Detergent isn't as stunning at a laundromat, and neither does Post-Internet art shine in the gallery. It's boring to be around. It's not really sculpture. It doesn't activate space. It's often frontal, designed to preen for the camera's lens. It's an assemblage of some sort, and there's little excitement in the way objects are placed together, and nothing is well made except for the mass-market products in it.98

Not surprisingly, similar suspicions—often by the same names—have been expressed regarding the agenda of postinternet artists with the online space as well. Droitcour states that PIA “is wholly compatible with art markets and art-world detachment.” Indeed, for the curator, PIA “flaunts a cheap savvy about image distribution and the role of documentation in the making of an art career.” Postinternet artists’ real concern with the internet is merely to have a “tool for promoting their work.”99

![Image](image-url)

**Figure 5. Ed Atkins. Us Dead Talk Love, 2012.**100

Impressions of the situation might be similar, but the perspectives on it differ. Chan says it bluntly, yet not apologetically: postinternet artists, unlike their forebears who avoided conventional art venues, find the white cube a relevant platform for exhibiting and certainly; for creating professional connections.101 She describes the contemporary struggles of entering the social games and power systems of whichever art forum, be it online or offline:

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98 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
101 Chan, "Notes on Post-Internet.", 111-114.
Privileges of access to the art world come through unlikely cross-platform friendships with critics, academic blogger meritocracy, and follower-populism. Artists with higher follower counts become aesthetic opinion leaders, soft-capitalizing on the attention of the right gallerists, art lovers, art students, and New Yorkers. To base your art practice around any one platform is to submit yourself to the social hierarchies created by impressions of influence and popularity with the communities you build and engage with.\footnote{102}

The online-offline issue has been discussed also by curator/director Hanne Mugaas, who approaches the matter from an institutional perspective. It is not only the artists who have to earn and maintain the sought-after attention and admiration of the public: “The Internet is a semi-public space, where artists and art institutions have become operators who need to communicate and compete within the world at large (moma has a Facebook page, but so does Burger King),” Mugaas reminds us that:

\begin{quote}
Today’s art institutions need to be as fluid as the art works they exhibit. [...] The art institution and its traditions are, of course, far from immune [to the effects of social media]. As a new currency based on visibility emerges through the multiplicity of ‘the digital’, the institution’s position as an arbiter of value becomes less clear; the prospect of unregulated horizontal distribution of culture poses a significant loss of its authority.”\footnote{103}
\end{quote}

Opinions over the agendas for and rightfulness of bringing PIA into museums and commercial galleries varies. It may not be criticism to use the system while merely wallowing in angst deriving from it. Yet still, it seems as if though PIA associated artists have offended many by simply using social media platforms like Instagram or art museums as is expected of today’s artists. PIA’s radicality might simply manifest as daring to be wherever it wants to be, showing whatever it wants to show, looking like however it wants to look.

**THE DISSOLVED REALITIES: LOSS OF AUTONOMY & THE ‘ORIGINAL COPY’**

Assuming a greater agenda behind PIA’s interplay within the online and offline, McHugh states that PIA aims to alter not only the conventions of the art world, but also those of the internet. From his perspective, the white cube is just a terrific space to hack: “by playing with that history of what has been marked as “art,” and successfully entering into that dialogue, these artists are changing what one thinks

\footnote{102} Ibid., 120.
of as ‘art’. One positive notion made on the BB9 is its admiration for the straightforwardness of PIA’s in exposing its ties to the neoliberal structures of the contemporary society. Salemy’s review finds the show putting “an end to contemporary art’s theatre of autonomy, thus liberating art from performing the tedious ritual of critical distance by fully embodying the problem.”

This refusal to presume that neither the art world, nor the art object, or even the audience can assume autonomy, is, also for curator Connor, the most genuine and noteworthy quality of PIA. Connor sets an example of the exhibition Brand Innovations for Ubiquitous Authorship, which took place in New York in the Higher Pictures gallery in 2012. The exhibition presented a wide range of international artists whose task was to produce an everyday object using the fabrication services of large corporations that, in turn, delivered the custom-made products directly to the gallery. Compared to its predecessors, the given project showed artistic creation that was, as Connor explains, “explicitly tied to a system of circulation of brands and images and objects, an internet-enabled neoliberal ether.” The artists of Brand Innovations had given up the assumption of the internet’s ‘outside’ – an untouched context.

The views given to the matter of autonomy link also to some philosophical reflections concerning the topic of original(ity). Referring to Krauss and Manovich’s ideas about Post-Medium Condition and Post-Media Aesthetics, Vierkant makes an important note on the condition of the networked technology that alters the ontology of objects. –The contemporary is a context of various versions: “For objects after the Internet there can be no “original” copy,” he writes.

First, nothing is in a fixed state: i.e., everything is anything else, whether because any object is capable of becoming another type of object or because an object already exists in flux between multiple instantiations. […] In the Post-Internet climate, it is assumed that the work of art lies equally in the version of the object one would encounter at a gallery or museum, the images and other representations disseminated through the Internet and print publications, bootleg images of the object or its representations, and variations on any of these as edited and recontextualized by any other author. The less developed stratagem for pointing to a lack of

104 McHugh, Post Internet: Notes on the Internet and Art.
106 Salemy, "Berlin's belated Biennale: A response to the responses.”.
109 Vierkant, "The Image Object Post-Internet.", 4-5.
representational fixity is that of taking an object to be represented (to be more direct, presented) as another type of object entirely, without reference to the “original.”

Originality has long been the historical pedestal for the ‘aura’ of an artwork. For better or worse, if not the disappearance of the original materially defined object, at least the conceptual-material extinction of the original copy, finally means complete loss of originality. Under the postinternet conditions, a work of art is more alike than ever to all the other stuff whose value is increasingly calculated in attention. It is another attractive motive that is primarily meaningful (or effective) as an instrument for post-media social frame that, in turn, is realized through entwined commercial operations.

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110 Ibid.
**SUMMARY**

To summarize the previous sections, postinternet can be understood as a term that denotes certain, socio-cultural conditions that are directly and implicitly governed by the omnipresent internet. The prevailing situation is found to manifest itself in various subjective, cultural, and political matters and phenomena. These matters are examined by postinternet artists on personal, social, philosophical, and on systems level. PIA is art that is recognized, even primarily to its thematic orientation, by its frame of aesthetic (or better, stylistic) references. It expresses and possibly even criticizes the circumstances of the internet-driven everyday that is ultimately managed by neoliberal principles. Anyhow, for its own promotion PIA does not hesitate to use any conventional or commercial online and offline forums. It is on the internet as well as in galleries, contemporary art museums, and art biennales.

Be it local specificity or temporal continuum, postinternet (art) attempts to escape anything that would make it clearly indicatable. Postinternet and PIA take the internet and the technology rooted phenomena as collectively confronted matters of the now that, in turn, is lesser than ever tied to the aspects of location and locality. With the focus on the current moment as an overall societal condition, they are accused to ignore the drastically varying geopolitical situations. The avoidance of any situating links also concerns the temporal roots. As intriguing as the originator Olson’s thought about postinternet (art) being ahistorical and posthistorical sound, it is also an unattainable idea. How could something that is, ever obtain posthistoricality? What is clear is that, whether having a motive in making a change, or just in doing what they want, postinternet artists do, indeed, mind the past. Ironically, by turning its back to the bygone, postinternet (art) is all about its ‘post’ – that is, about its fundamental, almost fearful, relation to time and to whatever it aims to antiquate.
3 (THE) NEW AESTHETIC

a) A BRIEF BACKGROUND

The New Aesthetic has been described as ‘an attitude, a feeling, a sensibility’. In part a reflection of the expanding use of digital technology, it has increasingly become an indication at almost an essentialist level of specific artistic and design tendencies and practices. [...] The term is used to describe the increasing presence in the physical world of such visual phenomena rooted in digital technology and the internet, in an effort to describe the increasing proliferation of visual languages dependent on self-generative computational structures rather than on natural language.112

‘New Aesthetic’ (NA) is a term coined by a British artist, writer, publisher, and technologist James Bridle in 2011. Bridle’s Tumblr blog The New Aesthetic is an online project and a virtual gallery showcasing visual and textual material gathered from all over the web. Bridle’s blog’s About -section describes the NA as an “ongoing research project.”113 He writes:

Since May 2011 I have been collecting material which points towards new ways of seeing the world, an echo of the society, technology, politics and people that co-produce them. The New Aesthetic is not a movement, it is not a thing which can be done. It is a series of artefacts of the heterogeneous network, which recognises differences, the gaps in our distant but overlapping realities.114

Bridle talked about the NA for the first time publicly offline in 2012 in a panel discussion titled The New Aesthetic: Seeing Like Digital Devices at the SXSW conference in Austin Texas. The conversation was immediately followed by an accelerating number of curious comments, critical observations, and conflicting definitions and fast Bridle’s notion (and its Twitter -version #newaesthetic) went viral.115 The concept was speculated to describe some “technology-based cultural

114 Bridle, "About."
115 See: Berry et al., New Aesthetic New Anxieties, 12.
and social phenomena” or possibly some “objects and artworks”). It goes without saying that already the bombastic title of the project was to trigger condemnatory takes. Indeed, many responses immediately challenged the New Aesthetic’s claimed newness and its historicity, as well as its political and ontological basis. One of the significant early contributions in the critical discussion of New Aesthetic is An Essay on the New Aesthetic, an article by science fiction author Bruce Sterling. Sterling’s tone is but excited also pointy and satirical:

The New Aesthetic is “collectively intelligent.” It’s diffuse, crowdsourced, and made of many small pieces loosely joined. It is rhizomatic, as the people at Rhizome would likely tell you. It’s open-sourced, and triumph-of-amateurs. It’s like its logo, a bright cluster of balloons tied to some huge, dark and lethal weight.

Sterling’s take was soon followed by another much-referenced response written by a group of curators, writers, and academics. In the article New Aesthetic, New Anxieties, David M. Berry et al. suggest, that Bridle’s project, and the terminology associated with it, received a lot of negative feedback because it went commonly unnoticed as a work in process. In their own account Berry et al. assure to think through and move beyond the “anxieties, misunderstandings, arguments, bruised egos and skirmishes” that the NA triggered. In addition to the countless blog entries, journals and tweets by individuals, many high-profile online magazines such the Atlantic, The Wired, Creators by Vice, and Rhizome got involved in stirring the discussion. As Berry et al. conclude, the term the New Aesthetic, the Tumblr

119 In Response To Bruce Sterling’s ”Essay On The New Aesthetic”.
121 Berry et al., New Aesthetic New Anxieties, 19.
122 Ibid., 11.
site and the “group of ideas, references and icons that its originators gathered”\textsuperscript{125} became a target of “an outpouring of frenzied attention and criticism”\textsuperscript{126} in a debate that recognized even the most ambivalent responses. Strangely, all of the different voices representing the fields of art and curation, philosophy, design, and the digital humanities spoke with an equally disturbed tone. Berry et al.’s reading might not be implausible as they argue that the crippling angst around the case tells also about the “insecurities, biases, or feelings of inadequacy” of the contributors, and thus ultimately of the “state of these disciplines.”\textsuperscript{127}

Whatever its causes may be, the anxious atmosphere did not escape Bridle’s notice either. Suddenly, on the 6th of May 2012, he closed the New Aesthetic Tumblr only a year after its opening.\textsuperscript{128} As an end-note Bridle stated that the NA project was to continue “in other forms and venues.”\textsuperscript{129} A couple of days later, in an interview given to the Huffingtonpost.co.uk, Bridle commented that his experience of being in the center of the NA hype was “deeply odd and occasionally distressing”:

Some responses to it have been fantastic and extraordinary and interesting and a lot of the other responses have been extraordinarily aggressive and misguided and simply wrong. It's a very odd experience that a lot of people out there have basically gone ‘the New Aesthetic is wrong’ and it can be many things but it can't be wrong because I just made it up.\textsuperscript{130}

The hottest debate simmered down fast. Yet still, the discussion did not end to the closure of the NA Tumblr. Again, in June 2013, Bridle wrote a defensive statement concerning his project. The NA was definitely not only an image archive, but also an interdisciplinary project including also texts and his recorded lectures on the matter. Bridle felt that the critics paid attention to the wrong things and ignored the NA’s “underlying concerns” and “its own critique and politics.” Most importantly according to Bridle, the term ‘aesthetic’ was commonly misread, as he used it simply within the context of what something “looks like.”\textsuperscript{131}

Now in 2018, Bridle’s project is on again and the archive continues to grow on the website new-aesthetic.tumblr.com.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[125] Berry et al., \textit{New Aesthetic New Anxieties}, 18.
\item[126] Ibid., 12.
\item[127] Ibid., 18.
\end{footnotes}
The term (the) New Aesthetic has been understood and used in numerous, even conflicting ways. Concurrently, the conversations apply the term in various spellings, such as ‘the new aesthetic’/‘new aesthetic’, and in short, ‘the NA’/‘NA’. While, on one hand, ‘the New Aesthetic’/‘New Aesthetic’ and ‘the NA’/‘NA’ often address explicitly to Bridle’s Tumblr, they are also used in recognizing the notion as a wider ‘movement’\(^\text{132}\), ‘non-movement’\(^\text{133}\), or ‘non-event’\(^\text{134}\). Similarly, the indicative label of ‘theory object’ appears to stand both for the NA as explained by Bridle, and for the term’s defining debate at large (especially the hype in 2011-2012). On the other hand, particularly when spelled in lowercase, ‘the new aesthetic’/‘new aesthetic’ does not seem to describe any particular accounts or objects, but rather to point to a wider set of contemporary phenomena. In this thesis the term’s reference/meaning is clarified as understood in each particular context. For ‘the New Aesthetic’/‘New Aesthetic’ I use the short, capitalized spelling ‘the NA’/‘NA’. ‘(the) NA’ is used to emphasize that the reference indicates to “all New Aesthetics” at once: to the Tumblr project, its defining conversations and accounts, and to the notion understood as a larger concept and phenomenon.

In the following sections, (the) NA is approached from three directions that introduce the notion as it is defined through the conversations originally triggered by Bridle’s namesake blog project.\(^\text{135}\)

**b) THE NA TUMBLR – A CURATED DATABASE**

NA is part meme, part techno-ethnography and part Tumblr serendipity. Its art is juxtaposition: If we put this next to that and this other thing, surely a new understanding will emerge. And you know what? It works surprisingly well. Whether that success is the product of brilliant curation or the result of feverishly sign-deciphering minds scanning image after image for clues that might not be there is academic. If it works, it works.\(^\text{136}\)

As the original platform for the concept, Bridle’s Tumblr is the starting point of the complete debate about the NA. Even the further theorized examinations and applications of the notion continuously return for discussion the NA the Tumblr. On  

\(^{133}\)E.g. Ibid., 20.  
\(^{135}\)The sources reviewed in this thesis are remarks directly posted or published to be available online. Primarily due to their significant role in the discussion, thoughts of James Bridle and contributions by Bruce Sterling, David M. Berry et al., as well as by Scott Contreras-Koterbay and Łukasz Mirocha are comparatively present.  
\(^{136}\)Watz, "The Problem with the Perpetual Newness."
May 2011, Bridle posted his initial introduction to the NA Tumblr in ‘a Really Interesting Group’ – a blog run by a London-based design partnership & organization:

For a while now, I’ve been collecting images and things that seem to approach a new aesthetic of the future, which sounds more portentous than I mean. What I mean is that we’ve got frustrated with the NASA extropianism space-future, the failure of jetpacks, and we need to see the technologies we actually have with a new wonder. Consider this a mood-board for unknown products. (Some of these things might have appeared here, or nearby, before. They are not necessarily new new, but I want to put them together.) For so long we’ve stared up at space in wonder, but with cheap satellite imagery and cameras on kites and RC helicopters, we’re looking at the ground with new eyes, to see structures and infrastructures.137

A bit later in 2011, at the web-professionals’ conference Web Directions South, Bridle introduced a surprising approach to his concept. In his closing keynote ‘Waving at the Machines’ Bridle argued that we ought to feel compassion toward technology because it “wants to be like us, and we kind of want to be more like it.”138 Bridle also presented that we already live in a “new nature” and “new culture” that the artificial intelligence and machines—the “new form” and “new beings”—increasingly inhabit among us.139 While the artist did point out that the technologies incessantly “shape our behaviours and our feelings and our culture,” he surely emphasized the urgency of collaboration:

[...] the essence is that we now live in a world that we share with the render ghosts, that we share with the technology, to some extent that we’re building, but it to a huge extent is also shaping the way we behave. And the thing to bear in mind is that we want this.140

Many immediately found Bridle’s project suspicious in multiple ways. There are indeed many issues in Bridle’s statements, but also in the responses to it. Problematically, the NA Tumblr collection became commonly treated as an online exhibition with Bridle as curator. As internet-based projects enable completely free use of the titles of an artist and a curator, they also complicate the identification of a platform as a social networking forum, database or a curatorial space.141 Furthermore, it did not seem clear to all the commenters that to curate and to collect

139 Bridle, "James Bridle - Waving at the Machines.”.
140 Ibid.
141 Berry et al., New Aesthetic New Anxieties, 32-33.
are certainly two different things. Despite these and other arguable matters, commenters like Berry et al. find Bridle indeed “employing a tested curatorial strategy of selecting images” in his aim to present a “different way of looking.” This, again, leads to another problem, as the NA project still essentially lacks an unequivocal curatorial statement.

The obscurity of Bridle’s own definitions of the project has resulted in numerous interpretations. Even if the understandings certainly vary, there are also some popular and concurring observations. Many describe the NA project as signaling a particular sensibility or atmosphere. Berry et al.’s reading summarizes this view

142 Ibid., 32.
143 Ibid., 28.
144 [Caption] “With so much attention on fake media these days, we could soon face an even wider range of fabricated images than we do today. “The concern is that these techniques will rise to the point where it becomes very difficult to discern truth from falsity,” said Tim Hwang, who previously oversaw A.I. policy at Google and is now director of the Ethics and Governance of Artificial Intelligence Fund, an effort to fund ethical A.I. research. “You might believe that accelerates problems we already have.”
145 E.g. Berry et al., among others, describe the New Aesthetic (the Tumblr) as “a vibe, an attitude, a feeling, a sensibility” (Ibid.,12.) and “an atmosphere or mood, a temporary litany of findings” that must not be considered as “a final and definitive statement” (Ibid.,19.).
well, as they explain that the NA Tumblr gathers “representations of pixels, standardized objects, calculative operations and other instantiations of applied mathematics” in order to document a sensibility associative with the future. They also remind that the Tumblr is not simply the project’s platform, but also its “computational curation tool” that operates through search and grouping methods that are likewise products of the technological development. Media theorist Eduardo Navas’ observations align with Berry et al.’s, insofar as according to him, the NA Tumblr’s digital images carry a “direct self-reference to their definition based on the aesthetics of computing.” They are examples of material that has an apparent, innate, and multifold connection to technology and the online systems.

Even if the Tumblr’s presented objects would have something in common, the assortment is so heterogeneous, that it might initially appear so many as arbitrarily assembled. By the template, the NA Tumblr lays the emphasis on a multitude where individual objects serve principally as fragments in a collage. Some have interpreted this as disinterest toward the content: the NA might simply be about creating a “digestible” presentation, or about concepting, similar to how it is done in the creative commercial fields. This would mean that the NA Tumblr is merely a catalogue or handbook for topical imagery and notions. Navas argues that Bridle’s curating, or rather, remixing, works like citing without caring about the reference. According to Berry et al. to read the NA as a superficial project focusing on the aesthetic “in the first instance” would means that it perpetuates “the obfuscation of the sociological and political reality of computational conditions.” They conclude that “surface digitality elides computational realities that inform aesthetic feeling, while holding unclear or haphazard investments in such hidden or lower level realities,” they conclude.

Bridle’s own mention of the Tumblr as a mood-board might actually be very accurate in describing the project’s “curatorial” method. But just what kind of a mood does the presented material arouse? Its depicted and claimed robot vision —rather than making the viewer feel compassionate towards the new technologies— presents an anxious and alienating outlook to the contemporary societies' technology-mediated (infra)structures. Additionally, Bridle’s machine-positive arguments were found to utterly ignore the issues of power that are materially, structurally, and functionally embedded into the relationship of the human and the computed. Berry et al. for

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146 Ibid., 15.
147 Ibid., 12.
148 Ibid., 47.
151 Berry et al., New Aesthetic New Anxieties, 12.
153 Berry et al., New Aesthetic New Anxieties, 47.
instance, have described the NA project to celebrate the “socio-political asymmetries perpetuated by data-mining, the privatized social graph, facial recognition technologies, drone attacks, and camouflage.” Sterling, in turn, was neither convinced about Bridle’s idea of the machine vision nor his tendency to humanize technology:

Dazzle camouflage has nothing to do with “machine vision.” Machines are incapable of a state of mind like “dazzle.” Camou is all about human vision. Glitches and corruption artifacts aren’t “machine vision,” either. Those are the failures of machine processing, and failures of machine displays built for human vision.

As the conversation has gone on, Bridle has gotten chances to sharpen up his statements. At the SXSW conference 2012, his tone had already become more serious as he explained how our technologies and devices are “learning to see, to hear, to place themselves in the world”:

Phones know their location by GPS. Financial algorithms read the news and feed that knowledge back into the market. Everything has

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154 Ibid., 13.
155 Sterling, "An Essay on the New Aesthetic.”.
a camera in it. We are becoming acquainted with new ways of seeing: the Gods-eye view of satellites, the Kinect's inside-out sense of the living room, the elevated car-sight of Google Street View, the facial obsessions of CCTV.\textsuperscript{157}

The same year, disputing the accusations of the NA as apolitical, \textit{aeon} magazine insisted the project as, a serious attempt to critically converse the invisible structures of power, namely through the notions of gaze and knowledge.\textsuperscript{158} In 2013, artist, critical theorist, and curator Michael Betancourt found the Tumblr’s material as capturing the machine vision well:

Bridle's 'new aesthetic' also contains examples of camouflage used to 'hide' from digital military systems. [...] Unlike earlier approaches that addressed specifically human recognition and capabilities, contemporary camouflage mimics the pixilation of digital imagery -- it is addressing not human sight, but the automated recognition systems of machines and the digital cameras that accompany them. This shift from a primary concern with human recognition to the disruption of machine vision is a transformation of degree and locus of address, mirroring the shifts posed by the 'new aesthetic' generally.\textsuperscript{159}

The NA the Tumbler is, for obvious reasons, an inseparable aspect of the (the) NA as long as the term is taken as a philosophical concept. In any case, it may be that the term will best reach its potentials if the NA blog is primarily treated as a practical tool or lens for targeting critical discussions on certain topics. Ultimately, it is a matter of perspective if what counts is the entitlement or success of the NA as a curatorial online project, or the outcomes and the further developments of the notion.

c) \textit{(THE) NA EXAMINES THE CONDITION OF THE POST-DIGITAL}

As the previous section on the NA Tumblr shows, to examine the emergent atmosphere of the postdigital is anything but a simple task. – The difficulties start


from the struggle of describing and comprehending computational related notions through languages, that largely base on pre-internet concepts. Terms like ‘digital’ and ‘the internet’ are commonly used and defined by contrasting them with terms like ‘anologue’, ‘palpable’, ‘physical’, or even, ‘the real’. More explanatorily, they are found to exist within the computational language of code and to operate with an algorithmic logic.\textsuperscript{161} The Oxford dictionary of English describes ‘digital’ as “relating to, using, or storing data or information in the form of digital signals” and “involving or relating to the use of computer technology.”\textsuperscript{162} ‘Computational’, in turn, is defined as “using or relating to computers,” and, “relating to the process of mathematical calculation.”\textsuperscript{163} Digital and computational are thus not synonyms, but strongly interconnected terms that both refer to the so-called computer language and the binary system\textsuperscript{164}.

According to Bridle, the NA is, indeed, an attempt to also address also the linguistic issue. In his opinion “all our metaphors are broken”:

The network is not a space (notional, cyber or otherwise) and it’s not time (while it is embedded in it at an odd angle) it is some other kind of dimension entirely. BUT meaning is emergent in the network, it is the apophasic silence at the heart of everything, that-which-can-be-pointed-to. And that is what the New Aesthetic, in part, is an attempt to do, maybe, possibly, contingently, to point at these things and go \textit{but what does it mean?}\textsuperscript{165}

Nonetheless, awkwardly, the contradictory allegories and problematic dichotomies are also typical to the discussions defining the NA’s. The notion of the NA is, also semantically, thus stuck within its own target of study; within the conditions of the ‘pre’ and the ‘new’. Berry et al.’s description of the NA contrasts culture with the digital. In their take the NA “[...] highlights the fact that something digital is a happening in culture – something that we have only barely been conscious of – and also that culture is happening to the digital.”\textsuperscript{166} This idea of an emergent rupture;

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[164]{Computers use the binary system that consists only of 1 and 0 as on and off; yes and no.}
\footnotetext[165]{Bridle, "#sxaesthetic."}
\footnotetext[166]{Berry et al., \textit{New Aesthetic New Anxieties}, 47.}
\end{footnotes}
“blurring”\textsuperscript{167}, or “transfer”\textsuperscript{168} between the algorithmic/digital and physical/analogue is apprehended as one of the main expressions of the NA. As reported by researcher Scott Contreras-Koterbay and researcher/journalist Łukasz Mirocha, the NA recognizes this intermixing for instance as an increasing appearance of “visual languages dependent on self-generative computational structures rather than on natural language.”\textsuperscript{169}

Figure 9. Images discussing pixel/glitch. Screenshot from aeon article about the NA.\textsuperscript{170}

But how does the NA then actually address these matters? According to Bridle the collision between “‘the real’” and ‘the digital’, the physical and the virtual, and the human and the machine” are in the NA Tumblr illustrated by glitch imagery. Glitch is a malfunction in a system or program of a computing device and it commonly disturbs the user experience as ‘breaking’ and ‘freezing’ of the screen into a pixelated or otherwise abnormal image.\textsuperscript{171}

\textsuperscript{167} Bridle, “#sxaesthetic.”.
\textsuperscript{168} Betancourt, "Automated Labor: The 'New Aesthetic' and Immaterial Physicality.”.
\textsuperscript{169} Contreras-Koterbay, Mirocha, The New Aesthetic and Art: Constellations of the Postdigital, 10.
\textsuperscript{170} Wiles, Will. "The machine gaze.”
Screenshot by the author.
\textsuperscript{171} Bridle, “#sxaesthetic.”.
Glitched imagery and images depicting the employment of glitch as a visual pattern in art and design are probably the most iconic visualizations of the NA Tumblr. One example of the NA’s glitch-inspired material is its much-featured pixel-sculpture images. Pixel-sculptures are physical objects designed with a cubical pattern that resembles pixels. Some think that the images of pixel-sculptures simply depict “physical renditions of a digital aesthetic.” For others, the NA image collection is successful in recognizing “information as instrumentality” and “immateriality as physicality.”

Berry et al. arrive to declare that by registering glitch as everywhere repetitively occurring “‘eruption of the digital into the physical’”; as “‘iruption’” the NA actually marks it as an ontological condition. This so-called ‘glitch ontology’ is a notion also recognized by Contreras-Koterbay & Mirocha, who find glitch convenient in the uncovering of hidden structures:

The postdigital era is marked by the logic of constant, seamless and equally obfuscated updates, which do not longer take place at the interface level. Today’s cloud-based and ubiquitous computing systems such as Google and Facebook algorithms, are being constantly rewritten and updated, often without the user’s knowledge. Noticing, analyzing and archiving glitches in the everchanging postdigital technologies is one of the few practices that enable us to critically reflect on the development of flux technologies of the postdigital age.

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172 Due to the rapid evolution of technology, glitch will soon be history as visibly pixelated imagery Bridle, "#sxaaesthetic." Nevertheless, because of the great complexity of code/software, the systemic errors themselves will remain core issues in the development of human-computer design. Berry et al., New Aesthetic New Anxieties, 46.

173 Glitch is documented by the Tumblr collection in its many forms, such as “encoding errors, algorithmic misidentifications of faces, pixilation / scan lines / digital noise”. Betancourt, "Automated Labor: The 'New Aesthetic' and Immaterial Physicality.”.


175 E.g. For Contreras-Koterbay and Mirocha glitches are “a fundamental aspect of New Aesthetic objects, the means by which they are apparent and recognizable to the user”. Contreras-Koterbay, Mirocha, The New Aesthetic and Art: Constellations of the Postdigital, 85.


177 See e.g.: Berry et al., New Aesthetic New Anxieties, 36.


179 Berry et al., New Aesthetic New Anxieties, 45.


181 Contreras-Koterbay, Mirocha, The New Aesthetic and Art: Constellations of the Postdigital, 100.
The postdigital age, evidently, means conditions of complexity as the societies construct through increasingly abstract, technology-driven structures. The consumers’ acts and experiences are continuously rendered digital to be used and produced by computational systems.\textsuperscript{182} Data-shadows operate in the algorithmic jungle tracking and shaping our beings and behaviors via infrastructures and personal devices. In 2016, Contreras-Koterbay & Mirocha described the circumstance for experiences in the contemporary, neолiberally maneuvered society as “mixed reality,” “the synthesis,” “the betweenness” and the “hyperrealities.”\textsuperscript{183} Five years earlier, in 2011, Bridle talked about “hyper-contemporaneity” as the condition that the NA is expressing.\textsuperscript{184}

Reading Golumbia,\textsuperscript{185} Berry et al. refer to their present as the “age of the algorithm.”\textsuperscript{186} Describing it also as “a computational Moment,”\textsuperscript{187} they involve the term ‘computationality’, which is an umbrella concept of sort in its originator David M. Berry’s texts about the NA. Approaching this notion through Heideggerian perspective, Berry et al. define computationality as no less than an ontotheology marking and “a new ontological ‘epoch’ as a new historical constellation of intelligibility.”\textsuperscript{188} Additionally, by employing also its known forms of ‘computation’ and ‘computational’, they explain that computationality functions through an “operative body of computational practices and expectations” encompassing “a central, effective, dominant system of meanings and values that are abstract but also organizing and lived.”\textsuperscript{189}

Contreras-Koterbay & Mirocha’s arguments align with Berry et al.’s findings, as they confirm that computationality covers “a set of social and cultural practices rooted in digital technology” and defines as “an ontological description of the contemporary civilization which is deeply shaped by software and digital management of data.”\textsuperscript{190} Computationality thus marks contemporaneousness as occurring: as a condition and structure of manifold hyperrealities defined by “computational knowledges, practices, methods and categories.”\textsuperscript{191} Code/software, then, are the paradigmatic case of computationality, responsible for the constructing and mediating of the systems of contemporary civilization.\textsuperscript{192}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{182} See e.g. Ibid., 25.
\textsuperscript{183} Ibid., 27.
\textsuperscript{184} Bridle, “James Bridle - Waving at the Machines.”.
\textsuperscript{186} Berry et al., New Aesthetic New Anxieties, 15.
\textsuperscript{187} Ibid., 23.
\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., 44-45.
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid., 44.
\textsuperscript{190} Contreras-Koterbay, Mirocha, The New Aesthetic and Art: Constellations of the Postdigital, 38.
\textsuperscript{191} Berry et al., New Aesthetic New Anxieties, 45.
\textsuperscript{192} See: Contreras-Koterbay, Mirocha, The New Aesthetic and Art: Constellations of the Postdigital, 100.
\end{footnotesize}
In visual instances and through theorization, the NA has been found potential in (re)present computationally and the means by which it governs the on-goings in the society and at an individual’s level. In 2013 Bridle stressed (in a tone considerably different from his earlier let’s-make-friends-with-the-machines) the urgency to focus the debate about NA on the necessity of understanding technology as the only way to avoid being merely “consumed by it.” He stated that “Technology is political. Everything is political. If you cannot perceive the politics, the politics are being done to you.”

193 Understood as an approach and method beyond the Tumblr project
194 On computationality, glitch and the New Aesthetic, see also: Stunlaw, "Glitch Ontology."
195 Bridle, "The New Aesthetic and Its Politics."
Bridle is not the only one who has thought like this, nominating it as a theory object whose “projective attunement speaks not to a romance not with God or the internet, but with the bemusing inhumanity of media power”\footnote{Berry et al., New Aesthetic New Anxieties, 23.}. Berry et al. are one of the active contributors in the shaping of the NA as a politically aware notion and approach. Engaging several perspectives, they pose a demand to interrogate the

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Banksy_overload.png}
\end{figure}
neoliberally governed computational condition, or the “technocultural present” so as to examine what it means for aesthetic practices and encounters – and vice versa. According to them, experimental and critical (art) projects might be at place in finding new concepts and methods to think of and through the political infrastructures as they become realized in the “aesthetics of comportment” – in “orientations with objects, relationships, things and communities.” Betancourt too thinks that the growing ascendency of inanimate agency is a central topic for the NA. In his account, the NA is an applicable notion in the examination of the automated and autonomous machine labor and production. Talking about a “bias of digital capitalism against the social,” Betancourt finds the NA aiding the uncovering of the “paradox of automation, labor, and value production: the cultural, historical, and aesthetic ruptures between automation and the (traditional) conceptual mappings of human society.”

Contreras-Koterbay & Mirocha’s ideas resonate with those of Berry et al. and Betancourt. For them, the NA already has, like it should as postdigital aesthetics, evolved into a multidisciplinary pragmatic-theoretical approach. By analyzing our interaction with the technology and the “new non-anthropomorphic agents, forces and computational patterns,” it examines the influences of artificial and autonomous objects that are present both in the digital and physical realms. In their take, NA enables the revelation of the “grain” of computation by picturing the dominance that digital objects perform over us. Through an analytical approach, it has a potential to uncover the “intertwined layers of algorithms and computation that contemporary civilization is built on.”

When its focus areas are described, the NA is commonly taken as an indicator of and tool for uncovering, marking, and analyzing certain, computation related material-agental situations and their socio-political meanings for the human culture at large.

\[d\] (THE) NA IS AN OBJECT EMBEDDED INTO ITS OWN THEORETICAL TARGET

(The) NA is a manifold, collectively formed notion that indicates the entanglements of the digital and the so-called physical realm(s) as well as the consequences of their

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198 Ibid., 17.
199 See e.g. Ibid., 55.
200 Ibid., 56.
201 Betancourt, "Automated Labor: The 'New Aesthetic' and Immaterial Physicality."
203 Ibid., 38.
204 Ibid., 74.
205 Ibid., 11-12.
mixing. It was around 2012 when the case of the NA got recognized in the
discussions on the technological development and its societal effects.²⁰⁶

The term is not, by origin, related to any theoretical account, but it is innately formed
of content that calls theorization. What has hindered (the) NA from becoming a
theory per se, is its multiplicity and nebulosity: its openness and tendency to escape
definitions. The notion has been found particularly confusing because of its twofold
status as on one hand a title of an ambitious blog-project and on the other hand, a
philosophical neologism with a confusing meaning:

[...] the New Aesthetic claims a status as an emergent aesthetic, but
does not really aspire to any sort of active or emergent impact. While
it makes claims about the reality of the present, it does not wish to
politically affect views or induce behavioural changes in that reality,
like art commonly does. It merely documents and collects.²⁰⁷

According to Sterling, the NA and other “Theory objects” or “shareableconcepts,”
might be “collectively-intelligent” but also possibly useless and increasingly
unbearable to describe. (But as “squamous, crabgrass-like entities where people
huddle around swollen, unstable databases.”)²⁰⁸ In Watz’s analysis the NA’s attempt
to identify the very latest transformations in the condition of the human culture is
done “obliquely and from the flank, with subtle observations rather than head on
with manifestos [...].”²⁰⁹ Contreras-Koterbay & Mirocha’s note summarizes the
critical remarks insofar as the NA is a “nonmovement” impossible to summarize or
define, yet easy to indicate:

It’s really cool, in a way, that a thorough academic approach to the
New Aesthetic has not emerged so far when so many new categories
instantly become the subjects of a feverish academic onslaught. [...] The New Aesthetic aims to cover so many contemporary social and
cultural phenomena that any disciplinary approach would be too
limited to analyze it as a whole.²¹⁰

Commonly, the discussions on (the) NA focus on analyzing the usefulness of the
concept by assessing its adequacy, namely its informativity, philosophical-
conceptual depth, and critical capacities. While proclaiming the scattered Tumblr
collection “more symptomatic than exemplary of a computational paradigm in
creative work, of whatever kind”²¹¹ Berry et al. also observe the NA as an

²⁰⁷ Berry et al., New Aesthetic New Anxieties, 37.
²⁰⁹ Watz, "The Problem with the Perpetual Newness."
²¹¹ Berry et al., New Aesthetic New Anxieties, 47.
“innovative interdisciplinary approach”212. As such, it does not even aim at making a manifesto or formulating any “autonomous aesthetic grammar,” they claim.213 Conflicting in terms yet agreeing in the message, Navas argues that the NA differentiates from the former paradigm shifts because it does not attempt to be “innovative” but rather it focuses on operating through its native embeddedness to “meta.”214

The greatest problem, for many, is that the NA does not seem to be critically aware of its own case of origin. It has been accused of ignorance toward its premises and materiality as natively digital. As early as in 2012 Berry et al. pointed out the intrinsic paradoxicality of the NA that, in its attempt to reflect upon the ubiquitous post-digital condition, ignores its own status as media thus remaining “caught in the computational regime itself.” In this sense it “seems to evoke what already was, rather than what might be.”215 Furthermore, if the NA fails to acknowledge the importance of the “embodied experiences,” it inevitably looks over the actual contexts and politics behind the argued mixing of the digital and the physical. “It is like buying a domain name, but not knowing how to build a website.,” they assert.216

Evidently, the case still necessitates yet another critical perspective. It is well known that the NA was made collective. However, for a reason or another, it actually is rarely treated as a project (and notion) that is intentionally open; indefinite by its scope, conceptually open-ended and ‘on-going’ by its durational frame. Bridle himself has emphasized the NA’s experimental and collective nature from the beginning. In 2011, he wrote:

        [...] I first realized that NA was “a thing” not in that first blog post [...] but when people started responding and writing about it. They started coming to me, bringing things, and saying “is this New Aesthetic?” or even “I think this is New Aesthetic” and I’d go yes, possibly, or better, why do you think that?

As a notion (the) NA equally encompasses Bridle’s declarations as it does everyone else’s contributions. The popular label of a ‘theory object’ marks (the) NA as a target of self-defining discourse attracting explanatory theorizations. Strangely, the commenters still seem to almost systematically disregard their own responses as actively effecting and altering the meanings of the term. Ultimately, it is precisely this openness and argued superficiality of (the) NA that have resulted in important contributions highlighting critical matters and building depth for the notion. In spite of (or even for) its awkward reputation and the undeniable challenges of developing

212 Ibid., 11.
213 Ibid., 15.
215 Berry et al., New Aesthetic New Anxieties, 15.
216 Ibid., 37.
217 Bridle, "#sxaesthetic."
the notion toward in-depth meanings, there might be reason to tackle the NA’s potentials. In Contreras-Koterbay & Mirocha’s words:

leaving a discussion of this increasingly important development to the vagaries of a passing fad as it hits the peak of its popularity lasting no more than a few months is a mistake.218

![Figure 11. A cursor-sculpture was part of the interactive URBAN CURSOR art project realized in Catalonia and online in 2011. Screenshot of a post on the NA Tumblr.](image)

(The) NA is a manifold, philosophical notion and discursive object embedded into its own theoretical target. It is not only used as a tool to exemplify or examine the consequences of the technological development, but also as the title for particular cultural-material-temporal conditions. The term is used in an attempt to address

219 [Caption] “The object, which is shaped as an oversized 3-dimensional computer cursor (pointer), was placed on a square in Figueres, Catalunya during the cultural festival Ingrávid. Here, people could touch it, move it around and sit on it as an alternative to the benches. Despite being removed from its normal screen based environment, the cursor was still in touch with the digital world. Via an embedded GPS device, the cursor transmitted its geographic coordinates to a website. At the website, the coordinates were mapped in Google Maps thereby documenting the cursor’s movements in the physical world and making it possible for participants to see how they collectively helped move the object around. During the festival participants could also upload photos of the cursor at the website. The photos were automatically placed on the map by matching the photos’ digital time stamp with the GPS coordinates.” Bridle, James. “The Object, Which Is Shaped As an Oversized...” *The New Aesthetic* (blog). November 28, 2011. Accessed May 15, 2018. http://new-aesthetic.tumblr.com/post/13449410654/the-object-which-is-shaped-as-an-oversized. Screenshot by the author.
many important matters but it only occasionally it manages to take an in-depth look into those subjects on the side of the continuous analysis of its own contours. Being articulated by countless voices at different phases of its age, the NA is not only one, but indeed many things.  

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e) SUMMARY

Revising the main points of the previous sections, (the) NA is can be described as a collectively thinking theory object: a polyphonic debate formed of and around self-defining declarations. Some aim at describing the concept by asking what (the) NA was and is as a social-media project, as a cross-disciplinary creative approach, or even as a set of new types of objects native to the condition of postdigital/postinternet. 222 Others discuss its social, cultural, political, and philosophical purposes and potentials, by asking what it does or might do in speaking of and through the accelerating technological development.

Terms like sensitivity and atmosphere appear to address (the) NA’s heightened awareness of the interconnected political and infrastructural systems and mechanisms of the contemporary global society. – The NA Tumbler tried to show what (the) NA is still assumed to demonstrate: an atmosphere and structure surrounding the human culture. It is a particular state of newness, nowness – it contains a prophesy of something that is emergent. 223 In order to hold its rubric, (the) NA needs to update its (re)presented views continuously. Taking that concept builds on and targets to discuss temporal phenomena, the stress it has certainly suffered from the moment of its establishment is the anxiety of/for super-novelty.

(The) NA theory object is asserted collective and open. While these features could convert into its virtue, so far they are mostly found as its drag. Under an analytical radar (the) NA conclusively transforms itself. Its defining statements are conflicting not only because the interpretations simply do not align, but also due to the evolution of the term over the several years long discussions. (The) NA is indeed many; ultimately, its meanings and potentials are as numerous as are its articulators and its described, fleeing conditions.

\[220\] See: Berry et al., New Aesthetic New Anxieties, 11. ‘Recent NA’
\[222\] See: Contreras-Koterbay, Mirocha, The New Aesthetic and Art: Constellations of the Postdigital.
\[223\] See, for instance: Berry et al., New Aesthetic New Anxieties, 12-14.
4 POSTINTERNET (ART) MEETS (THE) NA MEETS ART EDUCATION

In the following sections I will firstly bring the concepts of postinternet (art) and the NA together. Putting these terms against each other, I will examine and compare their use as well as their meanings. Secondly, I will speculate on their implications for art education (and vice-versa) by also including thoughts presented by some art educators/researches who have started to work with these concepts. Finally, I will summarize the main objectives and purposes of this thesis and critically reflect on its limitations.

a) INTERSECTIONS FOR POSTINTERNET (ART) & (THE) NA

Whether one believes in the theoretical and art-historical value of the post-digital, post-Internet, and New Aesthetic concepts or not, their rapid spread throughout art networks testifies to a need for terminologies that capture a certain condition of cultural and artistic practice in the early 21st century.  

The term postinternet (art) was coined by Marisa Olson in 2006, and (the) NA in 2011 by James Bridle. Both originators are multi-creatives working in the important art capitals of New York (Olson) and London (Bridle). Around 2012, the conversations on these notions also began focusing on their effects on the offline realm, making them largely influential for the mainstream contemporary art and exhibiting art world, as well as for writings by curators, critics and theorists from a range of backgrounds. Focusing on the consequences and meanings of the entanglement of the earlier and newer media, technological systems and realms, postinternet (art) and (the) NA are entwined and overlapping, technology and internet critical concepts.

Despite their undeniable connectedness, it is possible to notice some dissimilarities in the usage and orientations of the terms. To make a rough distinction, the conversations on postinternet ravel around notions like online/offline and

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virtual/real, while (the) NA is often associated with the concept of postdigital and therefore with notions like software/hardware and digital/analogue. Postinternet, as it has become clear, is a term prominently connected to PIA that again is a widespread, influential shift on the scene of contemporary art. PIA examines the internet as a nest of socially, culturally and politically influential phenomena that are relevant right now. That is, PIA recognizes a certain trend in art and claims to address a particular set of concerns that are a product of the postinternet era. (The) NA, in turn, is a notion that aims at hosting transdisciplinary and theoretical takes on diverse phenomena native to the postdigital moment.\(^{225}\) (The) NA contains a strive to be(come) an active and profound intellectual source and concept, it is a collectively shaped ‘theory object’. In actuality (the) NA is a set of theoretical approaches as well as a social media phenomenon. All its instances are inseparably tied to its pragmatic case of origin of artist Bridle’s Tumblr project.

Chapters 2 and 3 describe the transition from the times of manifestos and movements into the times of flux of ultrafast trends and phenomena. In this moment, as it seems, the gap between the history and present has grown incredibly narrow as the primary interest is to pin down the speeding ongoing and the emerging: the now and the next. Concurrently and consequently the attempt to track and name shifts; to make sense of what is and will be, has become a desperate task. New terms are the most native products of their current situation, and many of today’s neologisms are “aware” in addition to being fast and cool. As notions that aim to indicate a new now while still conveying the struggle of grasping anything on time, postinternet (art) and (the) NA are also great examples of the type of concepts that are tuned with ironical and anxious tones. They express qualities of presence that is governed by, and lived through, an accelerating speed. Ambivalence is essential to them in both content and use: on one hand, these terms seem informative and relevant, yet on the other hand, they are hazy, awkward, and impractical.

Contreras-Koterbay & Mirocha present that beyond a form of digital creativity or a mere signpost for recognizing software as the first principle for our undertakings and experiences, the NA can be seen as “a defining feature of contemporary existence.” As such, this claim is identical to the descriptions of postinternet (and postdigital) as the condition of the present era. Thus, in not only describing the current circumstances but also marking them, the NA is a concept belonging to postinternet and postdigital as they concurrently belong to it. Interestingly, the cultural and soci(et)al state that these terms capture is treated as a type of viral/global trend, rather than a locally specific situation or scene.\(^{226}\) Contreras-Koterbay & Mirocha write:

> The fact that such critical approaches as the New Aesthetic, the postdigital, post-internet, post-capitalism etc. have lately emerged and are deeply concerned about the role of computational technologies in today’s reality, only proves the fact that the

\(^{225}\) In comparison with postinternet, the term postdigital focuses on the latest technological developments and the materiality of the digital. See footnote 81

\(^{226}\) Contreras-Koterbay, Mirocha, *The New Aesthetic and Art: Constellations of the Postdigital*, 13
computational is no longer the avant-garde of our civilization and as such is of minor importance to the general public. On the contrary, it rather proves that it has become the condition of existence of today’s reality and, for better or worse, has greatly permeated our everyday lives.\footnote{Ibid., 42}

Postinternet (art) and (the) NA are inhabited by concurring, conceptual-philosophical leanings beyond the scope of contemporary art and creative field to broader discussions on worldwide sociocultural and subjective consequences of new technologies. There is indeed something very intriguing about their total embeddedness into, and feverish focus on the on-going as a singular, computation-governed, temporary condition. Postinternet (art) and (the) NA address particular types of qualities of the current conditions of/for being and doing. Their signaled reality is realized through the streams of Instagram filtered images, bitcoin payments, digital participations to Facebook events, and #mood conducted by Spotify’s taste-tailored soundtracks. This ordinary-sounding contemporariness marks historically exceptional existential conditions.

Images have always had an almost supernatural power to evoke feelings and needs. However, the latest worldwide societal mutations into the ‘information societies’ have not only incalculably increased the flow of stimulating material, but also with the aid of intelligent networked information technologies, they have radicalized the ways individuals are directed. The digital itself is (a) political matter and I can confidentially claim that nearly all images (whether on the screen or printed) we encounter today are a result of a digital processing. The image object is also conceptually challenged by the changed meanings of such qualities as proportions, form, or media, as well as by the altered definitions of ‘original’ and ‘copy’.

Thanks to data-driven marketing: personalized (image-based) merchandising, the internet knows our needs and tastes better than we do. Conversations about surveillance and privacy and attention have reached another level especially after the Web 2.0 and the recent scandals about information leaks. The notions of postinternet/postdigital and (the)NA designate a moment where attention economics tune the design of the user interface of software. Attention has, at least in the western(ized) cultures, become a commodity, lifestyle, and form of labor. It is an industry that employs individuals (e.g. social media influencers) and companies (data-mining and -analysis, fintech).

The situation obviously means changes for artistic, curatorial, and art institutional practices as well as for their relationship with audiences and the art object. The number of followers, likes, views, shares, etc., also measure the level of success in the creative field that has not escaped the market-orientated ether. According to Chan, the anxiety of the new wave of “digital nomad” artists derives exactly from
the perplexing demands of the times of post-everything. To exist as an artist requires commitment to the routine of constant presence and participation:

Participate to relieve the fear of missing out, and the loss of meaning and agency over self-representation. Participate for want of being discovered through reblogs and linkshares (but not LinkedIn). Post-internet art is frivolous, fickle and dandy, but even partying is hard work. You have to get ready, look your best, have energy to dance, and make enough to pay for cabs and coatchecks. 228

Thinking about participation and presence leads us to notice how the internet – and it’s becoming into the everyday platform for being and doing – has also expanded the meanings of space/place. As easily realized via popular notions (such as online and offline), the now is essentially tied to the aspect of location (here). The internet is often referred to as space or environment. However, the online requires neither physical presence nor particular timing. The way of being in contact via the internet’s social networks enables exchange in real-time – that is, immediately and independent to the parties’ proximity and location in the palpable real(m). From this perspective, the internet has added another layer to the meaning of accessibility.

The changes in the meanings of physical place, location, and locality become concrete in the way that the information network and its hosted global market shrink the world. Virtual highways do not just bridge, but they also gradually homogenize local cultures. Internet-rooted scenes and subcultural phenomena incorporate contributors from varying geographical localities. ‘Virtually local’ subcultures and communities are based on digitally collective experiences that utilize and create aesthetically and conceptually particular modes of communication and self-expression. It is, however, important to notice that the notions of internet/digital scenes, communities, and subcultures are very difficult to frame because the influencers, followers, and participants are not necessarily in direct contact with each other, nor are they organized in any way. Furthermore, as the postinternet/postdigital denote, the internet and the palpable domain are obviously not separate, but rather they are entangled. The geographically widespread PIA scene is a good manifestation of this, as addressed in the Chapter 2. In the same breath, it is worth noting that the grounding idea of collective experiences is not as simple as it sounds, given that our conceptions about the reality and current on-goings tend to base on algorithmically-curated information bubbles.

For the subject, the constant mobility and digital presence seem to also mean identity crisis, apathy, and existential angst. The ubiquitous present marks a state of presence that is multiple and fluid; nowhere instead of now/here.229 The amorphous unease derives from the ache to be special and urge to belong. The anxious post-

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228 Chan, "Notes on Post-Internet.", 112
229 See e.g. Chapter 2, sections b), c)
contemporary subject is a nomad who enjoys outstanding conditions of ostensible liberty while (semi-consciously?) suffering the fact that their subjectivity is a neoliberal product. 230 PIA can be found to express this type of privileged agony.

The ambiguity of the definitions and usages of postinternet (art) and (the) NA show that the developers and contributors to these concepts find themselves in a moment of “transition” amongst the irreversible rush toward postinternet/postdigital practices and knowledges. That is, the notions of postinternet (art) and (the) NA are rooted into a state of perplexity and change. It is an era of the before and during the so-called digi-leaps, social media profiles as identities, attention economy, and the omnipresent highways of networks and instant information. Aiming at speaking of the ubiquitous nature of the current conditions, these terms stumble on the use of dichotomies that belong to the conventional understandings of temporality, spatiality and materiality. In other words, even if realized as innately fluid and fleeting, the notions of postinternet (art) and (the) NA articulate through language that bases on beginnings and ends (e.g. online-offline, post-, pre-, new-).

What the notions of postinternet (art), postdigital and (the) NA commonly overlook, is that the internet and its world wide web are not the everyday (or even accessible) for the majority of the population globally. Furthermore, what comes to their resonated subjective and ontological experiences, these terms appear to primarily mark something for particular subcultures and relatively young people. It is not said, but it is probable that the elderly generations might not feel belonging to their signaled social climates. Postinternet and (the) NA are exclusive notions that intend to but cannot mark a mode of the now for all people and realms. 232 As this exclusiveness might be pure ignorance or naivety, it might also mark the terms as principally labels for some visual and stylistic references, rather than knowledgeable concepts. A point to make in the same breath is that the NA atmosphere and the postinternet condition are something that these terms and projects articulate, depict and create – they may be accurate in what happens and is felt, but they also exist somewhere in the fantastic sphere: out of reach.

Postinternet and (the) NA attempt to establish a novel passage and disconnect themselves from any direct background. Yet, while nominating themselves ‘post’ and ‘new’, their titles claim no specific content beyond their tie to the past. Their tendency to attract negational labels like ‘apolitical’, ‘ahistorical’, ‘posthistorical’, ‘acritical’, ‘nonmovement’, and ‘anti-event’ is symptomatic. Taking seriously the users and definers of these notions, postinternet (art) and (the) NA are, as it seems, anti-concepts of sort. Their marked phenomena and indicated objects typically avoid or even deny them.

230 This characterization points especially to the so-called Western or westernized cultures.
231 Rosi Braidotti might be an interesting reading for this
232 See Chapter 2, section b)
And yet, even if they may fail in convenience as terms, these notions and phenomena do succeed in encapsulating some discernable structures and atmospheres; essences of things, attitudes, and fears that mark a particular current for many. While fluidity is often taken as their major fault, it is good to keep in mind that it also is the very attribute that makes these notions potentially durable by enabling their almost unlimited reading, utilizing, and developing.

b) **IMPLICATIONS FOR ART EDUCATION**

According to Oxford Dictionary of English, the verb ‘educate’ derives from the Latin “educat-,” “led out,” that again is a variant from the verb “educare, related to educere ‘lead out’.” In Finnish, to educate translates as ‘kasvattaa’. Education literally means to make something grow, or to keep something growing. The notion of education contains a) an idea of authority, initiative and care – someone doing something to and for another; and b) essential focus on and belief in continuity – an idea of the future as an unending condition of possibility. In other words, one of the core rudiments of the philosophies of education is the idea of knowledge and skill as capital that needs to be (and can be) transferred from an individual and generation to the next. Another interesting orientation behind the pedagogical thought is the treatment of time as a space for progression.

Art education is a discipline in which success is measured in terms of how well its theory is realized in practice, and how well the knowledge-forming through practice feeds back to the theory. In order to work – to respond and to affect accordingly in the moment – art education must be in a state of continuous alertness. It should, in principle as well as in practice, commit to a high state of sensibility. One of the main concerns of art education is (self)reflection that is carried out in awareness and criticality towards whatever existing conditions and hegemonies – with attention pointed outward and inward to carefully spot the matters of relevance.

Having said that, it is good to remember that art education – as evolving in contact with various disciplines like philosophy, art studies, and sociology – is mutable at its core. This means that art education has built-in potential for radical transformations. In fact, fluidity could even be mentioned as one of its key rudiments.

The recent changes in art, culture, and society have also brought about new types of challenges for art education. Therefore, my question *How might postinternet (art) and (the) NA be important together in art education?* should naturally be approached as two-sided. While assessing the importance of these notions, art education should simultaneously assume its own implications for the present moment and yet again reconsider its own relevance within. How might art education be important for

234 (like we now know them)
postinternet (art) and (the) NA? More questions begin to be raised: How can art education be fast enough for its conditions? How to be on time? Or better still, in time?

Indeed, art education seems to have become stuck in understanding digitalization as a pressing demand for occupying new technology as tools and techniques for artmaking. Curricula are rushed to incorporate new devices and software, particularly at the expense of traditional practices and materials. The call for renewal converts into the newer the gear, the better the response type of thinking. Along comes the never-ending request to update, and update (and update). This, at its part, will also keep us in the everlasting spiral of hurry, which is a very reductive circumstance for operating (let alone, creating).

As important as it certainly is to take over new instruments, a start that simply fills the old frames with new technologies is a solution that sounds neither plausible nor maintainable. Most importantly, without sufficient understanding of postdigital media, techn(olog)ical preparedness alone is a quick-fix that will not be of aid when it comes to observing, intervening, or pertinently altering the conditions of the present and future. As we should not teach oil painting without bringing forth its conceptual properties as an art historical medium, we should similarly avoid teaching (about) digital technologies mechanically – ignorant to their singularity as a medium that is materially political (coded).

As the previous section indicates, the situation calls for a more profound perception and response. Postinternet (art) and (the) NA challenge art education with a demand for post-knowledges, -methods, -practices, and -literacies. Fortunately, individual teachers and researchers have recently started to work with the notions of postinternet and postdigital in art education.

Revolving around the notion of postdigital, researcher/art educator Tomi Dufva’s doctoral dissertation, Art Education in the post-digital era: construction of knowledge through creative coding (2018), emphasizes the importance of technological tools and creative practices – not as instruments as such, but as an experiential medium for learning about (post)digitality through code. Dufva presents an extensive art-making method called creative coding. Creative coding plays with the creative, aesthetic, and activist potentials of coding (also as hacking). Beyond and beside functioning as an artmaking method, creative coding bases on the idea that the implications of postdigitality become more understandable when coding is framed as learning-by-doing.

In addition to its focus on creative coding, Dufva’s thesis brings forward the notion of code literacy, that makes use of metaphors in thinking about code. In development through various theoretical perspectives (societal, philosophical, and educational), code literacy stresses the importance of understanding the larger contexts of code at a personal and society’s level. Ultimately, it objects to enabling proper participation
in the discussions about the sociocultural meanings of the postdigital.\textsuperscript{236} However, assuming that the postdigital/postinternet conditions keep on mutating as fast as they have arrived, it might be that the craft of coding (as we know it now) is soon history. To meet its goals, Dufva’s method will need to be continuously adjusted along with the changing situation.

Researcher/art educator Timothy Smith’s approach is more speculative. Making use of the theories of educator Celastin Freinet and philosopher Felix Guattari, Smith’s article, \textit{What Might a Post-internet Art Foundations Course Look Like?}, focuses on converting the conventional settings of the concrete art pedagogical foundation into a more flexible set-up. The logic of these reorientations, vocabularies, production modes, and processes derives from digital roots. This means that his proposed postinternet art foundations course might build on “an entirely different set of elastic formal terms, such as modulation, remixing, looping, embedding, scripting, archiving, reblogging, commenting, memes, fails, or defaults.”\textsuperscript{237}

The rapid and continuous transformation of PIA practices, on both formal and conceptual levels, would also mean re-orchestrating the social plot. In Smith’s proposal, a postinternet art foundations course would not repeat the typical top-down structure, in which the teacher is taken as an expert and the student as an amateur. Instead of reversing it, Smith proposes a horizontal logic that also involves students in the course to become co-instructors with the teacher. As Smith suggests, “through its fluid organization of rules and conventions,”\textsuperscript{238} such an approach would require “reconsideration of certain methods of teaching and learning in art foundations research, curriculum design, and the role of the post-internet condition toward transforming art education practices in the 21st century.”\textsuperscript{239}

Smith’s idea about the fluid structural and methodological frames sounds like sustainable groundings for dealing with the fast altering notion of postinternet. It is, however slightly confusing whether Smiths proposal indicates to ‘PIA - art foundations course’, or ‘postinternet - art foundations course’. As a specific category and ‘tag’ in art, PIA is known from its stylistic and formal particularities and references. In Smith’s suggested context, it might be beneficial to keep the emphasis on the ‘spacious’ notion of postinternet instead of on PIA. Smith’s article underlines the current day as a moment of changeover, in which the classroom of so-called digital natives is, with certain presumptions, innately “internet aware” – perhaps even more so than their instructor. Internet awareness may sound smart, but it typically denotes fluency in simply using the internet and digital technology in the way they are \textit{designed} to be used. This type of ‘awareness’ does not guarantee knowledge about the power structures behind the screens. The idea of horizontality

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{237} Smith, Timothy. "What Might a Post-internet Art Foundations Course Look Like?" \textit{FATE in Review} 36 (2018), 43.
\item \textsuperscript{238} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{239} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
ensures a pedagogical setting where each participant has a democratic chance to learn and teach.

Both Dufva and Smith’s contributions highlight the importance of (artistic) making and producing knowhow (or tryhow) as key means for learning “survival skills” for post-conditions. However, concerning the classroom activities, they take very different approaches. Smith’s course proposal simulates a flux and remix type of internet-derived operating logic. Emphasizing collective processes framed flexibly by each context, it leaves open form-fixed learning objectives. Dufva’s creative coding, in turn, is based on an articulated demand for better understanding of the (post)digital specifically through coding. Approaching code as language-like material, Dufva presented creative coding is a far designed (yet, within its own frame, principally open) and highly pedagogical method.

THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

Going back to the terms themselves, postinternet (art), postdigital and (the) NA are indeed fascinating notions to deal with. In their attempt to express the underlying ambiances and expose hidden structures, these concepts (and their described projects) can be found to be essentially pedagogically orientated. In Berry & Dieter’s words, postinternet, postdigital and NA

[…] form part of an epistemological asterism of practices, experiences and mediations that follows the primacy of the computal as normative. That is, the appearance of these terms can be interpreted collectively as endeavours to elucidate the trajectories of ubiquitous digitalization; they collectively form new patterns which can help begin to map and historicize the varieties of computer societies.

With a variety of approaches (theoretical, practical, aesthetic, formal, conceptual, and technical), postinternet (art), postdigital, and (the) NA aim at looking through and beyond (post) the mechanical level of apparatuses and functions, into the constellation of the embedded meanings and agendas. Art education should do the same. The focus needs to be shifted from technology as conveniences, and into seeking deeper knowledges about and beyond them.

The recent sociocultural and material-conceptual transfigurations demand that art education interrogate its relation to and conceptions about its essential concepts like

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art, image, knowledge, learning, and teaching. Taking seriously the radical changes signaled by postinternet (art), postdigital and (the) NA, art education is facing a demand to further revise the foundations of its ontological, epistemological, and axiological (aesthetical and ethical) understandings under and about the prevalent conditions.

In my opinion, it is vital for the discipline and field of art education that the situation is taken seriously also and especially at the university level. Education provided for the students in art education university programs plays a crucial role in directing the paradigm of art pedagogy immediately realized in the “field.” Besides, higher education programs (post-graduate programs) are the springboard for doctoral studies, research careers, and university teaching positions. These programs are in charge of generating and fostering relevant knowledges and literacies as well as skills and methods for art pedagogical practices carried out in all environments and contexts. That is, higher art education has the power to conserve or bend the conventions and discourses in art education and art pedagogy at large.

Having said that, the challenges that art education is facing are certainly too complex to tackle in isolation. Art education cannot solely relay on its own traditions and capacities to respond with the knowledge it produces and teaches by its own means. The scope of matters that postinternet (art), postdigital and (the) NA encompass is naturally as vast as are their definitions. As such, their domains intersect with countless critical and theoretical concepts and conversations ranching from postdigital aesthetics, artificial intelligence, machine learning, digital economy, and cyberculture, to gender studies, feminist intersectionality, and posthumanist and new materialist debates that discuss agency and anthropocentrism.

It is clear that the situation requires very dialectic and close transdisciplinary collaboration (in the curricula and research), not solely on an academical level, but also together with different groups “outside” the universities (institutional and independent operators from various fields). This is especially so when it comes to exploring the complexities of concepts like computational, digitality, algorithms, and code when reading and talking about the discourses and research is not sufficient. We also need to develop new types of critical methods to study and learn with and about digital technologies and their course.

Further exploration, application and elaboration of the notions of postinternet (art), postdigital, and (the) NA should utilize both art(istic) and theoretical methods of inquiry. These projects should incorporate aesthetical, philosophical, historical, political, economic, and technological perspectives. Postinternet (art), postdigitality, and (the) NA should be noticed as permeating the categories of the subject (experiences, identities, subjectivities, agency, autonomy etc.), object (human/non-human/synthetic objects, agency, autonomy etc.), and the sociocultural conditions (systems and (infra)structures, institutions and industries, (sub)cultures, mass behaviors, communities etc.). In these projects, the lenses or surfaces of reflection might include such concepts or chains of concepts as
If art education cannot open its university programs and research for highly collaborative and transdisciplinary practices, it may fail in responding to its ultimate callings in the current day society. This is not to suggest that to remain relevant, art education should merely adopt the perspectives, methods, or knowledges of other fields as such. I simply mean that any sole ‘internal’ solution to the demands of these post-conditions alone seems underpowered and unsustainable.

When it comes to notions like postinternet (art) and (the) NA (and their expressed conditions), art education must resist becoming superficially like them, or more to the point, conditioned by them. The fact that these notions are prominently branded with unflattering connotations makes their handling no easier. We must also acknowledge that any further utilization will certainly require resistance to their contagious anxiety, irony, and cynical charge.

Despite the urgency that the situation poses, we cannot instantly know what it is we might need to ask or do. The work needs to start from developing and testing radical ways to critically relate to the notions and conditions of postinternet (art), postdigital, and (the) NA. Ultimately, art education’s purpose is not only to be reactive but indeed active. That is, art education must assume its innate fluidity and mutability as a possibility to move the focus from following to altering.

**FLUIDITY AS POSSIBILITY: RADICAL MUTABILITY**

Pointing to art education’s inbuilt urge to envision and reach the new, researchers and art educators Kevin Tavin and Juuso Tervo argue for the rethinking of the relationship to temporality in art education. According to them, instead of speeding up in the never-ending chase of the new, art education must enable itself a space for operating with what is at hand.243

> […]it is important to examine what would it mean to take seriously the temporality of post-conditions, the Now without the New, and see how does this affect the way that art education itself is being conceptualized. 244

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https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/usae20/current.

244 Ibid., 3.
Art education’s chase after the *next new* is on one hand topical a theme, yet, on the other hand a timeless issue. It is indeed relative to the chase of novelty that also postinternet (art) and (the) NA manifest as notions characteristically marked by their particular conceptions of and relations to time/temporality. Like the countless concurrent post-conditions that run helplessly up against time, they too attempt to place themselves on the same side of the *now*; to the *new*. Newness might simply mean the inevitable, but what we obsess over is the idea of novelty – the utopia of being the first, or being new. That is, we are running after a certain *quality* of being. Ironically, to be *new* is to be *fast* and that again, with this logic, means *evanescence*. Ultimately, this is an absurd loop, or a sprint with no finish line.

As long as the technological development continues, and the cultural shifts keep breaking forward like the file-names of our CV’s, a sense of belatedness remains. Tomorrow will surely bring us the next newest-latest-post-post thing. As such, postinternet and the NA are terms at stake of soon becoming a passé – if they are not already. So, what can be the importance of these types of fast and trendy concepts? If they are this vague and short-lived, should art education simply ignore them, or let them pass? In my opinion, no. What we should make use of is their openness. In other words, *fluidity* should be regarded as their core quality as in multiplicity and change(ability).

Simultaneously, fluidity might be worked into a response that comes to art education’s anxiety to be on time. Turned into an attitudinal concept, it could be called *radical mutability*, as I have put it before.245 This speculative approach takes fluidity under its radar as a) the only ultimately defining characteristic of the terms/notions of postinternet (art), (the) NA, and b) as an inherent quality and resource of the discipline of art education that is utterly tied to the attentive conditions of constant doubt and self-renewal.

Radical mutability is to acknowledge, that as long as we continue to assume only *one* correct way to be as *being new*, then the chase will lead us to a dead-end. Radical mutability takes not fastness nor novelty, but fluidity as a condition for possibility. It means to assume that as long as we are, we cannot be *but on time*.

Radical mutability does not attempt to nominate fluidity as the intellectual or informative core to the notions of postinternet and the NA. It neither aims (at least at this point) to designate any formulated pragmatic methods or systems. In my idea, radical mutability is first and foremost an attitude and approach in the art pedagogical thought. By disrupting the fearful ambience of belatedness, it targets to *enable* the

establishing of suitable foundations for examining, understanding, and impacting the prevalent conditions in and through art education.

If art education could assume the attitude of radical mutability regarding its conditions of and for thinking and operating, it might become fluid enough to emancipate itself from the everlasting haunt for novelty (or the Next New, as Tavin & Tervo describe it). The primary objective of this critical approach would be to enable radically new ways to study, relate to, and to (re)act within the post-conditions and ‘after’.

c) **CONCLUDING NOTES**

This thesis offers art education with a conceptual framework for the concepts of postinternet, PIA, and (the) NA. It replies to the research question of *What are the definitions of postinternet, PIA, and (the) NA, and how are these terms used?* through a critical literature review that examines the uses, users and contexts of these concepts. The critical literature review constructs an explicating and categorizing reading that is based on recurring patterns in several accounts and remarks discussing these terms.

This study presents that the notions of postinternet, PIA, and (the) NA are distinctively characterized by their particular relationship to time and temporality. They are found to express particular qualities of present and presence. Situating themselves to the next, yet anchoring themselves to their previous, they belong into a state of in-betweenness and transformation. By investigating the consequences of the intermixing of the online and offline and the digital and physical, they mark ends, beginnings, and becomings.

Postinternet, PIA, and (the) NA are terms and phenomena that would not exist without this level of advancement in technology. They overlap with many contemporaneous discussions on the current state and the future of the human culture. Postinternet, PIA, and (the) NA essentially enclose and address concurring concerns, even if they do so via differing leanings, instances, and means. These terms and notions signpost sociocultural conditions of increasing complexity, constant transformation, and instant information.

Postinternet (art) and (the) NA create ambiances that resemble the current states of and for *being* and *doing*. Their described domain is one in which identities, relationships, societies, cultures, and markets construct through rapid, abstract, and mobile, technology-driven and internet-mediated structures. These notions ultimately reflect upon the theme of power by observing, theorizing, and visualizing

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246 And, on the side, also for the concept of postdigital.
subjective experiences, social ambiences, and societal phenomena under the computational regime and neoliberal order.

In this thesis I arrive to argue that postinternet, PIA, (the) NA (and also postdigital) eventually endeavor to mark changes so radical that they shake the history of the human at ontological, aesthetic, and epistemological levels. This also reveals the two-foldedness of my question: *How might postinternet, PIA, and (the) NA be important together in art education?* To address this, we must simultaneously ask: How can art education be important for postinternet, PIA, and (the) NA? How to be fast enough for these conditions? How to be on time? Or in time? Art education is facing a demand to interrogate its paradigm and current discourses from these perspectives. Post-conditions have also conceptually altered phenomena and terms that are essential in the art pedagogical domain and its vocabulary. Take art, for instance, or image, gaze, information and knowledge – the current conditions mark irreversible mutations in all of these.

I argue that in order to enable the tackling of inevitable and unprecedented challenges, art education must create a time-out for operating to its full potential. That is, it must assume its innate fluidity and employ the attitude of radical mutability.

*FINAL WORD*

Because I did not follow any regulating or strictly structured method for searching and selecting the sources, I needed to be particularly conscious about the framings behind my choices. In this work, the exploratory research attitude means that I often followed links, letting one source lead me to another, and then another. I found the same names circulating over and over. This is also how cross-referencing became such an obvious part of my process. It demonstrates the nature of these debates as scene-like bubbles, in which the people who make a remark once will also return to continue the conversation.

In any case, I attempted to treat the sources as democratically as possible – without losing my own personality through this writing. That is, I tried to be careful with keeping a balance, for example, concerning the professional backgrounds and ‘authorities’ of the voices, as well as the representation of the female and male assumed commenters. The locality of the writers was neither my first interest nor always unambiguous, so I cannot assure that there would be no emphases to one direction or another.

Certainly, cropping was one of the biggest challenges I encountered with this work, which ultimately aims to be indeed explanatory instead of complicating. I simply could not include all interesting perspectives even if I found them important.

Since my main object was to create a solid groundwork for the further utilization of the concepts of postinternet, PIA, and (the) NA, I have left the last chapter on art
education relatively light. This was also due to the very limited scope of this thesis. A number of observations that were only superficially presented in this work could and *should* be further elaborated on in the future.
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Description of the video.


Comment by Jaakko Pallasvuo, Oct. 25 2013, 10:08


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