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<nettime> Translation: The vagina is the boss on internet

- *To:* nettime-l {AT} Desk.nl
- *Subject:* <nettime> Translation: The vagina is the boss on internet
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- *Date:* Mon, 16 Jun 1997 00:59:00 +0200
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The vagina is the boss on internet

New media female artists inspired by erotics, identity and social interaction

Surfing on the internet I find the 'Virtual Themepark' from the most interesting cyberfeminist artist group VNS Matrix. It all sounds very promising and as a hetero woman I click on the Viral Pleasureworld. I am dissappointed, because I do not find any beautiful naked men on the screen, but a universe with purple planets and the text 'Viral Pleasure World'. As soon as I want to continue I always come back on the first page. Only at "The end of the World" I finally get to the "Filthy Genderworld" where I see a group of tiny little people who are licking eachother. Furtheron I step on Gashgirl's homepage, who's real name is Francesca da Rimini. This is one of the ladies from VNS Matrix. On this page I finally find some more 'information' about their work: wordmixture of textfragments from SM-stories, filmtitles and computerterminology that are connected to eachother. The title above this page says enough: "GenderFuckMebacy's palace of Unparalleled Cynicism", oldfashioned artistic enigmas that are larded with sensual quotes, to which's meaning you can quest for hours and hours being an outsider.

Cyberslut

VNS (VeNuS) Matrix wants to create confusion. The four Australian ladies want to make chaos in the standards and values from today's society, because they do not agree with the woman's status within. They make electronic art that questions the computer mass culture and her products in a playfull but brutal feministic way. VNS matrix acts on a humorous way against men's women-unfriendly and sexistic outbursts on the internet. These cyberfeminists are not afraid to use any means to achieve their aim. So they are not agianst sex, porno or even against men. They think that it is only just about time that women take control on the internet from men, because men behave badly. Still too many women suffer from obscene remarks.

The Corpus FantasticaMOO, an internet game, illustrates clearly how obscene creeps should be punished. VNS Matrix, virtually pierced, masked, harnesed and weaponed with the most horrible torturestuff, enters dark internetsurroundings by psuedonyms like Psybapussy and Cyberslut. There they terrorize everything male as soon as it logs in in this Tartaros-like

domain. Someone who entered as Quentin Tarrantino, for example, was almost sent to the virtual heaven by Psybapussy's dangerous C46-weapon. The girls are the boss and their feminity is sacred. The core of their realm, the Matrix, can only be reached by the virtual clitoris. The vagina is the symbol of the female power. In their "Bitch Mo Manifesto" the ladies swank about making art with their cunt. Their pussy is also capable of fighting against "Big daddy mainframe". "Big Daddy Mainframe" is the symbol of the male society, that is still dominating both the real and the virtual world. The "Mainframe" is also a widespread product of computertycoon IBM.

The art of these cybervamps is at it's most beautiful in their fantastic projects, that are based on internet- and CD-rom games like Quest and Doom. In 1995 they made in cooperation with the artist Leon Cmielewski an project named "The user unfriendly interface", where as many as possible people should be insulted. On these beautiful pages it was not allowed to click anything. When someone was naughty and clicked anyway, the computer yelled angry at this person and the buttons changed into insects that walked away from the screen. People also had to fill in their dreams and desires, so that the program could curse and jeer at them. This program was not meant to be an attack to the male society, but to the dominating commercials and the standard mass products, that always have to be userfriendly.

The game of communication

VNS Matrix is also trying to investigate in what way the game is a symbol of social interaction in cultural life. Is pleasure an important condition to experience art? Interactivity gives one the power to interfere in a work of art. The non feminist artist Agnes Hegedüs sees the new media as an interesting territorium for investigation in the field of social interaction. In the new media raises a new culture of games, that is both interactive and telematic. She thinks it is special that everyone can pick a different identity. The result is that communication via internet is more playful than in real life. The internet is a game of seduction. Not the seduction of being connected on a distance is addicting, but the mysterious rendez-vouses of people gives a sexy kick. On internet people can meet eachoter without being seen, they can pretend to be anyone in any way.

Hegedüs' "Televirtual Fruitmachine" from 1994 is based on this playful interactive aspect. De instalation is a big screen on which three puzzle pieces of a fruit machine are projected. In front of the screen are three tables with a joystick. Three different people can join into this game at the same time. The fruit is refering to the forbidden fruit from Paradise and seduction. In contrast with VNS Matrix, who wants to see the new digital world dominated by women, Hegedüs does not think that is necessary. When the man and woman identity can be swapped in the virtual space, the genderidentity will be less important. The idea of genderswap with the help of the media was allready being issued by Marcel Duchamp, who let himself been photographed as Rrose Selavy (Eros c'est la vie): travesty as sexual pleasure.

Metamorphosis

The body will be less relevant accoring to the Australian artist Jill Scott: by means of technique we will be nomads in both the body and the soul. She thinks technique is very fascinating and she illustrates that very brilliantly in her gorgeous interactive film-installation "Frontiers of Utopia" from 1995. The ill Zira does not live in the real world: everything she does is via the computer: working communicating and living, for this is the only way to forget that her body is soon going to die. In this installation the visitors can "setup a dialogue" with women who are in this film. These women come from different areas of the 20th century and tell things about their ideal society. Emma from 1900 hopes for freedom for public opinion, Pearl from 1930 is dreaming of equality of race, Gillian

from 1960 thinks of technical advance in socialist society and Zira from the 90ties believes that the technique can solve all problems.

Thanks to technique the body can be improved. This theme is very popular among feminist artists. Even when a woman is not ill, her body needs to be improved by technique. The dutch artist Inez van Lamsweerde is hackling artificial bodily changes from healthy females, by making beautiful ridiculous computerpictures on which she used photomodels and window-figures. The female figures on her photo's have something unreal: in the series "Thank you Tighmaster" from the early nineties Van Lamsweerde stuck doll's eyes on a woman's face. She thinks too many woman cannot be themselves anymore, but have to look like Barbie.

Bitter Herb Menu/Brutal Myths

'The cosmedical industry is a form of keeping women suppressed" claim the american artists Sonya Rapoport and Marie José Sat. The reason why men dominate women is because they are scared of them. That is why women were called witch. "The firsts woman Eve was already called bad and even the most evil woman that has ever lived" is one of the ancient myths that was going around in the middle ages according to Sat and Rapoport. They say, that this myth is still going on in the arabic countries and that's why the women do not get any political chance over there, and that is why woman in some countries are being circumcised. This is a primitive form of cosmedical surgery. In the western world women are forced upon strict diets and cosmedical surgery.

The Bitter Herb Menu is a metaphor for the so called badness of women. In Genesis, Sat and Rapoport continue, God condemned mankind to work at the fields and to eat the harvest. That is why these artists choose for the herbal witchcraft as a symbol for the wholesome harvest of women, because in early times women were seen as spiritual curers in ancient times. This has changed later in the middle ages, when spiritual curers were seen as dangerous witches. The first part of the website "Brutal Myths" describes which bitter herb poisons the mind of the man, so he will believe that women are bad. In the second part of the digital work of art is the healthy herbal garden with wholesome herbs.

Vagina Dentata

On the Bitter Herb Menu one can find the bitter herb "cleavers", which lets a vagina eat a penis. The principle of the Vagina Dentata, the mighty and male-swallowing vagina is to be found in different cultures. Because men are afraid of this Vagina Dentata, women are being circumcised, so that they cannot urinate in a normal way or enjoy sex. The liberation of women is to take revenge of them by castration, says the Bitter Herb website. The herb that is punishing men so severely is called Heartsease. The Vagina Dentata is a beloved subject among cyberfeminist artist, because it is the ultimate symbol of destroying male power. Women can be in charge then. The Bitter Herb menu sees the Vagina Dentata in a mystique and occult context. But VNS Matrix sees the vagina Dentata in a playful way as a vampire like tart, who is called Dentata. Dentata has to shoot men in the 'Cybersquat', a virtual game surroundings from VNS Matrix.

Interactive rituals in the Bitter herb Menu, that are made by the visitors, contribute to the destruction of the myth of women being evil and calm the phobias of men. Sat and Rapoport think that in this way they are contributing to the development of the World Wide Web as a new artistic technological medium, that is free from sexual prejudices and differences, so that the reputation of women can be purified.

Common Ground

The internet is a free space and that is why women can take advantage of

that. Sonya Rapoport sees the web as free and easy to give a presentation from feministic art. She hopes to reach also people who would otherwise never go to an exhibition. She is striving to a kind of common ground: a virtual space linked to different female artists. The dutch artist Mathilde Mupé has allready made links on her homepage to different feminists in cyberspace. The german video artist Ulrike Rosenbach and the american art critic Lucy Lippard have allready set up feministic art institutes in the seventies where female artists could cooperate.

Much female artists see the internet as a possibility to communicate in a role playing game, where people can change their gender. Some feminist artists want to gain power over men on the internet. For them the game of sexuality is a form of power instead of romance. The sexual organ is not only capable of enjoying sex, but also of urinating, multiplying and dividing the human race into the suppressed and the dominating species. These feminist artists see the internet as an opportunity to be the boss on internet. They do not want to lose their gender, but they want to gain dominance over the male in their female glory. The gender identity should therefore be emphasized according to them. The question is whether this is still relevant in an age of androgyny and transsexuality, because the body can also be changed in today's society.

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Check mijn nieuwe artikel over "De Vagina is de baas op internet"

<http://utopia.knoware.nl/users/sigorney/vagi.htm>

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