

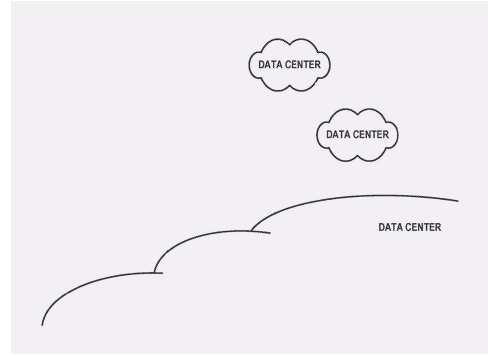
Mario Santamaría

Remote Hands

10.6.22 > 25.6.22

Opening: Friday 10th of June at 17:00 > 21:00h

Mario explores in this exhibition the absolute dichotomy between the illusion of immateriality and transcendence of data represented by the symbol of the cloud and the material reality necessary to sustain and keep all the information maintained and transmitted in the Internet. For such, he exposes 49 of the clouds part of his series *Cloudplexity*, started the 2019, that investigates the various representations of the internet and the construction of the cloud metaphor through the USA patents archive since 1979.



But it isn't this series that gives name to the exhibition. A service offered by storage centres, to make remote maintenance on the machines of their clients, does: Remote Hands. That way, Santamaría signals that the concrete, these material storage centres, have priority over the abstract, the alienated notion of the cloud.

What's for sure is that the Internet is full of alienation. It alienates us from the material reality that surrounds us and from the fact that the Internet itself has to participate in this material world, full of cables and computers and storage facilities, to exist as the cyberspace we know as the cloud. This materiality of the digital era tends to go unnoticed, as data seems to travel in no time. With this exposition, we intend to put this appearance into a parenthesis, through a dialogue with various pieces related to the materiality, visibility and representation of the Internet. That way we seek to unveil what is right before our eyes: The Data doesn't ascend to the Internet, it descends to the hardware.

Besides *Cloudplexity*, the exposition is composed of an installation, *Underdesk*, which includes cables and a table turned into a cloud with a hammock that faces a computer, transmitting a video that shows the path of the data all the way to the exhibition.

Cloudplexity, 2019, heat-sealed digital prints on wood, 21 x 30 cm.

The series is made up of 300 pieces. By going through the US Patents archive it can be seen how the diagram of the cloud went stop multiplying, pertaining several formulations of connectivity and exposing the difficulty to formally define the reality of the internet.

Underdesk, 2022, desk with a fireproof mortar, a metallic arm, a screen and a hammock, variable dimensions. Through panoramic pictures a digital itinerary was created portraying the cable traces that take the Internet connection to the interior of the gallery. This digitalization is navigated by an installation made of a desk and a hammock that allows the expectator to rest bellow the table.

This exposition is part of ISEA2022* (Extended Program)

* ISEA2022, Barcelona: 27th International Symposium on Electronic Art / 10-16 June 2022

Mario Santamaría (Burgos, 1985). The artistic practice of Mario Santamaría studies the phenomenon of the contemporary observer, paying attention to two processes, the representational practices and the machines vision or mediation. Using different tactics such as appropriation, remake or assembly, his work involves different fields like the conflict, the memory, the virtuality or the surveillance. Co-founder of the space Trama34 (2016) in L'Hospitalet de Llobregat and lecturer at Elisava University in Barcelona, for several years he was a collaborator of The Influencers festival and curator of the Internet Yami-Ichi (Internet Black Market) at CCCB and Matadero Madrid. He has been artist in residence at Hangar Barcelona, HISK Gantes or Sarai New Delhi and finalist of the prestigious Post-Photography Prototyping award of Fotomuseum Winterthur. His work is part of the anthology *Watched!* by the Hasselblad Foundation. His work has been exhibited in institutions such as: MACBA Barcelona, ZKM Karlsruhe, WKV Stuttgart, C/O Berlin, La Casa Encendida Madrid, CENART Mexico, Or Gallery Berlin, Arebyte London and Aksioma Ljubljana, among others.

Symbols and Circuits

In a comedy written by Aristophanes, Socrates (that had pended himself in a basket to *elevate* his thoughts and *give them some air*) attempts to persuade his conversation partner that only clouds inhabit the Olympus, “great gods for men free from the slavery of labour; they bring us intelligence, discourse, understanding, circumlocution, fantasy, attack and counterattack”.

Aristophanes wrote *The clouds* to ridicule the sophists, those rhetoric masters who are experts in defending something and its opposite without even having to catch some air. The praising of clouds as if they were gods is, of course, a silly joke. Who would dare to adore such common and fleeting beings?

I ignore whether ancient theatre would sparkle anger amongst programmers and informatics, or if they took Socrates’ nebulous promises seriously. Ah, intelligence; Oh, circumlocution. The data, intangible as angels or cholera bacilli, have long lived the shame of physical storage, as canned goods in cupboards. Fortunately, thanks to technology and ingenuity they have been emancipated, and as Homer says of god Hermes, “his feet no longer touch the floor, they walk through the heads of men”

Everything is nowhere: hallelujah. At any second and latitude, a phone may summon the data his owner needs, and those will fall into his screen as raindrops from the sky. Quick, clean and mysterious. Through fluffy icons and clever naming tricks, users magically forget about the heated servers, the soldering, the micro connectors and the *blood spilling* mineral exploitation of cobalt and coltan. The cloud, that inhabits noisy and refrigerated industrial depths, shows itself as an ethereal and benign figure: it guards our remembrances, facilitates our work and assists us on any given need. To Divine Providence, it has become a competitor.

But there is no respectable mist without an ominous peak. The London fog has poisoned twelve thousand people in the year 52 and, as if that wasn’t enough, also provoked a wave of assaults and robberies. Seventy years earlier, Jack the Stripper performed his infamous anatomy classes beneath that same thick atmosphere. Correggio painted Jupiter as a thundercloud that girdles his hands around the waist of damsel Ío, an *affaire* that brought him all sorts of disgrace. The cloud can always reach you. Its ubiquitous and ungraspable power whispers a mephistophelic ditty: *I will forever be available, for you shall forever be connected.*

Whenever technology becomes mystical, disgraces arise.

Joaquín Jesús Sánchez, June 2022