

WHAT IS WEBWASTE.NET?

In short: WebWaste is an Internet based rubbish dump. By clicking a few times anyone can empty the content of his or her computer trash-bin (recycle-bin) onto this webwaste-land. The trashed documents pile up on the server. And by visiting the website (www.webwaste.net) everyone can browse through the images, texts, sounds and video-clips that others have thrown away. You can search for things that inspire you or just look for fun ... If you like something you can of course take it home with you by downloading it from the server onto you computer. But the rules are open, do what you will in this space: Play or protest, tell the truth or lie – it is your choice.

Public space

This is an open space, public space in cyber-space where participants can leave a footprint (by throwing stuff away); thereby assert their existence in this new digital space, where most of internet users are locked in the situation of an invisibel viewer not a doer or a participant. By leaving a footprint of their visit in this space they negate the dominant “window-shopping”-feel of today’s websites which predominantly tend to feel “edited” or “commercial”. In this sense this is an experiment in giving “rawness” some small space place on the web. In this sense this space celebrates unintentionality and mistakes in all its forms – and the creativity of misunderstanding.

Rats

WebWaste is also a kind of digital-“eco-system” since this rubbish-dump is also home to digital-rats. These algorithmic rodents trek through the waste, eating words and letters from text-docs, pixels from images and dumping them in other files after digesting them. The rats see to the

slow decomposition or of the trashed files over time. The rats are not visible as bodies but their marks can be clearly seen in images with holes in them, in garbled old text docs or heard in slowly disintegrating soundfiles.

WebWaste tries to open a free open space for anyone that wants to participate – it has no special rules and in a sense no special point to make other than what it's participants want to do. Total anonymity is assured as you share your thrash.

Archive and memory

In essence this is an archive built for a culture that seems insatiable in it's craving for storing, stacking and remembering.

Digital media brings this tendency to "freeze time" to a new level of intensity bringing to mind Borges' dystopian depiction of the "Library of Babel"

In the end a discharge tells us so much about the practices of a society. (The things we throw away might say more about us than the things we keep!). When the archaeologists unearth ancient monuments, they are delighted, but, when they put their hands on an old rubbish dump, they become euphoric.

Despite all these thoughts: In the end webwaste.net is about enjoying the unusual and finding humour in strange things. Above all else WebWaste is about fun.

ABOUT WEBWASTE:

A Universal Rubbish Dump

Shouldn't people be able to throw away their electronic-trash in a similar way to how they take out their normal waste? Instead of erasing their trashed documents forever by emptying the Recycle bin of their computer, Internet-users can now dump the content of their trash-bin in the immense collective depot of WebWaste.

AN ON-LINE TRASH-CAN: WebWaste is a real universal, on-line rubbish dump; a collective yet anonymous dustbin, open to all Internet users. You can look through what other people have thrown away, add your own waste and take stuff home. It is an open public space. Anyone can enter; everyone can participate and thereby leave a sort of «footprint» in cyber-space.

BROWSE THROUGH WASTE: On WebWaste.net you can browse through waste such as images, texts, audio- and video clips which participants before you have thrown away.

EMPTY YOUR TRASH CAN: By downloading the Dustman-application you can empty the content of your own Recycle Bin onto the WebWaste. Your files are uploaded to the WebWaste server and promptly disappear from your computer. WebWaste accommodates most of what can be found in an ordinary computer's recycle-bin.

TAKE STUFF HOME: If, while strolling through the wasteland, you come across an image or a file that you like you can of course «take it home» with you, by downloading it onto your own computer.

FEED THE RATS: Like any other waste-dump WebWaste is home to rats. These algorithmic rodents that trek through the waste are data-parasites. They eat pixels from images, words from textdocuments and, after digesting them, dump them onto other images or files seeing to the breakdown and decomposition of the things on the WebWaste over time. The rats breed, multiply and if people stop throwing things away they die of starvation. While the WebWaste itself is accessible from any computer the rats «live» in a specific location on a specific, constantly running computer connected to the server which houses the website. From this «cage» (at the moment stored in Marseille, France) the rats feed of the files of the WebWaste.

WHY? The Internet is increasingly becoming a type of «window-shopping–experience» where people browse trough static «advertisements». It is up to us to see to it that the Internet reflects not only «intended remarks» and «finished products». It may be argued that the things we throw away reflect a truer picture of ourselves than the things we keep, let alone the things we «publish».

PLAYFUL PUBLIC SPACE: WebWaste is a playful public space. A place where the Internet-user ceases to be an invisible spectator, shares his junk and thereby leaves a personal trace that he or she passed by. The Internet-user can in this way leave a «footprint» on the web. Built into WebWaste is a social dimension: An idea of a collective-page, a sort of anti-page, or infinite page, that endlessly grows and shrinks (depending on the growth of the rat population and online human investment).It is designed as a utopic or «possible space» of collective visualization beyond the world of the chat and published web «pages».

NON-INTENTIONAL CREATIVITY: WebWasters know that when archaeologists unearth ancient monuments they are delighted, but when they put their hands on an old rubbish dump they become euphoric. In this context WebWaste plays on our obsession with storing and stocking - with the concept of archiving - which modern technology has brought to a new level of intensity. WebWaste is uncensored and anonymous and thus open to things «authentic» as well as «fake». It is a community of passers-by, an archive and a collective image of its users. WebWasters find inspiration in things that are mistakes, have been used up or are useless celebrating the non-intentional and creativity of misunderstanding.

VIEWING & USEING WEBWASTE

- PC or MAC compatible.
- Shockwave plug-in required.

A DUSTBIN OF PIXELS

By Marie LECHNER

From french newspaper: LIBERATION

"When the archaeologists unearth ancient monuments, they are delighted, but, when they put their hands on an old rubbish dump, they become euphoric. A discharge tells us so much about the practices of a society", explains the Icelandic artist Ragnar Helgi Olafsson. Perhaps in a few hundred years, when the cyber-archeologists will be browsing through millions of forgotten pages of HTML, they will stumble upon Webwaste, the universal internet rubbish dump, conceived by Ragnar. Instead of erasing the documents after having thrown them in the recycle bin of the computer, one can now store them in this immense collective depot. It is enough to download from the site a small Dustman-application who makes himself at home on our desktop. As soon as one wants to get rid of one's old text documents, photographs, sounds, or documents of any kind, one clicks on the Dustman-icon who penetrates the dustbin, uploads the waste from the trash bin and throws it on to the on-line rubbish dump. One can enjoy browsing through other peoples waste, without being likely to dirty oneself, unearthing things which can be used again (a love letter, a pretty image...), or recycling them by downloading them onto ones hard disk. But it is necessary to act quickly, because the "rats" have invaded the place and begun their work of destruction. There are already more than fifty rats that nibble the pixels of the images and words from texts, digesting the contents of the discharge until its progressive disintegration."

This article was written about the first beta-version of the website which was displayed at digit@rt, at Cité des Science, La Villette, Paris [a part of La Villette Numerique Biennale]. Current version (running now at webwaste.net) uses PHP and Myscl. This version was written in august-december 2004 for an exhibit at KIASMA – Muesum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki.

ABOUT THE ARTIST: RAGNAR HELGI OLAFSSON

Ragnar Helgi Olafsson was born in Reykjavik Iceland 1971. He studied hermeneutics and political-philosophy from 1991-1997 at the University of Iceland. Moving to France, he graduated from l'Ecole des Beaux Arts d'Aix-en-Provence in 2001. After making narrative short films and animations he now works chiefly with new media in installations and web-based art, his work often revolving around the themes of participatory narrativity, time and memory. He lives and works in Reykjavik. He also does graphic design work and teaches at Iceland Academy of the Arts.

Ragnar has recently exhibited at the *STEIM*-gallery in Amsterdam, *La Villette Numerique* in Paris, *Museet for Samtidskunst* in Roskilde, *The National Museum of Iceland* in Reykjavik and at *KIASMA* in Helsinki.

CURRICULUM VITAE

RAGNAR HELGI ÓLAFSSON

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EDUCATION

1999 - 2001 École Supérieure des Beaux-Arts d'Aix-en-Provence, *Fine Arts*
1999 Université d'Aix-Marseille
1998 The New York Film Academy - *Film directing*
1991 - 1997 Faculty of Philosophy - University of Iceland - *Philosophy*

EXHIBITIONS [selected]

2005 *The National Museum of Iceland, Reykjavík, 11/11 - 10/02 2006*
« **RearViewMirror v.1.0: For Walt Disney og Martin Heidegger** »
Interactive, video installation & archive.

2005 *The Living Art Museum, Reykjavík, 12/08 - 01/09*
« **RearViewMirror v.0.9** » Interactive, video installation & archive.

2005 *Museet for Samtidskunst, Roskilde, Denmark, 07/04 - 12/06*
« **Get Real: Real Time + Kunst** » Collective web-site.

2004 *Monty, Antwerp, Belgium, 15/12 - 17/12*
« **Budget Motel Revisited, no. 2** » Contemporary dance piece /
interactive sound installation (collaboration with Paola Tognazzi)

2004 *KIASMA – Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki, 11/11 & 30/01*
« **Rubbish: WebWaste – Version 2.0** » Installation based on public
space web-piece.

2004 *Galleri Klink & Bank, Reykjavik, 02/06 & 18/06*
« **FM 88.1: Even if the world will perish you will always be
able to count on interesting discussion on FM88.1** » A
political talk-radio generator. (Collaboration with Gudmundur
Steingrimsson)

2004 *Galleri Skuggi, Reykjavik, 13/03 & 04/04*

« **The Lorna Show** » *Group show with members of the Lorna-Group.*

2003 *Melkweg-theater, Amsterdam, Holland, 21/05 & 22/05*

« **Budget Motel & Room 2.6** » *Contemporary dance piece and interactive sound installation (collaboration with Paola Tognazzi)*

2002 *La Villette, Paris - Digit@rt: La Villette Biennial, 25/9 -10/10*

« **WebWaste** » *Web site. Universal-digital rubbish dump. One server and an unlimited number of participants.*

2002 *GrandRokk, Reykjavík. 5/6 – 15/6*

« **Immigrant Song** » *Interactive sound installation (outdoor), for 6 speakers, 2 microphones, a computer and a bar*

2002 *STEIM-Gallery, Amsterdam, Holland. 15/1 - 29/1*

« **PetSounds** » *Interactive sound installation, for 8 speakers, a microphone and a computer*

2001 *Espace Sextius, Aix-en-Provence, France. 4/6 - 15/10*

« **EchoHomo** » *Interactive sound installation, for 6 speakers, 7 walls of rock wool, a microphone and a computer*

OTHER MEDIA

FILM

« **x=x2** » *Short film (fiction), 16 mm, black & white, 11 min., 2000*

« **The Polka Rats** » *Short film (fiction), 16 mm, black & white, 4 min., 1999*

« **Wor(I)ds** » *Short film (fiction), 16 mm, black & white, silent, 1999*

HONOURS

Artist-in-residence at STEIM, Amsterdam, Holland. April/May 2003.

DISCOURSE (selected)

« *Was there then* » – STEIM Discussion series. Lecture. Steim,

Amsterdam, Holland, 20.05.2003.

« *Heimspeki & myndlist / Electronic-Art & Philosophy* ». Presentation and panel discussion. University of Iceland, Reykjavík, Iceland, 16.11.2003.

BIBLIOGRAPHY (selected)

« **Poubelle a pixel** », review and interview. Marie Lechner, *Libération*, Paris, France, 11.10.2002

« **Hvert fer rusli?** », interview. Örn Úlfar Sævarsson, *Band*, Reykjavík, Iceland. 15.1.2004

« **Kannski verður til ...** », interview. Heida Jóhannsdóttir, *Morgunbladid*, Reykjavík, Iceland. 4.1.2003

« **Work of ...** », interview. Wang Xueqing, *Art and Design*, Shanghai, China, 6.2001.