DIG DEEP
On Nicky Broekhuysen's solo exhibition "The Digital Archaeologist"

"A map *is not* the territory."
— Alfred Korzybski, *Science and Sanity* (1933)

I first saw Nicky Broekhuysen's work through a digital screen; our virtual communication and information exchange formed the outlines of her exhibition, The Stonebreakers. Her works featured in this exhibition in October 2015 questioned how the binary code of zeros and ones could be transformed from pure potential to a new language, and what kind of structural tools these codes referencing the digital space could provide us to rebuild the chaos and order they held within. With time, these questions have allowed for other explorations and research topics. Broekhuysen's works in binary code repeatedly focus on duality, chaos and order, destruction and construction. Understanding her work from the perspective of current global geographies of interest (Europe and Middle East's connection) undoubtedly calls for an interpretation in politics. Showcased during her exhibition in Istanbul, a piece entitled "When the Dust Settles" explores the potential of chaos within, symbolized in the image of a pile, and the way in which chaos contains the potential of reconstruction in return. Through analyzing how the process of social change could be read from different perspectives, the exhibition, and this piece in particular, urged viewers to question and re-understand the possibility of seeing potential in societies experiencing periods of despair and depression.

The (historical) journey of Nicky Broekhuysen starts in South Africa, continuing to New Zealand, China, and then to Germany. Examining the way in which information is perceived in these various cultures, this journey had allowed the artist to develop personal techniques that placed her in the Bumiller Collection's The Contemporary Intervention exhibition. From a perspective that questions the source of written information, Broekhuysen's tenth personal exhibition, where the layers of her artistic journey become thoroughly visible, starts a conversation between her works, the history of writing, and early-Islamic period objects used for written information. This new conversation, that correlates the antique early-Islamic period objects from the Bumiller Collection with contemporary approaches, not only creates a new space of investigation for contemporary artists, but also emphasizes the modern erroneous verdicts attributed to terms and conceptualizations of Middle Eastern territories.

In Broekhuysen's early installations, the hand-stamping on rocks and stones found in nature develops a spatial perspective. Later, these spatial installations turn into stamping and processing binary code, which becomes the artist's main technique, through using ink, oil paint, iron-oxide pigments, and various materials collected from her time in different geographies. Throughout this time, the artist also created sculptures and installations using stone, marble, and similar materials. Broekhuysen's recent works on the other hand, which focus on video art, can be understood as the most unifying part of her process. During this time, the artist transferred her hand-stamped works into a digital platform, where collaboration on open source programming and sound design has allowed this media based work to be turned into a video. As such, the artist, who questions the way in which information travels from its source to our modern digital spaces, the tools to reach these sources, and the temporal emptiness created from these processes, also travels in between the layers of her own artistic practices in depth. From this perspective, the way in which Broekhuysen's works feed upon their past (now) to include their future potential suggests an automatic dialogue with the collection. By marking the object with ink, the artist inadvertently transports old traditions into the modern digital world.

Under digital research, digital archaeology has various definitions. While the advancement of archeological technologies have allowed for the employment of new tools on discovery, archiving, and examination, it has also provided artists, alongside archeologists and historians, to develop new digital modeling and archiving techniques. The way in which the concealed can become visible with these new tools and techniques has made further in-depth explorations and analysis possible. Concurrently, digital archaeology is the study of information, data, and history's restoration, archiving, and organization in digital space. As the

usage of digital archives prolongs the lifeline of the physical by transferring it to a timeless space, it also reconstructs the disappeared and reopens the discussion while creating new teaching, publishing, research, exhibition, and documentation methods. Since these methods are accessible to anyone and everyone, digital archeology is a discipline of collaborative study. The way in which selected pencil cases, inkpots, and seals from the Bumiller Collection form a dialogue with the artist's work features a few of these different definitions within, and consequently turns Nicky Broekhuysen into a digital archeologist. With her work where she has stamped the binary code on stacks of abandoned old books found at the former Iraqi Consulate's library in East Berlin, Broekhuysen urges the viewer to participate in this collaborative questioning of the consumption, restoration, collection, and transference of written sources to digital platforms in the context of digital archives.

While the binary code (zeros and ones), central to Broekhuysen's work, might be a product of the modern digital era, the images and shapes the artist creates through the code encompasses all of time, and becomes even supra-time. The code-images Broekhuysen creates not only have different interpretations in different territories, but can also be interpreted in a way that can't be predicted today with the digital technologies of tomorrow. The code's interpretation today, as signifiers of data and information are temporal and local, suggests a shift in meaning throughout time and location. As such, while binary code itself is universal, structures created by the code are contextual, therefore can't be explored linearly while pathfinding is differential.

The patterns created by the physical mobility and repetition of ones and zeros exemplify the realization of just one probability amongst many. From this perspective, the artist's pieces embody the exploration of a multitude of topics and theories. A deliberate blank space, a decision on the tiniest of details become evidence of their affects on the image as a whole. As the digital space in its vastness hinders our ability to differentiate the affect of minute details, Broekhuysen's topographical images of these spaces, allow the viewer to observe and discuss fundamental aspects of phenomenon not visible at first glance.

Antique objects from the Bumiller Collection continually reference the artist's stone engravings, imprints on books, usage of ink, and craftmanship. These objects, reshaped and colorized through the characteristics of the regions they belong to, become the historical guardians of information and data that reach us through writing. The Digital Archeologist exhibition invites the viewer to explore the way in which information is processed into writing, the digitalization of this information, its distribution from the digital space, and its reversion to analyze its own historical process. Exploring this multi-layered and well-dispersed journey also urges the viewer to critically think about our contemporary societies.

Simply defined, the fundamentals of computer programming in two numbers also describe the construction of fundamental information. This dualistic and fundamental information, which holds millions of probabilities within and hence can be understood as a power element, can perhaps be balanced easier in this day and age. As today, chaos is becoming another way of order, the widening, deepening, and quickening stream of data and information the modern individual is faced with concurrently alters the reaction to time. While the digital revolution has diversified, expanded, and sub-categorized since the 1960s, and continues to further expand and change today, digital platforms call for an investigation of the methods and tools required to understand the space. Rather than trying to sort it out, the new understanding of order can focus on exploring the pieces that form the chaos, thus giving individuals a better understanding of the tools used in analyzing time and history.

As modern telecommunication continues to advance tenfold, and time in digital space runs faster than in our physical world, arts and artists are left with limited options and time to understand, adapt, and realize these advancements. Compared to the history of writing, the Internet, with only a few decades of a history, has already piled up thousands of years worth of data and information. A digital world, where we can visit an exhibition in another part of the world with virtual reality glasses and a VPN connection, compels us to question how we separate experience and information, as well as the tools we would need for such separation. As such, answers to questions and discussions on the techniques of digital archaeology

arising from Broekhuysen's work cannot be found in the traditional conceptualizations of history and science.

The modern individual, finding his way around in the era of easily accessible piles of information belongs to "generation why." A generation of questioning, this motto allows individuals to focus on tools and techniques of accessing accurate information. Much like digging the earth to discover facts of history, information in the digital age can become accessible and visible with such an attempt of unearthing by focusing on the questions. For this reason, making the concealed (information) visible, a recurring theme in Broekhuysen's works, can be understood as a point of origin for artists. This kind of a perspective will allow the individual to explore how information and history, that are currently forced into an erosion, can be alternatively restored. While cyber attacks, manipulations, censorship, and access restrictions through control mechanisms can pose problems, today, digital spaces are the safest alternatives for the accurate recreation, investigation, and restoration of history being physically destroyed through war and conflict. Moreover, threats to this usage of the digital space can be further avoided through the collaborative works of artists. Exemplified in Broekhuysen's video installations, the involvement of various artists on a multitude of digital levels expands, recreates, and hence reiterates the data on multiple layers. The existence of such a digital world has created spaces in which the display, restoration, installation, layer-wise organization, editions, and copyrights of artworks can be questioned from the perspective of contemporary art.

Especially for artists commentating on the manipulation of information and its interpretations by the public, contemporary digital spaces are platforms of art and freedom. Indeed, digital space plays a major role in territories where the physical creation, exhibition, and discussion of art are nearly impossible due to oppression. When a territory becomes non-negotiable for an artist with time, these digital spaces present the artist with open-source, collaboration, accessible exhibition, and resistance as a practice of art. Looking at Nicky Broekhuysen's works from this perspective, the artist aims to form new connections between regions through analyzing our past, while concurrently forming preliminary examinations of information territories that are possibly in our future.

Perhaps the most valuable of contemporary art's lessons is its reminder of other possible existences in the past, present, and the future; as long as the individual is willing and able to dig deep. "The Digital Archeologist" now invites the viewer to dig in and discover two worlds; *the physical* and *the digital*.

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Istanbul

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