



## Artstation

I TXT ERGO SUM / I-YOU- (X)!

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The British artists Glenn Davidson (b. 1957, Birmingham) and Anne Hayes (b. 1957, Leeds) aka Artstation live and work in Cardiff. They have been active in the art world since the late seventies. From their interest in conceptual art, shared authorship and connection to the emergence of new media art, they developed a practice that focuses on systems rather than objects. Artstation is an art collective known for their architectural designs, installations, films and interactive media projects, but also for their social events and creative workshops. Their studio is housed at Chapter (Arts Centre) in Cardiff.

Artstation is interested in reaching a wide audience through new media. As active bloggers, they developed several online projects in which they conducted interdisciplinary research into social and political issues such as immigration, ecology and activism (*The On Off button, Climate for Change, FACT, Liverpool and The Reverse Google Car, May You live in Interesting Times, Chapter, Cardiff*).

In the past two years they have been exploring the socio-cultural impact of SMS traffic (*TXT2 Projections*). Earlier this year they created an interactive multimedia installation in which they invited spectators of a rugby match to massively and creatively send txt messages to a large screen. They also managed to mobilize an entire community to send SMS messages to prevent the demolition of The Vulcan, a much loved and historic public house (a pub) in Cardiff. The project was initiated in Cwmaman, a small village in the industrial valleys of South Wales, with funding from Arts Council of Wales and Unltd.

In Netwerk the artists exhibit their son's text messages a continuous extract taken from a total of 15,000 messages saved over a six month period. Through this installation we grasp the essence of incessant fingered impulses and reactions that has become the backchannel, not only to the life of their son but also that of a whole generation.

The installation presents a 40 meter 'sound wave', a horizontal line of vertical text messages. The lines of data have been compressed, removing the spatial conventions of typesetting, and time data added as a timeline beneath. This reveals the staggering volume, density and intensity of the youthful day-for-night sms social networking.

The wave is monumental, it's scale is reminiscent of the text on buildings and billboards. The font, *Times New Roman*, mimics the printed medium of literature and publishing. Prominent fea-

tures of TXT are the "x's", (Note: In the exhibition they have also been added to protect personal data.)

Artstation examines the evolution of SMS culture, a kind of slang expressing intimacy between senders. Displaying intimate text messages of someone in the transition between childhood and adulthood raises ethical issues for the artists, and more so when that person is their son! It is common knowledge that message data is held by GSM operators a request to obtain the sent messages was declined. I txt ergo sum seeks to cut through and contradict the largely invisible practices of surveillance, data storage, privacy and ownership issues.

The messages present a more rigorous and complementary snapshot of the their son's life than perhaps photographs or sound recordings might provide. The messages hover in the gallery, materialised as a soundtrack from a youthful life. They capture the intensity of the moment and the place of their making, they serve as a continuous and directed memory. By presenting this ephemeral data in an artwork TXT's acquire a physical presence and directs our attention to the universal features of 21st century communication and explores the impact of *unlimited texts*.

Visitors can also send their own TXT's to be incorporated into the live TXT2 projection in the exhibition.

I.c.w. Murals Wallpaper.co.uk. Many thanks to Dr. Ian Grimstead from Cardiff University, School of Computerscience.

The exhibition is a part of the European project Interreg IVa '2 Mers Seas Zeeën' Cross-boarder cooperative programme 2007-2013. This project is a cooperation between Aspex (Portsmouth), Boem vzw (Kunst & Zwalm), Fabrica (Brighton), L'H du Siège (Valenciennes), La Malterie (Lille) and Netwerk (Aalst). United by the motto 'Investing in your future' sustainable strategies for audience participation are developed. More info: [www.IRIScan.org](http://www.IRIScan.org),

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