

Lisa Marie Sneijder

How to Prevent Hair Loss, Kiat Kiat Projects

2023

<https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/21722>

Veröffentlichungsversion / published version

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Marie Sneijder, Lisa: How to Prevent Hair Loss, Kiat Kiat Projects. In: *NECSUS_European Journal of Media Studies*. #Cycles, Jg. 12 (2023), Nr. 2, S. 338–343. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/21722>.

Erstmalig hier erschienen / Initial publication here:

<https://necsus-ejms.org/how-to-prevent-hair-loss-kiat-kiat-projects/>

Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer Creative Commons - Namensnennung - Nicht kommerziell - Keine Bearbeitungen 4.0/ Lizenz zur Verfügung gestellt. Nähere Auskünfte zu dieser Lizenz finden Sie hier:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Terms of use:

This document is made available under a creative commons - Attribution - Non Commercial - No Derivatives 4.0/ License. For more information see:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

How to Prevent Hair Loss, Kiat Kiat Projects

Lisa Marie Sneijder (independent curator & researcher)

NECSUS 12 (2), Autumn 2023: 338-343

URL: <https://necsus-ejms.org/how-to-prevent-hair-loss-kiat-kiat-projects/>

Keywords

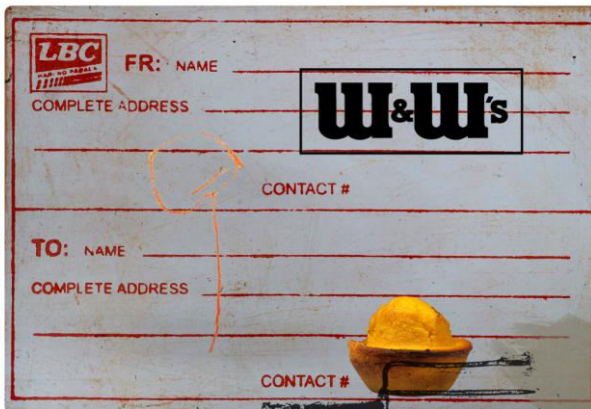
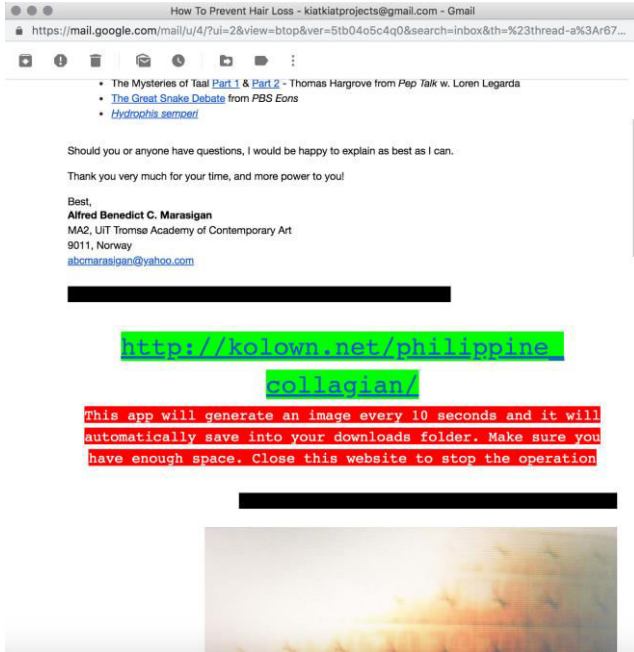
art, exhibition, exhibition review

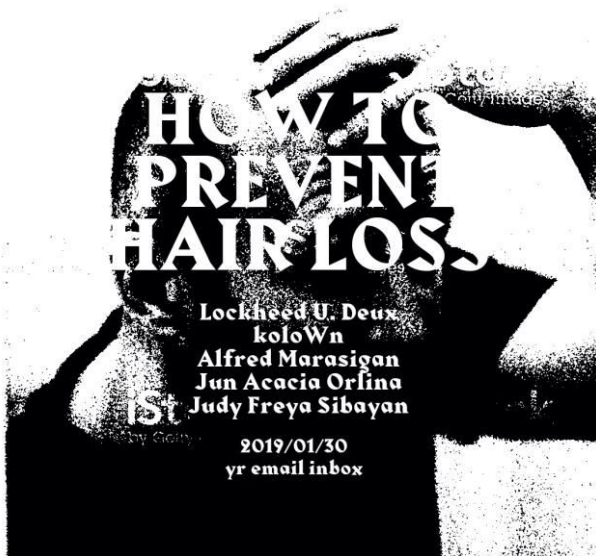
Lives nowadays are saturated with online clicks, daily newsletters, social media updates, and a 24-hour cycle of news streams. The online world is vast and the wheels never stop turning. So how do you adopt the internet as a medium to a curatorial purpose? This is one of the questions curators Arianna Mercado and Yuji de Torres from Kiat Kiat Projects, which is a nomadic curatorial initiative from Manila, the Philippines, explored with their email exhibition called *How to Prevent Hair Loss*, distributed on 30 January 2019. While the exhibition was sent in 2019, its relevance is still felt today as its curatorial critique of the art world can still be posed, while the practice of curating digitally or on the web has not been examined enough. Curating and its reviewing as a practice has primarily focussed on physical spaces and artworks, while the digital structures so prevalent in our society can offer new ways of creating, presenting, and interacting with art and the art world. Therefore, this review aims to look into the contradiction of curating in a new manner by adopting the digital structures we know so well.

The exhibition targets our vanity, our insecurity, the question you will ask Google but not your friends. It plays on our internet habits, the newsletters you subscribe to, the way you present yourself online and perhaps not offline. Through an email, *How to Prevent Hair Loss* visualises these contradictions through net.art and GIF artworks, several links to online books, archive databases, YouTube videos, and a short personal message as an answer to an unknown previous conversation by Alfred Benedict C. Marasigan. The email is the exhibition's hosting location, which provides a set framework of how the artworks can be presented. As any offline exhibition, it is embedded in the technical features at hand – it has simply swapped bricks for HTML. The exhibition follows a more standard email structure with the heading 'How to Prevent Hair Loss', an introductory text written as if it was a personalised message with several links to online sources, followed by a few

HOW TO PREVENT HAIR LOSS, KIAT KIAT PROJECTS

artworks which are digital images and GIFs, and a link hiding a temporary computer virus. Once the link is clicked the virus downloads an image from the exhibition every ten seconds into the download folder until the link is closed. This is also clearly stated alongside the link, to combat any confusion. The exhibition features work by Lockheed U. Deux, koloWn, Alfred Marasigan, Jun Acacia Orlina, and Judy Freya Sibayan.





The email exhibition is a way of curating on the web, which is described by Marialaura Ghidini as curating by interacting with the characteristics, tools, and interfaces of the web as a medium.[1] This orchestrated interaction which employs the interface and the script of the global email network may have a rather light tone, but it is targeting a deeper meaning. How to Prevent Hair Loss aims to question who holds the power in the art world and challenges that world's often serious tone through the use of humour. The email exhibition is a play on the early 2000 computer viruses ILOVEYOU and the Trojan Horse Virus. The ILOVEYOU virus was an email virus which would infect computers that opened the infected email. The virus pretended to be a love letter, and thus exploited the human desire for intimacy and connection.[2] The Trojan Horse Virus is a type of malware that downloads into a computer disguised as a legitimate programme to gain access to the users' system software.[3] Both virus methods are adapted to the How to Prevent Hair Loss email exhibition, which targeted the Art Review's Power 100 list in 2019 to make a statement about how many ageing men were on this list at the time.[4]

The exhibition's rather unsubtle targeted point of action is a way of curating on the web by simply using the technical structure that is already there, while at the same time questioning it. Visually, the exhibition explores the aesthetic of net art which is art that is created online. Dating back to the 1990s, net art was used to create art uninhibited of any political, social, or cultural constraints; it generally did not need the endorsement of an institution to be exhibited, giving rise to art on sites like MySpace.[5] The early days of the

HOW TO PREVENT HAIR LOSS, KIAT KIAT PROJECTS

internet embraced a DIY spirit which has contributed to its unique and recognisable aesthetic until this day. In the exhibition the pixelated GIF, which was originally built to combat the lack of memory on a computer and uses a compression algorithm and a limited range of 256 colours, takes centre stage in the title as the words are visualised by flaming letters in choppy movements. This aesthetic does not aim to be a copy of anything found offline, but rather a very recognisable entity on its own.

While the email exhibition targets specific people, the email was also easily forwarded by anyone who had received it and eventually spread to a far wider audience.[6] The movement of the exhibition is thus rather opposite of an offline exhibition where the audience visits one location to see the work. In this case the exhibition moves around from inbox to inbox, possibly into the spam box, reflecting the ecology of the web's technology. That is, as Ghidini explains, to understand websites not as 'static and self-contained objects but, rather, as ecosystems that are inhabited and shaped by third parties through various interactions between the object (the website) and its larger context (the web)'. [7] The email exhibition is thus an interconnected part of the web medium and its ecosystem. Curator Annet Dekker agrees with Ghidini and further emphasises that when curating digitally, 'it is in execution', as it is a process consisting of 'multiple threads that execute instructions concurrently, or it can involve interactions between multiple paths that can potentially branch out in different and at times uncertain or ambiguous directions'. [8] The web is thus built by the endless interactions between multiple paths all happening at the same time. In this case, it is the interaction within the email exchange and the interaction with the computer virus. One could question if the email exhibition reached their targeted audience, especially as their inboxes are already quite saturated. Perhaps it reached whomever manages the inbox, but what action followed? And what happened to the images that were downloaded into the folder through the virus?

Looking back at this project now in 2023, one could also scrutinise the exhibition's lifespan based on these endless interactions on the web. As the email exhibition was only sent out once, but forwarded multiple times, its lifespan was fairly short and perhaps for some unwilling receivers of the email non-existent. However, for the persons forwarding it the interaction was longer. The relatively short human interaction with the exhibition at that time opposes the longevity of the receivers' inbox now. For some the exhibition might still sit idly in their inbox buried under countless new emails; however, a few clicks in the search bar and the exhibition might appear as if it had never left. This contradiction in the temporality of the email exhibition is also what characterises it. The email can easily be sent out or forwarded again as if it was new, thus questioning the publishing date of this exhibition. You could even go as far and question if an online exhibition like How to Prevent Hair Loss ever ends? We can still experience the full exhibition today in the same manner as when it was sent out in 2019. However, as with any link on the web some disappear over time, and in this case two links pop up with the well-known sentence '404

HOW TO PREVENT HAIR LOSS, KIAT KIAT PROJECTS

Not Found'. Nonetheless, as Dekker and Ghidini explained, curating on the web is in execution and the interactions can thus change over time or become non-existent, making it part of the exhibition's presentation.

Part of the curatorial narrative is that the email might not be seen or that links stop working, which is also a characteristic of the digital realm where it is impossible to keep up with everything that is posted online. Emails are deleted or end up in spam boxes, but the statement on the art world is nonetheless made. However, to accept the uncontrollable dimension of the web in the curatorial process and outcome, and to even dance on the grave of the curator as an omnipotent creator is a unique characteristic of the digital realm and is quite opposite to how offline curating is conducted where technical failures or missing artworks are rarely accepted in the final presentation, let alone seen as a defining aspect of it.

Thus while curating on the web, like the email exhibition *How to Prevent Hair Loss*, requires a similar set of tools as an offline exhibition, it does require a different curatorial approach. The vastness and longevity of the internet is uncontrollable, which has to be taken into account when thinking how targeted the exhibition might be. While data is collected on any online movement, it is still hard to tell who ended up interacting with the *How to Prevent Hair Loss* exhibition and its artworks from 2009 until 2023. Did their message reach the balding top of the art world at the time? Or was it disregarded as spam? How was the virus received? Nonetheless, *Kiat Kiat Projects* plays around with our online behaviours and raises questions on the power structures and aesthetic desires that enable them by delivering their critique in a humorous and original manner.

References

Dekker, A. *Curating digital art*. Amsterdam: Valiz, 2021: 28.

Ghidini, M. 'Curating on the Web: The Evolution of Platforms as Spaces for Producing and Disseminating Web-Based Art', *Arts*, 8, no. 3, 2019: 3.

Poulson, K. 'May 4, 2000: Tainted "Love" Infects Computers', *WIRED*, 3 May 2010: <https://www.wired.com/2010/05/0504i-love-you-virus/> (accessed on 26 August 2022).

'Trojan Horse Virus', Fortinet: <https://www.fortinet.com/resources/cyberglossary/trojan-horse-virus#:~:text=What%20is%20a%20Trojan%20Horse%20Virus%3F,system%20access%20with%20their%20software> (accessed on 26 August 2022).

HOW TO PREVENT HAIR LOSS, KIAT KIAT PROJECTS

Notes

- [1] Ghidini 2019.
- [2] Poulson 2010.
- [3] 'Trojan Horse Virus': <https://www.fortinet.com/resources/cyberglossary/trojan-horse-virus#:~:text=What%20is%20a%20Trojan%20Horse%20Virus%3F.system%20access%20with%20their%20software>.
- [4] Arianna Mercado, 'Interview about Curatorial Activism', interview by Lisa Marie Sneijder, 29 July 2022, audio, 51:58.
- [5] 'Internet Art', Tate: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/i/internet-art> (accessed 14 April 2023).
- [6] Mercado, interview.
- [7] Ghidini 2019.
- [8] Dekker 2021.