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EDITORIAL

Once again – words and things

Artnodes, in its editorial work of the last decade, has endeavoured to map out a niche for reflection and evaluation regarding the forces acting on something as elusive as the present of artistic and cultural practices associated with particular places and times.

Year after year, however, a somewhat perplexing paradox is painted. Is it a question of talking about the present from the past? Or rather a question of talking about the past from the present? In referring to the artistic and cultural practices of our networked society, past issues of Artnodes have remarked on the need to map, survey or rewrite these practices and even to the more radical need to wipe the slate clean. This is because – leaving aside the ‘great narratives’ and stories already told – their immediacy and primitiveness (in the positive sense) allow us to glance between what has and what will be written.

Thinking about media art and media art practices very often implies thinking about the nature of art itself, returning to the present and considering associated concepts, words and ideas and how these have emerged and gradually acquired legitimacy in the discursive apparatus of an institution. The fact that the institution, whether artistic, academic or otherwise, represents the apogee of success of certain narratives, accounts, concepts, etc., implies power, social, economic and consensual relationships between members of a community who, in order to stand out, highlight their similarities and feed their differences.

Observing and questioning ways of explaining, narrating and archiving enables us to talk about history with a certain vigilance. And the necessary return to the present, from a lineage shaped in the past, enables us to highlight the muted parts of history (referring to art, the media, science and technology), and also to render visible oversights, omissions, intentions and politics as an abstract category that structures the narrative. Perhaps the exercise of thinking in the present implies the need to conduct a historiographical exercise aimed at tracking down and examining whatever gaps exist so as to be able to fully understand contemporary events and their political implications. Common to the articles in this issue 13 of Artnodes is the fact that they are mirrors reflecting institutional critique, discussing, as they do, the present as created from the past, current artistic trends and the new critical discourse that departs from the lengthy and diverse tradition of art history.

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