

The OFF LABEL Festival

A Curatorial Statement

OFF LABEL in a "technological" sense might be taken for the ways in which technology outruns its own conceptions of use and misuse. Whether the transhumanist dreams of technologically-enabled immortality, or the fateful prophecies of techno-dystopian apocalypse -- the question of technology is never confined to arenas of use and function. Instead, the question of technology -- at its core -- always speaks first and foremost to the possibilities of the human imagination. And in this, technology always aspires to being more than simply technological.

"OFF LABEL technologies are the hacks, cracks and drifts of a digital imagination, brought back to reframe the human possibilities of technological encounter."

In an "artistic" sense, OFF LABEL might be seen, not as a remix of technological possibility, but as the attempt to keep up with the remix of humanity already initiated by a technological imaginary. In this, there is something experiential about artistic practice, something that opens itself to how human lives are imagined and re-imagined -- and the ways in which the human and the technological begin to form strange attractions. Art, no less than technology, aspires to that which is beyond its own frame of conception. And, until it goes OFF LABEL the human imagination is simply not human enough -- the possibility of a human imaginary requires that the imagination in some way -- perhaps in any way -- finds a way to outrun its technological rendering.

"OFF LABEL art is a practice of creative mis-use, directed towards the limits of experience and representation."

In this, art in a technological era might be seen as an "ideological" and "spiritual" -- even "religious" -- pursuit. This does not dictate form or content -- since the dreams of a technologically-enabled humanity are also endowed with full-spectrum capabilities, spanning possibilities both nihilist and transcendental. Here, what matters is that there is an ideological condition in play -- a perspective or attitude that grounds itself in a cultural, political or spiritual exploration. Far from having become a new religion, the technological condition forces spirituality into an artistic mode of engagement -- OFF LABEL -- defining itself for itself, as part of a larger cultural and experiential context.

"OFF LABEL ideology is the challenge to creatively rethink the status of meaning in a technological world."

"OFF LABEL" is an invitation and a challenge -- what happens to questions of art, technology and spirituality when we begin to peel the labels off -- when we begin to remix the codes of remix itself, living -- or attempting to live -- the imaginary versions of the story as it might otherwise proceed. This is a forum where the suspension of disbelief meets the science of placebo-induced effect -- a world where the feedback loop of technology can merge seamlessly with artistic dreams and spiritual desires because each was always already a strange but compelling fusion of the real and the imagined. The OFF LABEL festival takes an OFF LABEL approach and abandons conventional canons of content, presentation and interaction in order to integrate itself with the lived cultural,

ideological and spiritual particularities of our times. With participants from many disciplines, representing a wide range of original perspectives, OFF LABEL emphasizes knowledge, creativity and practice for the ways they are integrated, remixed and reinvented by scholarly, artistic and scientific communities.

Off Label Team - June 2011