

Marlborough

mark amerika



mark amerika

Remixing Reality. 1993 - 2023

March 30 - May 13, 2023

Marlborough

Enric Granados, 68
08008 Barcelona

www.galeriamarlborough.com
infobarcelona@galeriamarlborough.com

+34 93 467 44 54

MARK AMERIKA: I LINK, THEREFORE I AM

Roberta Bosco

Multidisciplinary artist, Internet art theorist and transmedia storyteller, [Mark Amerika](#) is considered one of the fathers of net.art. The definition, however, is reductive. Mark Amerika has proven to be a 360° net artist, capable of evolving in step with technology, making us have a different approach and perception of the digital space through his works.

Since [GRAMMATRON](#) (1993–1997), his first work, which with [PHON:E:ME](#) (1999) and [FILMTEXT](#) (2002), constitutes the trilogy that made him known to the world, the artist has been creating works that not only refer to the multiple possibilities offered by the Internet in terms of communication, interaction and collaboration between users, but also predict the parameters of the new digital reality in terms of our perception of space, time and our identity and role in relation to that reality.

“I am a writing-machine” is one of the first statements to appear in [GRAMMATRON](#), emblematic of a new model of narrative that has arisen from the Internet and the possibilities of hypertext. This system of organizing information, which requires a more active and engaged reader, represents a break with 20th century narrative linearity and links to the concept of metanarrative and literary visionaries such as Borges

and Cortázar. “I link, therefore I am” declares Mark Amerika in the same work, claiming the new identity of the network user, his free choice and autonomy to navigate and experiment. With this statement the artist updates Descartes’ *cogito ergo sum*, adapting one of the fundamental principles of modern philosophy to the information age. Two centuries before Descartes’ *Discourse on Method* (1637), Johannes Gutenberg had invented the printing press (1440) and in *De pictura* (1436) Leon Battista Alberti had provided the first definition of scientific perspective, proposing an unprecedented vision of the world, generated by three-dimensional spaces. These innovations, which allowed the world to move towards three-dimensionality, leaving behind the conventional two-dimensional world of the Middle Ages, have a certain analogy with the emergence of the Internet and the profound social and perceptual changes generated by the introduction of computer technologies in everyday life. Society is claiming a new relevance and is living a new Renaissance, thanks to the fourth dimension, virtuality and everything related to the computer revolution.

When, in 2001 at the Transmediale festival in Berlin, Mark Amerika said “Net.art is dead”, provoking a real storm among the ideologues and artists of the

medium, beyond launching a simple provocation, he raised a reflection on the foundations of this new artistic expression and what the Internet had been up to that moment. Appearing to question the values of the traditional art world with immaterial works that challenged the concept of authorship and uniqueness, net.art, which was born with the network and evolved in step with its rapid transformations, was the materialization of a utopia.

Considering this, it is legitimate to think that when he said “Net.art is dead”, Mark Amerika was predicting that the Internet was not going to be the open, participatory territory without limitations or restrictions that had been postulated at the beginning of it. The artist announced the death of net.art, sensing how the network was going to evolve, and 20 years later it is obvious that he was right. However, the growing commercialization and surrender of the Internet to large multinational corporations did not prevent him from continuing to take advantage of computer technologies and their innate transforming power in a critical and even subversive way.

“Internet not only allows new experimentations, it requires them” said Mark Amerika in the year 2000, in his first appearance in a Spanish media, an interview

we did with him for the newspaper *El País* (Arte.Red <http://www.arte-red.net>). These experiments led him to explore the dark areas of the Internet, starting with system failures. While the world pursued the perfect image, the highest resolution and the triumph of hyperreality, Amerika created the Museum of Glitch Aesthetics (MOGA), a fictitious institution dedicated to the Artist 2.0, an equally fictitious character whose work allows them to explore the potential of error and the unexpected, to delve into the practices of appropriation and remixing of content and to suggest critical reflections on digital culture, the computer industry and the art world.

Appropriationist practices, another of the distinctive features of his work, embody a technical and conceptual process that exudes a certain nostalgia for the free Internet of the early days, alien to the dynamics and hierarchies of the art world. As Mark Amerika’s alter ego, the Artist 2.0, he is one of the first to buy a cell phone to create works of art and with the new device comes new functionalities, which multiply at an increasingly dizzying pace as digital technologies evolve, transforming supports, forms and contents of all communication.

The metaphor of travel and *dérive* (drift), which characterizes the graphics and language of the Internet, together with the unprecedented creative possibilities offered by wireless media, make Mark Amerika the perfect contemporary *flâneur*. The Artist 2.0 appropriates the situationist *dérive* and uses Google Earth to turn the aimless walks through the city into virtual drifts in the middle of nature without leaving their armchair. The famous *Lake Como Remix* is from this period, in which he combines situationist *dérives*, the lessons of Richard Long and the *land art* artists and the computer error as an artistic resource, exploiting the failures produced by his erratic navigation on a tour of Lake Como in Italy.

Technology allows him to go further. The Artist 2.0 discovers that it is not necessary to move, it is enough to choose a subject that is in constant movement, but that does not change its position, and so the water with its waves and its play of light becomes an ideal generator of *glitch* videos. The analogy with the flow of data is obvious and this is how the Artist 2.0 expresses it: “The flow of data, the water of information, is continuous and I am a part of the mix. The flow never really needs me, but I

absolutely need it. It channels my creativity in ways I have no control over.”

Video games with their virtual worlds, the metaverse (a new name to define experiences that from Second Life to date have not been successful), Artificial Intelligence and NFT are also introduced in Mark Amerika’s artistic practice, linking with pop culture (*8-Bit Heaven*), automatism and surrealist aesthetics (*Watermarks*) and textual conceptual art (*Value Propositions*).

It is true: net.art in its most purist sense is dead, but art on the Internet is more alive than ever and Mark Amerika will continue to be here to disrupt the development of art history, exploring its contradictions and taking advantage of its failures.

Roberta Bosco es periodista especializada en arte contemporáneo y cultura digital.

<https://arteedadsilicio.com>

GRAMMATRON, 1993-1997

It is Mark Amerika's most iconic work since in 2000 it became one of the first pieces of net.art selected for the Whitney Museum Biennial of American Art.

GRAMMATRON is a networked narrative environment that develops a close world where stories are created in immersive environments, something that at the time of its creation challenged the way a narrative is composed, published, and distributed.

Mark Amerika invites the user to build a narrative, based on hypertext, that follows the exploits of Abe Golam, the hero of this online novel close to the literary genre called cyberpunk. The visitor has to make continuous decisions, often with unexpected consequences.

GRAMMATRON
1993-1997
net.art

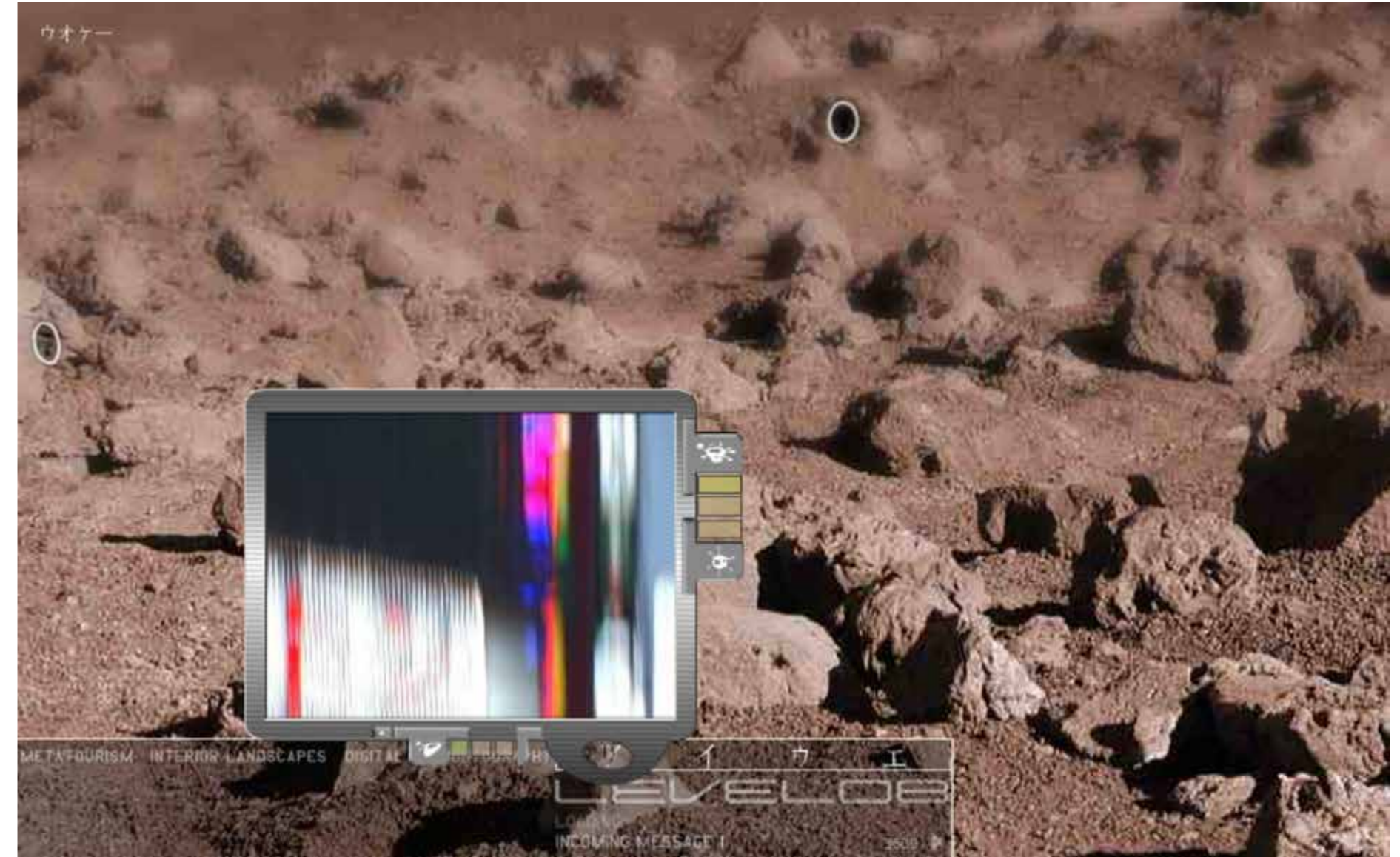
HTC hypertextual consciousness
Mark Amerika

I link therefore I am

Filmtext 2.0, 2001-2002

Interactive net.art work that explores the interrelations between biotechnology, digital narrative, and networked culture. The piece is set in the language of computer games. The artist follows the tradition of the most experimental cinema (Vertov, Godard or Marker) and attempts to translate the cinematic language into interactive and digitally expanded art forms, associated with new media genres emerging at the time of its creation, such as net.art, hypertext and moving graphic images.

Filmtext 2.0
2002
net.art



Dream Cum True, 2008

Video artwork described and created by the artist as a “prolonged meditation”. It refers to the artist’s personal experiences, such as the time he spends annually in Kailua, Hawaii. The work consists of a series of poetic, double-meaning and provocative statements that wash ashore in a sea of phosphorescent colors, accompanied by a soundtrack created by the sound of Hawaiian waves.

Dream Cum True
2008
video art, digital video / color
85 minutes

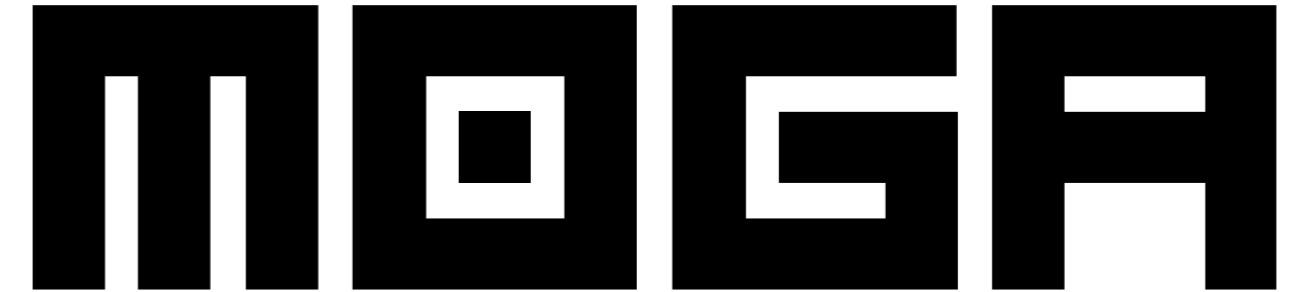


MOGA_Museum of Glitch Aesthetics [glitchmuseum.com] 2012

MOGA is a virtual museum and transmedia artwork that hosts various forms of *glitch art* (video, animated GIF, still images, sound art and electronic literature). It was commissioned by the Abandon Normal Devices Festival on the occasion of the 2012 London Olympics.

This virtual museum displays the expressive capacity of error, of failure, and ruptures our mental construction of reality. We live in a post-digital era in which the hyper-real, high-resolution image is being pursued for its resemblance to reality. *Glitch art* questions this sort of image, typical of the present, through deformation. If it is human to fail, as Augustine of Hippo said, knowing that machines also fail, just like us, makes us, in a way, humanize technology.

The connection of glitch art with other artistic movements, much earlier in the history of art, is obvious since the taste for the different, the weird, the deformed has been represented on many occasions by artists such as Bosch, Goya, Francis Bacon or Louise Bourgeois, among many others.



Lake Como Remix [MOGA]

It depicts a journey via Google Street View through the Italian Lake Como and the landscape that surrounds it. Described by the artist as a “cyberpsychogeographic” journey, he experiments with the functions of the software, creating images that show the glitch aesthetics inherent to the images that are produced by this type of program.

Lago Como Remix
2012
video / color
9 minutes 48 seconds



Glitch Lake [MOGA]

The water of a lake intervened by *glitch* results in a new and powerful image, which responds to a process of experimentation and manipulation. The Artist 2.0 creates a work full of color and brightness, with forms that are close to abstraction and offer us an almost hypnotic moment.

Glitch Lake
2012
video loop / color
9 minutes 48 seconds



Glitch TV [MOGA]

Amplification and use of the error in search of a concrete aesthetic to create images that belong to an unreal and impossible world, a surreal and unexpected world. This work responds to the need to develop a new language that, in a way, rejects the audiovisual language to which we are used to with cinema, television or video art

Glitch TV
2012
video loop / color



Cookie Monster (Goyaglitch1) Use of Force (Goyaglitch2) y Nature Mort [MOGA]

The animated GIF is a format inherent to today's popular culture, somewhere between photography and video, and where quality is the least relevant. In fact, these images were captured by the artist in the years when cell phones with video cameras were really popular, something that transformed the way we communicate and that was incorporated by some creators to their artistic practices, as it happens with all communication technologies that have emerged in recent decades.

The GIF becomes a perfect vehicle to tell a short story, an emotion. We can appreciate how some of these images are directly linked to the history of art, appropriating, reworking with a contemporary vision and decontextualizing, sometimes in a humorous way.

They were created in 2006 on the first cell phone with embedded video recording technology. At that time, the artist already used it to record images, some of them capturing details of important works in the history of art, thus making reference to great artists such as Goya.

Cookie Monster (Goyaglitch1)
2005-2006
animated GIF





Use of force
2005-2006
animated GIF



Nature Mort
2005-2006
animated GIF

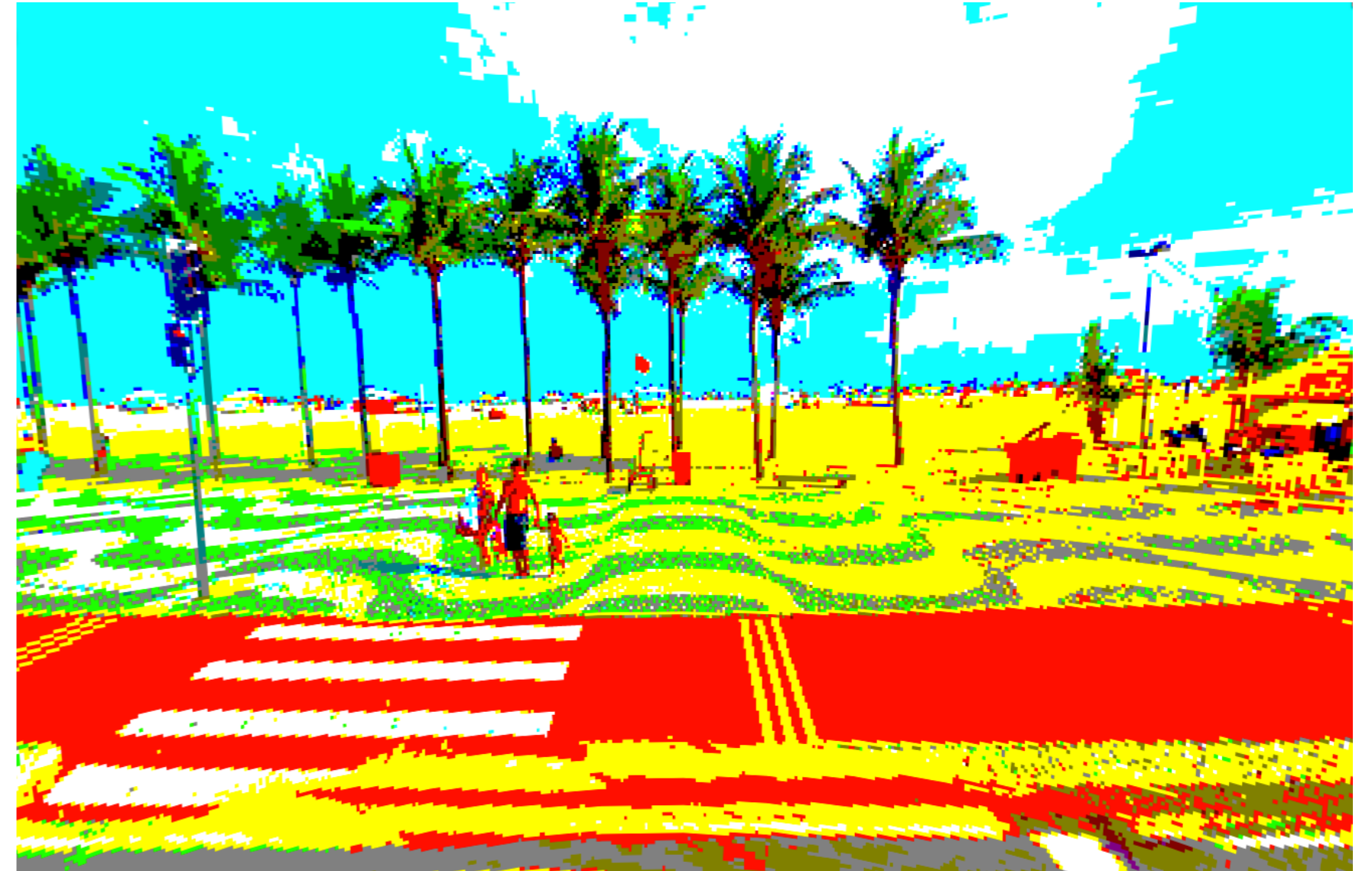
8-Bit Heaven [MOGA]

The 8-Bit Heaven series is part of his MOGA Museum of Glitch Aesthetics project and consists of images captured from Google Street View, making use of the traditional appropriation of digital art, to which an 8-bit filter is applied, thus recalling the aesthetics of classic video games from the 80s. The result is a series of digital images with a retro and pixelated look with an intense coloring.

Classic video games are one of the milestones of popular culture and are also part of the history of contemporary art, considering that more than a decade ago the MoMA acquired video games such as Pac-Man and Tetris, among others.

Mark Amerika takes this expressive language and images from the Internet to create 8-Bit Heaven, showing the interconnection between the popular, current digital tools and contemporary creation.

Rio 47 (Series: 8-Bit Heaven)
2012
digital print
61,7 x 90 cm



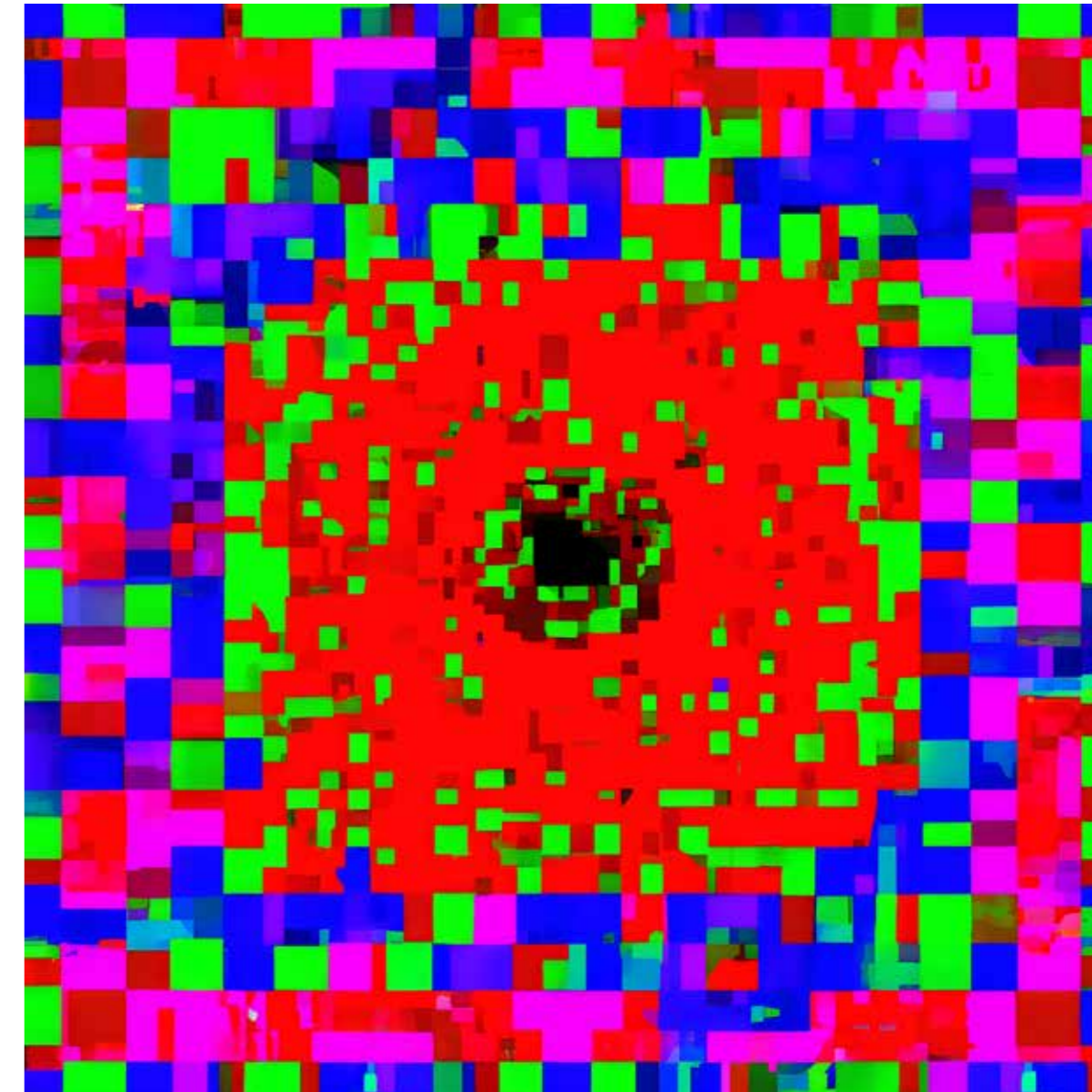
Watermarks

The word *Watermarks* refers to the watermarks used in text-to-image generation platforms using Artificial Intelligence. Such marks are intended to be an annoying intrusion that certifies the origin of the works.

In 2019, Amerika began experimenting with Artificial Intelligence. As an artist and writer, he is fascinated by what the AI community calls “machine learning” and “artificial neural networks” and their relationship to what the surrealists called an aesthetic form of pure psychic automatism.

Amerika was an early adopter of an online AI program called DALL-E 2 (a neologism remixing Dali + Wall-E). He approached the AI as an artist-collaborator and began producing previously unimaginable images. When using DALL-E 2, each rendered image came with a watermark composed of small colored squares. Amerika decided to work with the AI to transform these generic watermarks into the main feature of each of the works that make up the *Watermarks* series.

Watermarks 7 (Series: Watermarks)
2022
digital print
40 x 40 cm



Value Propositions

During the pandemic, with the surge of NFTs, digital art became a rising commodity for the first time in art history. Amerika, seeing the recent explosion of interest in digital art online, in 2021, working with an archive on a 1994 Powerbook, the same one he used to create his most iconic artwork, *GRAMMATRON*, decided to address this new speculative art market and began creating a new series of artwork entitled *Value Propositions*.

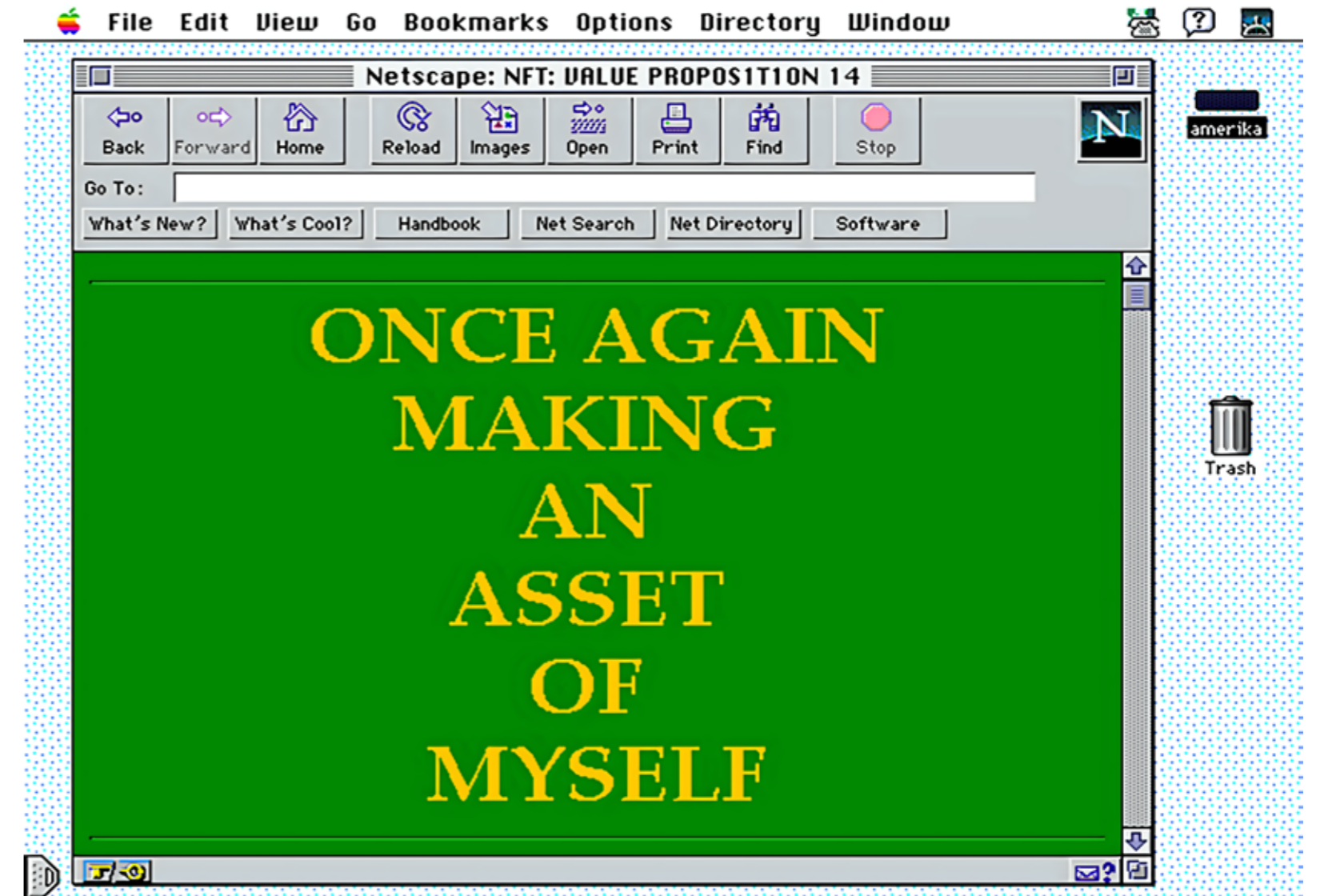
These short, conceptual sentences, created on his old laptop and using 30-year-old software, are a direct and playful response to the rapid commodification of digital art.

He uses an old Netscape web browser as a framing device to produce fictitious web pages that have been transformed into digital prints whose titles include the word NFT in a 1994 web browser, creating a disruption in the history of net.art.

Value Propositions represents a satirical critique of the contemporary art market, especially now that digital art is taken more seriously only because it has increased in monetary value.

This series of works is influenced by the work of John Baldessari, Joseph Kosuth and Jenny Holzer.

Asset (Series: Value Propositions)
2021
digital print
40 x 40 cm





Mark Amerika. Miami (USA), 1960.

Artist, theorist, writer and teacher, he graduated in Fine Arts at Brown University. He has held solo exhibitions at venues such as the Denver Art Museum, the Institute of Contemporary Art in London and the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis.

His work has been shown in over 100 international group exhibitions on five continents and, in 2009–2010, the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Athens hosted the exhibition entitled UNREALTIME. Other exhibitions were shown at The Power Plant (Toronto), the Eli and Edith Broad Museum of Art, the Denver Museum of Contemporary Art, the ZKM and the Montreal Biennale. The Abandon Normal Devices Festival in the UK, in conjunction with the London 2012 Olympics commissioned Amerika's large-scale transmedia artwork, Museum of Glitch Aesthetics [MOGA] which was shown in a solo exhibition in Manchester.

Amerika's work is included in numerous private collections, as well as in the permanent collections of the Denver Art Museum, the Walker Art Center, the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens, and the University of Colorado CU Art Museum. His work has been written about in over 100 international publications including The New York Times, Die Zeit, El País, The Wall Street Journal, The Observer and The Art Magazine of the Tate Museum.

He is the author of numerous books, including the cult novels The Kafka Chronicles (FC2/University of Alabama Press, 1993) and Sexual Blood (FC2/University of Alabama Press, 1995), as well as two books documenting his experiences as one of the first digital artists investigating Internet and remix culture: META/DATA: A Digital Poetics (The MIT Press, 2007) and remixthe-book (University of Minnesota Press, 2011). In 2022, Amerika published My Life as an Artificial Creative Intelligence (Stanford University Press), a book of artist writings focused on his experiments with artificial intelligence.

Marlborough

MADRID
Orfila, 5
28010 Madrid
+34.91.319.1414
galeriamarlborough.com
info@galeriamarlborough.com

BARCELONA
Enric Granados, 68
08008 Barcelona
+ 34.93.467.44.54
galeriamarlborough.com
infobarcelona@galeriamarlborough.com

LONDRES
6 Albemarle Street
London, W1S 4BY, United Kingdom
+44 (0) 20.7629.5161
marlboroughgallerylondon.com
london@marlboroughgallery.com

NUEVA YORK
545 West 25th Street, Floors 1-3
New York, NY 10001, USA
+ 1 (212) 541.49.00
marlboroughnewyork.com
mny@marlboroughgallery.com

CURATOR / Lorea Iglesias
DESIGN DIRECTION / Lorea Iglesias
LAYOUT / Jara Herranz
PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST / Laura Shill

With the collaboration of:

.NEWART
{ foundation; }

Marlborough