

# 'Eva and Franco Mattes' virtual world', *Phaidon*, April 2012

PHAIDON

## Eva and Franco Mattes' virtual world

An interview with the Italian internet artists aka 0100101110101101.ORG, ahead of their first London gallery show



Eva and Franco Mattes aka 0100101110101101.ORG, *No Fun* (2010). Online performance HD video, 15:46 min, Courtesy of the artists and Carroll/Fletcher

### DETAILS

Carroll/Fletcher gallery,  
London, United Kingdom

[carrollfletcher.com](http://carrollfletcher.com)

From: 13 April 2012

Until: 18 May 2012

Anonymous, untitled,  
dimensions variable

[carrollfletcher.com](http://carrollfletcher.com)

Eva and Franco Mattes' exploration of art in the online dimension spans the internet's breadth of possibilities at its most inclusive while providing an access to its darkest, most disturbing aspects. *Re-enactments* (2007-2010) saw the pair perform live restagings of historic art performances including Marina

Abramovic's *Imponderabilia* and Gilbert and George's *The Singing Sculpture* in the virtual world of *Second Life*; *In No Fun* (2010), Franco's apparent suicide in a webcam-based chat room prompted a chain of disconcerting reactions from users – laughter, scepticism, even, reportedly, masturbation.

The Italian duo - known collectively as 0100101110101101.ORG - open their first solo show in London this week with the suitably vague title *Anonymous, Untitled, Dimensions Variable*. Inherently difficult to define, the art at their London show is emblematic of their approach. As commerce in art becomes an increasingly hot topic, Phaidon talks to the pair - who chose to answer as a singular unit - about the issue of copyright, fakes and ownership of art in the online sphere and what it means to collect and own digital art.

### Do people who come across your work online know its art?

In most of our works there is a first phase in which people are not aware they are part of an art piece, most of the time it involves some sort of fake news, so they get involved in a very spontaneous way. We often incorporate their reactions in the final work. Once the piece is revealed, it's presented as an artwork and people became aware of its nature.

**Many of the people who are viewing - indeed, participating in - your work aren't interested in art at all – does that matter?**

We try to reach a broader audience than the usual art crowd. Our ideal audience is the neighbour next door. Our hope is to get genuine reactions, and in order to do so we must involve people when they least expect it. Say you're walking down a street and see two guys in a garage shooting at each other, your reaction will be very different than attending a Chris Burden performance in a gallery. I'm interested in that moment of shock, that "WTF moment".



Eva and Franco Mattes aka 0100101110101101.ORG, *The Others* (2011), 10,000 photos stolen from personal computers, slide show, HD video, Courtesy of the artists and Carroll/Fletcher

**Have you ever found the way people react to your work shocking?**

Sure, when you leave things open something surprising always happens. In *No Fun* we simulated Franco's suicide on a public webcam chat room. We liked the idea of a performance, taking place online, for an unwitting audience, and wanted something people had to react to, something extremely real, like death. Thousands of random people watched while he was hanging from the ceiling, swinging slowly, for hours. The video documentation of the performance is a sequence of reactions: some laugh, some are completely unmoved, some insult the supposed corpse, and some take pictures with their mobiles. At one point a person started masturbating. So while we expected our "performance" would shock the viewer, we were the ones shocked. Maybe it turned us from authors to spectators.



Eva and Franco Mattes aka 0100101110101101.ORG, My Generation (2010), Video collage, broken computer, Courtesy of the artists and Carroll/Fletcher

**Can you buy and sell this sort of art?**

My impression is collectors who buy Net Art are more like patrons who, by acquiring these kinds of works, allow other people to see them online, for free.

**Your work explores issues of copyright and authorship of works online – is that a new concern for artists?**

These issues seem important for the art market but have never been too relevant for artists. And I'm not talking of digital art. When Michelangelo did his David he had obviously in mind Policleto's Doriforo. They are pretty much the same sculpture, but 2,000 years apart. We usually assume that copy-paste started with the internet, while it has been there forever. Young artists value the circulation of their work much more than its "protection", the more other people copy, modify and make variations of your work the happier you are. It seems to me that we are finally perceiving it as a form of celebration, a sort of tribute, instead of theft.



Eva and Franco Mattes aka 0100101110101101.ORG The Others (2011), 10,000 photos stolen from personal computers, slide show, HD video, Courtesy of the artists and Carroll/Fletcher

**Your work is staged on real-life platforms and the interactions with people are real, do you worry about the kind of influence this**

**meddling would have?**

A good fake is not like a painting hanged to a wall. It spreads out of your control. Paradoxically, the better the fake, the harder it is to communicate it was a fake. Once we made up an artist named Darko Maver, and I still meet people now, more than 10 years after the disclosure, who believe him to be real. People saw him on TV or in some newspaper and sometimes there is no way to convince them it was our construction. I guess we have to accept this.

If you're interested in art an online world, we recommend taking a look at our account of [LuckyPDF's performance](#) at the opening of Remote Control – a television-focused exhibition at London's ICA. Also relevant is Phaidon's book [Art and Electronic Media](#) – a comprehensive international survey of art in the myriad forms of electronic media, including light, robotics, networks, virtual reality and the web. And if Eva and Franco's restaging of the work of Marina Abramovic has whetted your appetite you may be interested in our [monograph](#) on her.

Eva and Franco Mattes aka 0100101110101101.ORG  
Anonymous, untitled, dimensions variable, [Carroll/ Fletcher gallery](#), Eastcastle Street, London. April 13 – May 18 2012.