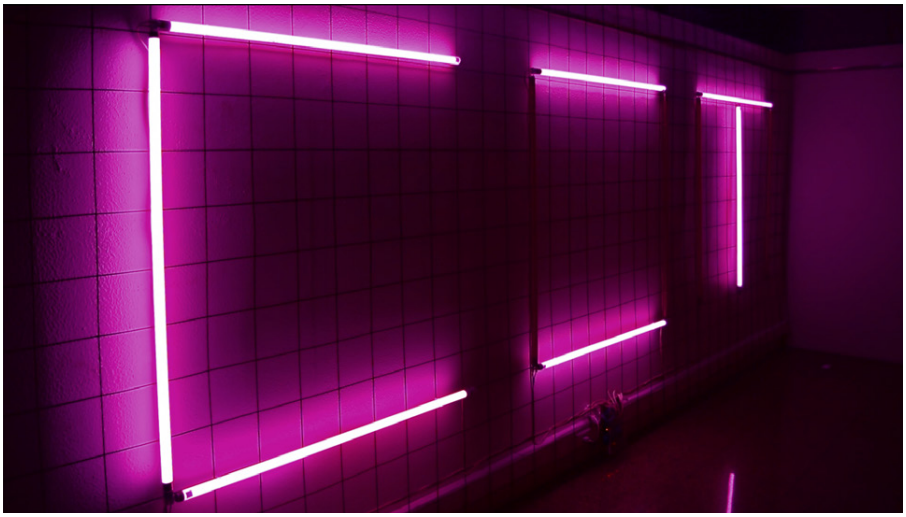
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ComComComCom: Computation, Communication, Commerce, Community, a Common Com

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Keywords: Computation, Communication, Commerce, Community.

This automated light installation arises from the necessity to empower a critical reflection about an actual communications multinational company. This artwork was conceived and materialized to synthesize a critical and satirical view towards misconceptions and permeability between the concepts of communication, commerce, computation and community that int the post-digital contemporaneity can easily be transmuted into each other. This automated light installation highlights that more than the common prefix "com" between the above four words it's the transmutation of their meanings, contexts and functions that we must be aware of.

Description

Community, Commerce and Communication

In the last decade of XX century a European Community was promised but, instead of real 'community', a Common Market was executed simply to empower/facilitate commercial activities. Soon the concept and nomenclature changed to European Economic Community. Although a common currency is implemented, huge social, economic and cultural differences among its member states persist. This "Community" as "Market" execution was achieved with "Communication" shaping public opinion.

.com, Commerce and Communication

Under a .com domain –the most common domain extension—often we face hybrids of communication and commercial mediums. .com domains serve to commercialise products and services but also to communicate and inform about them. Thereby commerce and communication evolve as mediums in a common infrastructure, transmuting themselves, one in to the other, reciprocally, becoming a hybrid. Altice presented as a communications company is in fact an Internet Service Provider that commercialises internet access—the most widespread commercial and communication medium.

Computation and Community

Nowadays communication is dependent on computation of digital data. Computational devices ubiquity changes the way we navigate space and live in community. The goal of some of the most powerful corporations in the world is to keep our attention, keeping us engaged. Computational algorithms control and measure this engagement. Being online makes it difficult to escape the influence of this companies and their computing power that mediate and change the information we access. To be online in a non digital public space becomes a refuse to be in that space, a refusal to a face to face communication affecting the notion of community itself. Freedom and chaos get replaced by control and predictability.

Artwork

ComComComCom is a large display constituted by T8 lamps, controlled by an Arduino instructed to switch on and off each one of them. The lamps—aligned on a vertical plane formed by a metal slab mesh—together form the word 'com'. The materials that constitute *ComComComCom* were reused from previous artworks and from a construction site. Randomly calculated visuals are displayed and some times the word 'com' can be perceived.

The slab mesh has a symbolic value in *ComComComCom.* Designed as a medium to reinforce concrete ceilings and walls, this mesh function is frequently subverted in construction sites when used as a fence – a division of

private and public space, a protection. This ability to subvert and transform the functionality of mediums opens the possibility to create new thoughts, new ideas and new functions to existing media, liberating them from their original functions. Thus the mesh is a metaphor for the internet as a grid/network that supports communication. A grid that represents simultaneously protection and safety of personal data, privacy and individuality but also the structure that grounds the network that integrates public digital space where humans navigate. The grid as structure for communication, community and therefore freedom but also as border, limit, prison and confinement hardware of control.

Each lamp acts as a flickering bit—an on/off binary state—reminding the smallest unit of digital information. *ComComComCom*'s control algorithm keeps count of each 'bit' state, ensuring that there is always one bit on and that bits are never all on simultaneously, so that the word "com" is never complete/explicit. The flickering was designed as aesthetic, expressive and semantic strategy, alluding to machinic malfunctions and to any written semantic ambiguity, highlighting Communication as an incomplete and subjective phenomenon.

Video Asset: https://vimeo.com/391963578.