**The Cybernetic Advertising Agency**

Summer School for Art and Activism in the Algorithmic Attention Economy

Artúr van Balen, Baruch Gottlieb, Seda Gürses, Loet Leydesdorff, Shailoh Phillips and others

13.08.2018 – 18.08.2018

**Project-oriented summer school exploring artistic implications of empty spectacles, the social feedback operation in social media, inflation in the attention economy and contemporary participative networked computation. Appropriating and elaborating strategies from art, philosophy, activism and commerce, we will discuss and diffract the functioning media apparatus extending into every corner of life. Convened by Baruch Gottlieb and Shailoh Phillips.**

As a follow-up to the ‘Winter School of Discontent’, West is pleased to invite you to a new Summer School program for 2018, the Cybernetic Advertising Agency!

The Cybernetic Advertising Agency is a one-week multi-disciplinary art and theory lab in The Hague where we explore the inner workings of the ‘attention economy’ and discuss its implications for the arts. Marshall McLuhan considered advertising the ‘first great art form’ of the electronic age. He meant a ‘corporate’, collaborative, multi-disciplinary art form that reached out into the society in a cybernetic feedback loop, sending out messages, gauging responses and then integrating information from the responses into new messages. For this summer school we will be working with the playful and light material of inflatable objects, under the guidance of artist Artúr van Balen. Inflatables are spectacular attention-grabbers all the way to the empty core. They are used both for advertising purposes and for social protest movement. In our working method, we will prepare our tactics, prepare our evaluation criteria, deploy our tactics, launch the inflatables and evaluate according to our criteria towards subsequent deployment.

Advertising is everywhere. It is central to the profit models of all the prevalent social platforms. Everywhere you look, you click, you listen, you walk you are bombarded with messages that are trying to lure you. Many forms of advertising mechanisms today not only send messages, they also harvest all kinds of data to improve the advertising ‘targeting’. Such feedback loops controlling behavior belong to the field of study called socio-cybernetics.

Socio-cybernetics describes how the techniques of advertising are not just about marketing; they are about behaviour shaping, nudging and control. We will look at how our perception is formed and reinforced through advertising, embedding cultural norms and stereotypes about gender, race, age and class, conditioning not only what we desire, but how we shape ourselves. Since the work of artists also intervenes in this socio-cybernetic space, our project-oriented summer school will explore the artistic implications of the social feedback operation in social media, and contemporary participative-networked computation. Appropriating and elaborating strategies from art, philosophy, activism and commerce, we will discuss and diffract the functioning media apparatus extending into every corner of life. Over the arc of the week together we will conceptualize, design, build, deploy and evaluate speculative artistic interventions in public space.

The course will be led by Shailoh Phillips and Baruch Gottlieb and guided by experts from the fields of tactical and activist art, media philosophy, digital art, algorithmic politics and marketing. We are very happy to have artistic inflatables expert Artúr van Balen with us, who will be guiding us through the practical part of our workshop. The course will run 6 days, from Monday August 13th to Saturday August 19th, with morning, afternoon and evening programs, hands-on making, ‘insurgent’ public art techniques and performance, activist and art critique, philosophy, social science research, marketing and more! Participants should leave the course with their political and social agency invigorated by fundamental knowledge of how the ‘system’ really works.

We are cybernetic, and we advertise to cultivate agency, the Cybernetic Advertising Agency!

**In order to keep the discussions and experiences substantive and immersive, this Summer School is limited to 30 participants. There is a fee of € 175 per participant, which includes lunches as well as a reader. The program will be held in English.**

**To apply, please e-mail machteld@westdenhaag.nl before 21 June 2018 with a short introduction and a 100-word motivation. If successful, you will receive a confirmation of registration and instructions for payment within the week.**