[PRESS RELEASE]

Holy Fire. Art of the Digital Age
curated by Yves Bernard & Domenico Quaranta
April 18 – 30, 2008
iMAL Center for Digital Cultures and Technology
Brussels

Featuring:
Cory Arcangel (USA), Gazira Babeli (SL), Boredomresearch (UK), Christophe Bruno (FR), Grégory Chatonsky (FR), Miguel Chevalier (FR), Vuk Cosic (SLO), Shane Hope (USA), Jodi (BE/NL), Lab[au] (BE), Joan Leandre (SP), Olia Lialina & Dragan Espenschied (RU/DE), Golan Levin (USA), Eva and Franco Mattes aka 0100101110101101.ORG (IT), Alison Mealey (UK), Mark Napier (USA), Casey Reas (USA), Charles Sandison (UK/FI), Antoine Schmitt (FR), Yacine Sebti (BE), Alexei Shulgin & Aristarkh Chernyshev (RU), John F. Simon, Jr. (USA), Paul Slocum (USA), Wolfgang Staehle (USA), Eddo Stern (USA), Ubermorgen.com (AT), Carlo Zanni (IT)

 iMAL Center for Digital Cultures and Technology (www.imal.org) is proud to present *Holy Fire. Art of the Digital Age*, a collective exhibition featuring a unique panel of digital artworks created in the last ten years by internationally known new media artists, and coming from galleries and collections from around the world. Curated by iMAL director **Yves Bernard** and Italian curator **Domenico Quaranta**, *Holy Fire* is, in fact, featured into the "Off Program" of Art Brussels, the international contemporary art fair (April 18 - 21, 2008). Taking its cue from this occasion, *Holy Fire* is an attempt to explore how new media art, bypassing all the stereotypes connected with its presumed immateriality, was able to enter the art market.

Thus, *Holy Fire* is probably the first exhibition to show only collectable media artworks already on the art market, in the form of traditional media (prints, videos, sculptures) or customized media objects. The exhibition wants to show that new media art is just art of this century, to contribute to reduce the gap between digital art and contemporary art, and to participate in a broader understanding and acceptance of digital media. *Holy Fire* comes out from the belief that talking about a "new media art" as something different and separated from the contemporary art world doesn't really make sense today. All contemporary art is, someway, new media art, as far as it makes use of the digital media for various purposes. So, the artworks collected in *Holy Fire* are not new media art, but simply art of our time: art which appropriates institutional or corporate identities, creates fictional ones, hacks softwares and game engines for its own purposes, infiltrates online or offline communities in order to portray them or their own myths, subverts existing tools or creates its own ones, explores the aesthetics of computation and information spaces; or, more simply, art which uses hardware and software in order to create art and speak about our time.

Over the last two decades, new media art experienced an exponential growth, that changed it from a little and relatively closed niche of experimentation into one of the biggest and more vital communities of the contemporary scene, and into an entirely new "art world", with its own festivals, its own exhibition centers, its own magazines and debates. Yet, this increasing importance is hardly ever recognized in the contemporary art world, which is challenged by new media art in many ways. New media art is often immaterial, temporary, performative; it strongly relies on software and interfaces, and produce hardly sellable artifacts, with a high obsolescence risk in supporting equipment. So, it's always difficult to find new media art in contemporary art venues and collections. In the meantime, many artists are fighting to find more stable layouts for their works, in the effort to bring new media culture in the contemporary art arena; and some brave individuals and institutions are starting collecting new media, knowing that its importance in the future could only grow up. With the accelerated technological development (e.g. large flat screens, powerful beamers, ubiquitous computing, wifi, fast internet) and the sociological and cultural acceptance of digital tools and media, new media art is going to become one of the main currents of 21th century art, looking at its own nexus to our techno-environment as a strength (not deafness), and to be part of our everyday life in our office, in public buildings as well as in our home.

The title of the exhibition is a reference to a well-known book by **Bruce Sterling**, a book which, among other issues, envision the art of the (at that time, future) digital age. In the same time, the issue makes reference to the passion that helps a growing number of people (artists, curators, gallery owners and collectors) to take care of an art that is temporary and variable by definition.

Galleries:

Bitforms, New York; DAM Gallery, Berlin; Fabio Paris Art Gallery, Brescia; Numeriscausa, Paris; Postmasters, New York; Project Gentili, Prato; Rodolphe Jannen Gallery, Brussels; XL Gallery, Moscow.

Credits:

This exhibition is produced by iMAL Center for Digital Cultures and Technology, and generously funded by LIEDEKERKE.WOLTERS.WAELBROECK.KIRKPATRICK and DEXIA . It is supported by: the Minister-President of the Government of the French-Speaking Community of Belgium; the Minister of Culture and Audiovisual of the French-Speaking Community of Belgium; the Ministery of the French-Speaking Community of Belgium (Digital Art Section and Department for Plastic Arts); the Brussels Capital Region; and the College of Burgomaster and Deputies of the Municipality of Molenbeek-Saint-Jean.

Location:

iMAL Center for Digital Cultures and Technology
30 Quai des Charbonnages/Koolmijnenkaai 30
1080 Bruxelles/Brussel 1080
www.imal.org
(métro Comte de Flandres/Graaf van Vlaanderen)

Vernissage:

Friday, April 18, 18:30 – 23:30

Opening Hours:

Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday : 12:00 - 19:00
Thursday: 12:00 - 21:00
Saturday, Sunday: 11:00 - 19:00
Closed on Monday

Contact:
yb@imal.org
+ 32 (0)2 410 30 93
http://www.imal.org/

Collateral Events:

"Holy Fire: Exhibiting and Collecting New Media Art". Conference-debate
Saturday 19 april, 11:30 - 13:30
Art Brussels (Brussels Expo)

One of the targets of the Holy Fire exhibition (iMAL, 18-30 april) is to take a snapshot of the present situation of New Media Art, an art practice arose from the meeting of art and computer technology in the Sixties. This practice developed into a self-built, parallel art system and had a second youth in the last half of the Nineties. New Media Art has always been described as process oriented, immaterial, and therefore un-collectable and un-preservable. Now getting to its adult age, it is entering the contemporary art world and market.

Moderated by Patrick Lichty (Columbia College, Chicago) with Alexei Shulgin (RU), Olia Lialina (RU/DE), Steve Sacks (bitforms, New York), Wolf Lieser (DAM, Berlin), Stéphane Manguet (Numeriscausa, Paris), Philippe Van Cauteren (SMAK, BE), Domenico Quaranta (Brescia, I) and Yves Bernard (Brussels).

Catalogue:

Domenico Quaranta, Yves Bernard (eds), *Holy Fire. Art of the Digital Age*, **FPEditions, Brescia 2008. Hardcover, color, 128 pages. ISBN 978-88-903308-4-1, 25.00 €**

Featuring contributions by: Inke Arns & Jacob Lillemose, Yves Bernard, Aristarkh Chernyshev, Roman Minaev & Alexei Shulgin, Vuk Cosic, Régine Debatty, Steve Dietz, Joan Leandre, Olia Lialina & Dragan Espenschied, Patrick Lichty, Wolf Lieser, Vicente Matallana, Eva & Franco Mattes aka 0100101110101101.org, Fabio Paris, Christiane Paul, Domenico Quaranta, Charles Sandison, Magdalena Sawon & Tamas Banovich, Paul Slocum, Bruce Sterling, Michele Thursz, Mark Tribe, Ubermorgen.com, Karen A. Verschooren.

About the Curators:

Yves Bernard (BE) has an academic background in architecture and computer science and worked as research scientist for about 10 years. Beginning of the 90s he founded one of the first european new media studio where he produced awarded art&culture cd-roms (e.g. Milia d'Or 1998). In 1999 he created iMAL (interactive Media Art Lab), a non-profit association for the new media arts. For the past decade he has worked with artists as a producer (e.g. Salt Lake), an interaction design adviser and a developer (e.g White Square). Yves curated or co-curated many new media art exhibitions in Brussels : *CONTinENT* (2000), *F2F* (2003), *Infiltrations Digitales* (2004), *openLAB* (2005), *Art +Game* (2006), inaugural exhibition of iMAL new venue (2007). He is the (co-)author of works merging Internet and the physical world such as *Martini Ground Zero*, *OFFFCAM* and *The Gate*. He teaches digital art at ERG and he is the director of iMAL, Center for Digital Cultures and Technology. [www.erg.be/blogs/artNumeur/]

Domenico Quaranta (I) is an art critic and curator who lives and works in Brescia, Italy. With a specific passion and interest in net art and new media, Domenico regularly writes for *Flash Art* magazine. His first book titled, *NET ART 1994-1998: La vicenda di Äda'web* was published in 2004; he also co-curated the *Connessioni Leggendarie. Net.art 1995-2005* exhibition (Milan, October 2005) and co-edited, together with Matteo Bittanti, the book *GameScenes. Art in the Age of Videogames* (Milan, October 2006). Among his most recent publications, *Todd Deutsch: Gamers* (ed., 2008) and *Gazira Babeli* (ed., 2008). He teaches "Net Art" at the Accademia di Brera in Milan and runs the blog *Spawn of the Surreal*. [www.domenicoquaranta.net]

About iMAL

iMAL (interactive Media Art Laboratory), is a non-profit association created in Brussels in 1999. It was founded by individual artists, media producers, interactive designers, software engineers, and by NICC (a Belgian association of visual artists) with the objective to support artistic forms and creative practices using computer and network technologies as their medium. In October 2007, iMAL opened its new venue in Brussels, a Center for Digital Cultures and Technology, a new place of about 600m2 for the meeting of artistic, scientific and industrial innovations, a place entirely dedicated to the contemporary artistic and cultural practices emerging from the fusion of computer, telecommunication, network and media. iMAL is a laboratory and a workplace for artists in residence. It supports artists during their experimentation and research process as well as for the production and diffusion of their works. iMAL produces professional workshops targeted to creative people (artists, designers, developers,…) under the direction of recognised artists. iiMAL organises public events and collaborates with other european centers. Works (co-)produced by iMAL have been shown in Helsinki (Kiasma, 2003), Madrid (VIDA, 2003), Los Angeles (AIM iV, 2003), Stuttgart (Filmwinter, 2004), Lisbon (Alkantara, Close Encounters III, 2006), Amsterdam (Victorian Circus at Brakke Grond, 2006), Basle (Viper, 2006), Montréal (Temps d'Images, 2007), Sao Paulo (File, 2007), Ghent (Almost Cinema at Vooruit, 2007), Shanghai (eArts/Ars Electronica, 2007), London (Sum/Some of the PARTS, 2007)
iMAL is supported by the French-speaking Community of Belgium.
More about iMAL on www.imal.org/index.php?sub=about_EN