

Marco Cadioli Remap Berlin

essay by Margherita Balzerani –
Curator and art critic

Marco Cadioli, the artist as meta-wanderer.¹

"I travel across the net like a Japanese tourist in Europe.
I jump from a place to another.
I travel across the net like I were a reporter to tell about place made by data.
I take shots of the net." (Marco Cadioli 2003)

Often, a traveller returns totally transformed after a stay abroad. But if as Marcel Proust said, «A true journey of discovery is not about finding new horizons, but finding a new perspective», Marco Cadioli seems to use the photographic process to underline a shift in visual perspective. Photography becomes an extension of the possible, enabling the artist to go beyond geographical, formal and physical boundaries.

Marco Cadioli is a traveller, a nomad, a net-reporter.

Armed with intentional nonchalance, his many journeys take him to places yet unexplored by artists: persistent worlds.

« Not a simple tourist, but a vagrant. The artist contemplates the aesthetics of disappearance, he experiences the wandering. Marco Cadioli is hence a meta-wanderer, a vagrant in digital territories, a network hobo. From the web to virtual worlds, the work of art shapes a nomadic destiny. An artwork that becomes both transient and immanent, persistent and entropic, fragile and poetic. From the web to virtual worlds, the artist and his work take on a new existence. A true identity drift where the artist is moved to be driven by two primary desires: ubiquity and immortality. »²

Marco Cadioli started his explorations in 2003, with a series of photo essays on his online travels. Shooting pictures on the web, he established the art of net-photography with his « Internet Landscape » Manifesto.

By crossing the borders of the web and testing the interoperability of networks, Marco Cadioli documents the recent evolution of metaverses using photography.

His exploration continued in 2005 in hostile territory, a zone of permanent conflict: online war videogames. AREANAE (2005) is the result of his immersion in permanent danger zones, as well as being a physical performance. This « embedded » black & white 35mm photoshoot took place inside FPS arenas, such as Counter-Strike, Wolfenstein and Quake Arena III.

After having travelled the sprawling environments of war games and the barren lands of Second Life, Marco Cadioli set out to discover a new territory of artistic exploration : Twinity.

¹ The meta-wanderer is a neologism coined by Margherita Balzerani to define the idea of a network vagrant, a hobo of the web.

² M. Balzerani, excerpt from an essay published in June 2009 in the online magazine <http://dpi.studioxx.org/demo/> «Journal intime d'un critique d'art à l'ère du web 2.0. Rencontre avec l'artiste de l'identité dématérialisée dans les réseaux au méta-wanderer dans les métaverses ». <http://dpi.studioxx.org/demo/?q=fr/no/15/journal-intime-critique-art-par-margherita-balzerani>

In Remap Berlin, his new project launched in July 2009, the artist reconsiders the photographic medium through a series of black and white shots taken inside the virtual world of Twinity, which replicates the real city of Berlin. The photos are then uploaded to the actual Google Maps of Berlin, overlaying virtual shots with real life images of the city.

Remap Berlin: Meta-stable Equilibrium

Exterior day, a landscape on the dreamlike frontier of a conscious dream, unreal light shooting through space. Through a series of photos, Berlin seems to give in to a hanging feeling of desertedness, as if deprived of any temporal notion.

The alignment of identical buildings bears witness to a temporality that hangs over outlying places, on the fringe of the essence of identity.

The Remap Berlin series appears as the exquisite corpse of a space where emptiness confines to urban congestion. Like a silent sphinx, Berlin exhibits an architecture of absence, a suffocating openness, a latent solitude. Walking through this melancholic urbanity with minimal aesthetics, the streets of Berlin follow one after the other, as if inhabited by a deliberate amnesia, some kind of poetic control.

Marco Cadioli's work sets photography on the document side, focusing on objectivity, an aesthetic approach dear to Bernd and Hilla Becher's teachings at the Kunstakademie of Düsseldorf in the 60s, which opened new grounds for contemporary photography. Marco Cadioli's work refers to the new generation of artists that ensued: Candida Höfer, Thomas Struth, Andreas Gursky, and Wolfgang Tillmans.

The views of Remap Berlin are shot following a very meticulous protocol: neutral lighting, frontal composition, absence of clouds or characters. This strict composition imposes an objective aesthetic approach to the audience, very reminiscent of Sommerstrasse, Düsseldorf, 1980, Hermannsgarten, Weissenfels, 1991 by Thomas Struth.

Marco Cadioli seems to consider photography not as a hedonist process, but an actual one.

« Philosophy is the theory of multiplicities, each of which is composed of actual and virtual elements. Purely actual objects do not exist. Every actual surrounds itself with a cloud of virtual images. This cloud is composed of a series of more or less extensive coexisting circuits, along which the virtual images are distributed, and around which they run. These virtuals vary in kind as well as in their degree of proximity from the actual particles by which they are both emitted and absorbed. »³

Not so much because he photographs «the truth», but because the functions assigned to the photographic image claim to be objective: description, report, inventory.

Marco Cadioli's work continues to be fueled by systemic research, thus multiplying the possibilities of re-interpretation of the photographic image.

In Remap Berlin, the artist establishes a kind of classification table of streets, functional buildings devoid of aesthetic quality, social housing, juxtaposed with a cold, repeating imprint, as if taking inventory of a nostalgic encyclopaedia of everyday life.

The Remap Berlin project recalls the city of Berlin using a mirror approach based on a series of images shot in the virtual world of Twinity.

According to Roland Barthes, photography, the « light writing », is objective in essence. Replacing painting as « an open window to the world », photography started out as a scientific discovery in the early 19th century. German photographers of the so-called « new objectivity » movement used to consider photography as a document. Marco Cadioli pushes this topic to its climax. His photos crop up on the real, the actual, like an epidemic, a virus conveying the full measure of the world, the accurate account of reality, the expression of what has happened.

³ Gilles Deleuze, *The Actual and the Virtual* (1995), in *Dialogues*, 1996, Editions Flammarion. Première Partie.

Remap Berlin: Hacking the actual.

« It is by virtue of their mutual inextricability that virtual images are able to react upon actual objects. From this perspective, the virtual continuum, whether one takes all of the circles together or each individually, is a spatium determined in each case by the maximum of time imaginable. The varyingly dense layers of the actual object correspond to these, more or less extensive, circles of virtual images. These layers, whilst themselves virtual, and upon which the actual object becomes itself virtual, constitute the total impetus of the object. The plane of immanence, upon which the dissolution of the actual object occurs, is itself constituted when both object and image are virtual.»⁴

The photographs of Remap Berlin appear as urban viruses capable of confusing and bewildering the internet user.

If it is true that there is no such thing as amnesiac creation, then Remap Berlin seems to be referring to Wim Wenders' 1987 movie *Wings of Desire*⁵. Wim Wenders chose Berlin to stage his story because the city – still split by the wall at that time – was in his eyes a perfect metaphor for human existence, itself torn and painfully disconnected from the world.

If *Wings of Desire* was directed by Wenders as an allegoric poem about sensation – sensation being the primary bond between the body and the world – Marco Cadioli chooses to depict Berlin's urban space using Twinity, underlining reality, showing its corruptibility. Remap Berlin could hence be considered as an additional layer to reality, a kind of temporary graft of reality hacked onto the actual, providing the internet user with a hybridization of urban space and the web 2.0's new visual ergonomics.

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A post-graduate in Art History at Roma La Sapienza University, Margherita Balzerani studied for a year at Paris La Sorbonne, where she found interest in the relation between Contemporary Art and Video Games. □ Back in Rome, she graduated with a Master of Advanced Studies. Between 2002 and 2007, she worked at the Cultural Action Department of Palais de Tokyo, a contemporary art creation site in Paris.

An avid videogames fan, she is in charge of the Palais de Tokyo's upcoming Second Life project. She was the Artistic Director of the 2008 Reality Festival, the first international art festival dedicated to virtual realities. <http://www.reality-festival.com/>

She has written numerous articles about contemporary artists such as Maurizio Cattelan, Bruno Peinado, Chen Zhen, Daniel Pflumm, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Mathieu Briand, Thomas Hirschhorn, Nari Ward, Kolkoz, Martin Le Chevallier, Tobias Bernstrup, Le Cercle Ramo Nash. She is currently the arts section editor for the French magazine Amusement.

An active member of O.M.N.S.H. (Digital Worlds Observatory in Human Sciences), she is completing a Doctoral thesis in joint supervision with universities of Paris and Rome (La Sorbonne and La Sapienza), titled: «The aesthetic perspectives of video games and their influence on contemporary art creation».

Margherita Balzerani is Assistant Director of Eurasiam, a Manga school in Paris, where she teaches Semiotics and Art History. She also teaches Museography at the ICART in Paris.

She lives and works in Paris, enjoys teleporting herself, living inside and exploring virtual worlds, and is currently at work on the upcoming Atopic Festival 2009, an international art festival dedicated to virtual realities that will take place in Paris, October 29 – November 4.

<http://www.atopicfestival.com/>

⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *The Actual and the Virtual* (1995), in *Dialogues*, 1996, Editions Flammarion. Première Partie.

⁵ *Wings of Desire*, *Der Himmel über Berlin*, by Wim Wenders, a French-German movie released in 1987. Winner of the Director's Award at the 1987 Cannes Film Festival.