

OVERSIZE

THE MEGA ART &
INSTALLATIONS

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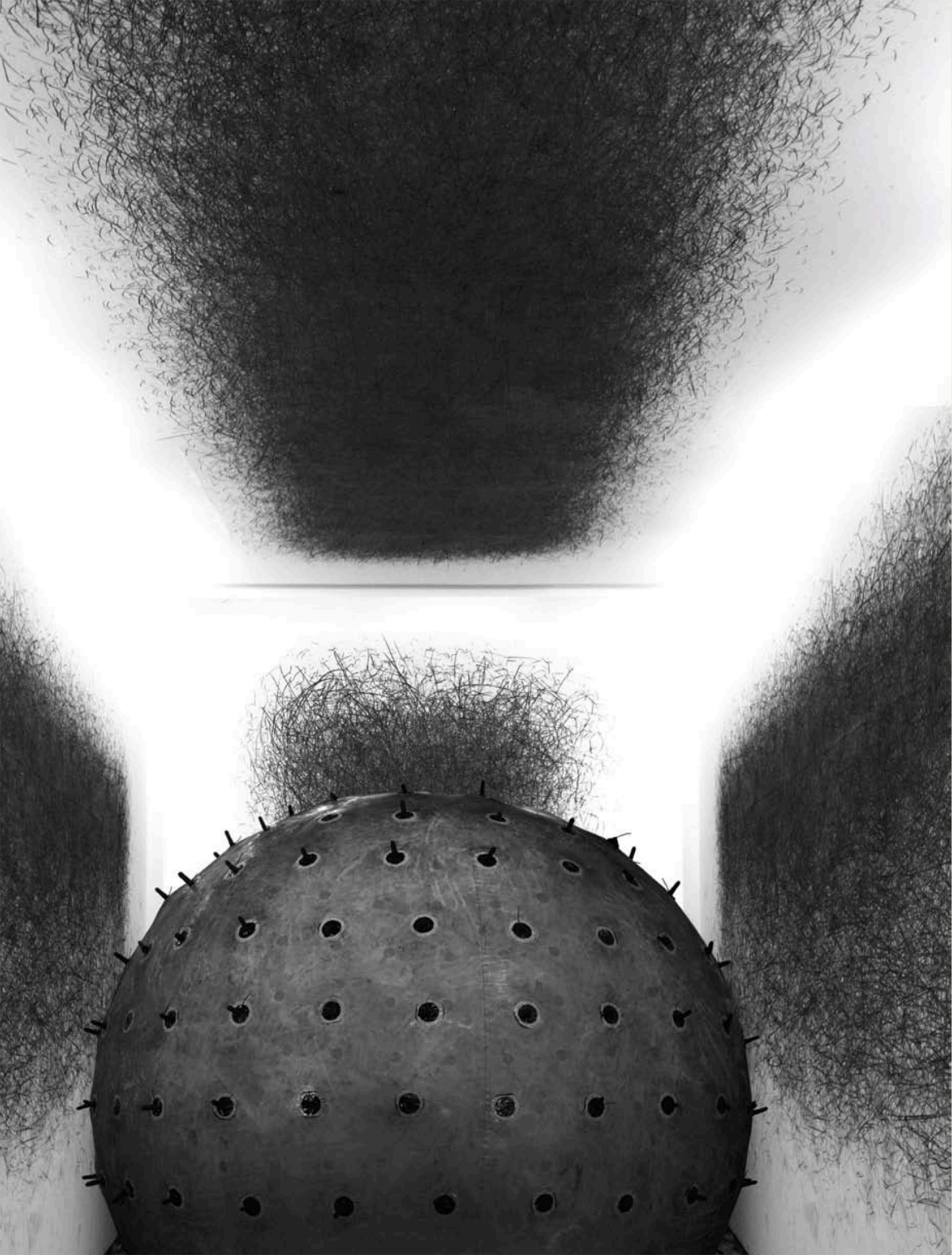
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An aerial photograph of a city street scene. In the foreground, there's a busy street with cars and a motorcycle. A large, dense green tree stands in the middle of the street. Behind the tree, a large, colorful, abstract sculpture is visible. The background shows a dense urban landscape with various buildings, including a tall, modern glass skyscraper. The title 'OVERSIZE' is overlaid in large white letters, with 'SIZE' having an exclamation mark. The subtitle 'THE MEGA ART & INSTALLATIONS' is below it. The publisher information 'Edited & Published by Viction:ary' is at the bottom center. The text 'OVERSIZE' and 'THE MEGA ART & INSTALLATIONS' are in a bold, sans-serif font. The publisher information is in a smaller, sans-serif font. The background image is a high-angle, wide shot of a city street, showing a mix of old and new architecture, greenery, and urban infrastructure. The overall tone is vibrant and artistic, reflecting the theme of the book.

OVER SIZE

THE MEGA ART & INSTALLATIONS

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Splitting her life between Munich and Berlin, Karina Smigla-Bobinski explores interactive and mixed reality art between analogue and digital media. Her works encompass online projects, interventions and multimedia physical performances, as well as interactive installations like *ADA*. Built to draw within a space as a response to visitors' physical input, *ADA* extols Ada Lovelace and Jean Tinguely's visions of devising a machine that can produce art. Upon entering the exhibition space, visitors will soon find their ways to drive *ADA*, 'who' would in fact draw in 'her' own will.

INTERVIEW
WITH

KARINA SMIGLA- BOBINSKI

What was *ADA* originally produced for?

ADA is a result of my thoughts and inquiries about the fundamental idea of 'computer as a machine' that can remember and create works of art, such as poetry, music, or pictures like an artist. I have developed *ADA* without a client. After she was finished in 2010, curators Ricardo Barreto and Paula Perissinotto invited *ADA*, as the first, to FILE Festival 2011 in São Paulo, Brazil. Then came FAD Festival in Belo Horizonte (Brazil), FACT Foundation in Liverpool (U.K.), FILE Festival in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) and ZERO1 Biennial in Silicon Valley (U.S.), etc..

What kind of influences do Ada Lovelace and Jean Tinguely have on you?

I am interested in the connection between art and science and, especially with *ADA*, the role of computers in our world today. Ada Lovelace was the first person who saw the potential generative power of a machine as Charles Babbage proposed Analytical Engine. That was just a vision — she saw a machine with the eyes of a poet, an artist.

I did the same by looking at "machines" today as an artist and building a post-industrial and post-digital "creature" that resembles a molecular hybrid (such as one from nano biotechnology) with the ability to produce artworks through an open source method. In connection to copy-

right debate, there appears a very interesting question too — what is exactly the work of art? The balloon, the drawings on the wall or both? :-)

On the other hand, Jean Tinguely was an artist who disapproved the commercialisation of art and had built kinetic artworks out of industrial age machine parts, of which some are generative, like *Métamatics* that could draw on its own. Some other of his artworks were designed to be self-destructive, which he described as "under destruction", a creative force and structural transformation. I developed the idea of Jean Tinguely, where a kinetic artwork expanded itself by the action with which I entrusted the visitors. The visitors thus became the driving force responsible for the expansion of *ADA*. From every aspect, Jean Tinguely paved the way for me.

With *ADA*, what kind of experience did you intend to bring to the public and the exhibition space?

The normal, traditional way of viewing art is to go to gallery and look, but the participation is confined to looking and nothing more. All reactions occur inside the viewers' head instead of physically to the piece.

Interactivity in art stands out as a way to connect with the audience. This contact between art and the public creates a relationship that involves the viewer personally in the project.

The best part of interactive art installations is when you can use your body which then turns you into a part of the art piece. When we talk about interactivity, we imagine it as a digitally-created, non-physical experience which computers and electronics have very often forced into the foreground. But *ADA* as a post-digital artwork does not need programming because *ADA* is an analogue interactive kinetic sculpture.

Same as my other works, it is very important for me that the entrance into the practical experience of art is possible for everyone and that visitors may decide how far they dip into the art experience according to their ability or will. I like the fact that visitors are able to work with the intuition in my installations and use their body to explain how they work. Here, as *ADA* is put in action by visitors, she would then fabricate a composition of lines and points which are incalculable in their intensity and expression. By exerting control on *ADA*, constantly visitors would fall into some kind of a trance as they try to govern *ADA*'s drawing path. Sometimes people forget where they are and that *ADA* is balloon vulnerable to damages. They might sometimes get a little bit too rough with her.

Do you consider *ADA* a machine or a being?

ADA is constructed to have her own will. Once you set her into motion she just works away. What *ADA* produces is very humane because she seems to respond to some of a human instincts. The only method to decode these signs and drawings is to understand them as the intuitive association of our jazzy dreams and thoughts.

It is a good feeling of having created a piece of art that is autonomous and that it would not be complete without visitors. Within the balloon-space-people relation, visitors are obliged to respond. That was my intention when I built *ADA* for the first time, but the reality got beyond my wildest dreams. Perhaps it is an intuitive reaction of the body that provokes us to stretch our hands to catch or push the ball and not let it drop. It floats weightlessly in the air and changes the perception. The more she is handled by visitors, the blacker she gets from the charcoal and thus seems more "alive". Even I, who built her, sometimes get the illusion that she is a living thing.

Already at her first public appearance in São Paulo, visitors asked where 'uma bola com carbon (a ball with charcoal)' was as they looked for *ADA*. But after they interacted with *ADA*, they referred to *ADA* using the name or "she", so did the many English visitors at FACT Liverpool. So it happened that I use "ADA" or "she" now, too.

Anyway the concept of *ADA* is a temporal "under destruction" artwork with her lifetime equal to the duration of an exhibition. Her age will progress with the number of people who visits her, their temperament and the galleries' supervision on site.

What was it like creating and building *ADA*? How did *ADA* conceive its unique form and look?

While Ada Lovelace's idea of a machine laid the grounds for *ADA*, in the new post-industrial age where the Web is born of a desire for speedy and open access to information and nanotechnology comes from a desire for speed and miniaturisation, *ADA* becomes the common ground for both nano-switch networks and human brains, which explains how she generates marks like when a switch-network configures itself to create "quick routes", in the structure of a synapse.

If, in this very serious scientific world, we could follow the White Rabbit and fall into the world of art, we might imagine that it makes no difference whether *ADA* is alive or not when we consider *ADA* as a nano creature. As Scottish physicist James Gimzewski concluded, together with Masakazu Aono, the creator of the first nano-switch, and Argentine neurologist Dante Chialvo, the basic mechanism of the brain is the same as the basic dynamics of nano-switches.

Knowing this and inspired by Ada Lovelace's poetic way of thinking, I took the idea of the nano-machine which then I manipulated on the scale against the standards with silicone, helium and carbon. I created an art machine, an independent creature capable of claiming the whole room for itself and eventually along with visitors.

How do size and scale matter to *ADA*?

Size and scale decide our perception and how we deal with the interactive artwork. The relation between our bodies and the artwork is crucial. If the artwork is smaller than we are, then it is subjected to us and thus, be absorbed or rejected. And if it is equivalent to our size, then it will mutate into a counterpart which we have to

What do you expect the audience to take away after interacting with ADA? Is it necessary for them to understand why you built ADA?

Where would ADA go after the exhibitions?

Among all the interactive projects you've been involved, which one do you enjoy most and why?

What are you planning on producing next?

act toward. But when the artwork is bigger, much bigger than us, then it will become a superordinate which we are compelled to absorb and be subjected. We would have to respond to it, arrange ourselves or leave it.

For ADA, the last two conditions apply. Relatively equivalent in size, visitors would perceive ADA as their counterpart. As for the drawings which covered the entire gallery space, the lines would exert influences on the visitors, whom simultaneously become part of the work.

In all exhibitions with ADA, I observed and spoke with the visitors (ranging from children to NASA employees). To those who reflected on this work, their ideas seemed to go with my thoughts. This is like a controlled free fall into the hole of the White Rabbit.

Similar, for example, to the experience of the still life paintings from the 17th and 18th century, the concern of a painter was on the one hand to grasp the nature and objects of everyday life in their beauty and play, and convey a hidden message or a mental content on the other hand. To read these coded messages (then as now) you have to dip deep into the art experience. However, those that remain on the surface, they also can find satisfaction in the aesthetics of visual experience (beauty of the presentation). There were also those who ignore all that and create his own reading mode and meaning. In this case, it was interesting for me to know their thoughts.

After the ADAs are back, they remain in the boxes in which they are returned to me. ADA is "under destruction", meaning they will not be washed or repaired. For a new exhibition, I build a new ADA and each ADA has only one life. I will rather continue to drive the destruction as I have in mind the decomposition of ADA into its individual parts and the parts might create small documentary sculptural objects as mementos of the interactions.

The first artwork that comes to mind is ADA because it is the current project, but also ALIAS which can be understood as a metaphor for the dependency of art — without a viewer or visitor it is trapped in an incomplete existence. The visitor are alienated in an intimate situation. The strange confrontation with the personal shadow and the appearance of a stranger inside creates a tension between individuality conceived within one's own silhouette and the presence of an image of somebody else.

I am currently dealing with the phenomenon "cloud". More about that when it is ready.

ADA, 2010
FACT (UK), FILE Festival (BR), ZERO1
BIENNIAL (US), FAD Festival (BR)
Helium-filled balloon, charcoals
2.5 metres in diameter

