

VNS Matrix

VNS Matrix emerged from the cyberswamp during a southern Australian summer circa 1991, on a mission to hijack the toys from technocowboys and remap cyberculture with a feminist bent. (VNS Matrix, 1995)

The four Australians, Francesca da Rimini, Virginia Barrett, Julieanne Pierce and Josie Starrs, who from 1991 into the late 1990s formed the artists' group VNS Matrix (spoken Venus Matrix), were among the best cyberfeminists of their day. Listed among the primary goals in the group's statement of purpose was to question dominance and control, which goes hand in hand with the use of new technologies: then like now, while women were underrepresented on the maker-and-user side of computer technology, in the Internet they were consistently depicted as objects, as fetishistic stereotypes of femininity. In the sense of having an aggressive confrontation with the constructions of identity and gender in cyberspace, VNS Matrix tried to redefine the role and image of women in art and technology. One of the group's principal strategies was to unmask and debilitate androcentric, mythical images and to hold up against them the newly-created representations of a stronger and active femininity.

This happened by way of the texts and images that VNS Matrix placed in the Internet, but also through the use of other media. One of their earliest projects was «Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st century,» smuggled into various websites, placed in the printed advertisements of magazines, broadcast over the radio and on television, and posted in public spaces.

Source: Verena Kuni, «Die FlanerIn im Datennetz. Wege und Fragen zum Cyberfeminismus», in: Konfigurationen. Zwischen Kunst und Medien, eds. Sigrid Schade-Tholen/Georg Christoph Tholen, Munich, 1999, pp. 467–485, p. 478 photo. VNS Matrix 1996, quote from: «Nothing is Certain: Flesh, the Postbody and Cyberfeminism. VNS Matrix in conversation with Nora Nora Delahunty», in: Memesis. The Future of Evolution, Ars Electronica '96, eds. Gerfried Stocker and Christine Schöpf, Vienna/New York 1996, pp. 180–189.

