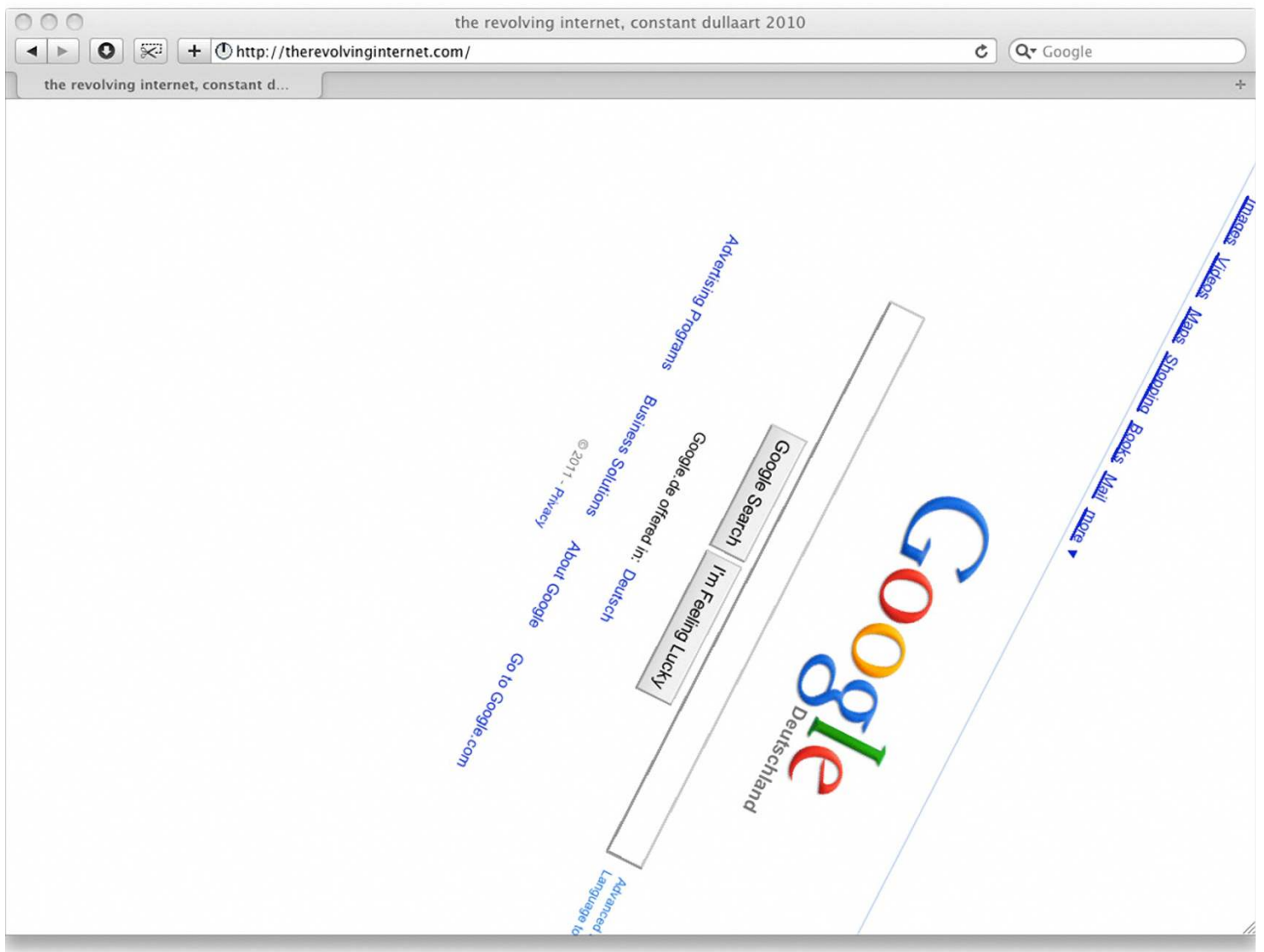


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The Internet's Revolutions

By [Michael Connor](#)

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This article accompanies the inclusion of Constant Dullaart's The Revolving Internet in the online exhibition [Net Art Anthology](#).

MC: How did you begin working with the internet?

structured image resources online. I made videos with specific imagery that I found online, on these kind of specific websites and message board. But the whole structure of the art school was still very much related to the professional media, let's say, professional media as in having broadcast-ready video. And these kind of standards were ... I always felt like they were kind of inhibiting to me, and then I felt like the internet wasn't necessarily immediately a place for publication.

I remember I was really frustrated because I missed an episode of *Cheers*. I wanted to see it and I couldn't find anything related to the show. But I could find these really kind of niche kind of collections of images – a gold mine of really honest content that didn't go through the filter of professionalized media.

MC: How did you incorporate this material into your work?

CD: For example, I made this video that was just a collection of all these people videotaping their stuff that was being sold on a Dutch version of Ebay. And I really liked the fact that it was just functional and unpretentious and very direct. This is what really kind of pulled me in, because I felt like it was such a gold mine of honest material, unpretentious material, perhaps one would say amateur.

I didn't necessarily see it as the “revolution of publishing” til much later when I found out I could even participate in that, and then recontextualize this kind of amateurism I had found – which others were already actively reframing from a commercial perspective.

MC: How did you move from recontextualizing this amateur content, to focusing on the commercial reframing that was taking place with the rise of online platforms? Was *The Revolving Internet* your first work responding to the Google search interface?

CD: The first web site I did in this way was *The Disagreeing Internet* because I found out I could just put an entire iframe in a marquee, which I thought was really hilarious. The old marquee html tag that would just animate a piece of text or an image over a page—I could put an iframe in that, and move the entire thing. So that brought *The Disagreeing Internet*. And then somebody responded, by just changing that around and making *The Agreeing Internet*. And then I made *The Doubting Internet*.

I had time on my hands because I couldn't sleep because I was emotional, and I was trying to see if I could use code to spin the entire page around. In video art that was kind of the ultimate thing to do—to have like this 360-degree turn of the camera.

I felt like that would be this ultimate thing. I could make this vision of this new world turn again.

MC: So the choice of “revolving” was a formal decision.

CD: Yep. Yeah, I mean its super formal. I felt there was still room for kind of a formal exploration of these newer media and this newer kind of infrastructures in a way that was akin to earlier formal media studies. Even thinking about like Nam June Paik or other formal explorations of a new medium.

And I felt like that was happening at that time too. For example, I curated the show in Amsterdam called Contemporary Semantics Beta at Arti et Amicitiae. I invited Chris Coy and Marisa Olson, who sadly didn't end up participating in the show, and Pascual Sisto, Ola Vasiljeva – and many more lovely people. We openly had discussions about our interest in formal experiments.

MC: One thing that really stands out about the work, even years after first encountering it, is the experience of using this incredibly difficult interface.

CD: Yeah, it removes the ease. With this really small gesture, it subverts all these really highly developed user interface designs. Yeah, or trying to kind of like give a meta perspective on that infrastructure.

There was a Reddit comment on the work that completely describes how hypnotizing it was to surf Reddit through *The Revolving Internet*. This particular user said it felt like somebody was watching over their own shoulder and like they were caught in a movie staring into an abyss browsing Reddit. This kind of like, almost like metaphysical experience of becoming aware of the infrastructure of like how we look at information, that was what I tried to do.

MC: Your work since then has often been concerned with digital labor, and surfacing the conditions of digital labor – for example, your works based on the YouTube “loading” screens. Was that question of labor a part of this work?

ephemeral gratification. I don't even know if the whole ad revenue thing had started yet, or if at that point it was just about likes and the direct feedback of comments and shares and this kind of social confirmation. I did feel like it was a kind of monument for these people that were providing content for this larger Moloch of the media.

This was on my mind with *The Revolving Internet*, but I was mostly looking formally at the infrastructure that these companies were developing, and also highlighting where some of these infrastructures are just faulty. I really never liked the design of YouTube, I never really enjoyed how accessible it was and how it seemed like it was community-driven, but it wasn't. Even the YouTube logo was a frustration, it was just very pixelated and very lo-fi. In this aggressively corporate platform, there was also this kind of clumsy, human approach.

MC: How did Google's own evolution affect the project since its launch?

CD: I knew some people at like the Google Creative Labs at that time in New York and we had talked about the work and it was fun and dah dah dah, and then suddenly there was like this "Do a Barrel Roll" thing in 2011.

MC: What was that?

CD: If you typed "do a barrel roll," the Google page would turn 360 degrees, just like it would do on *The Revolving Internet*, but then it would just stop. And it was so weird! And then two weeks after that, the iframe, the technique that I was using to embed the entire Google page, was technically disallowed. I guess it's totally logical, it was just strange that these things coincided to be at the same time.

It was totally logical that it was discontinued, because it was strange that you could actually check your email through *The Revolving Internet*. There were definitely some security loopholes that I had been enjoying; I didn't ever make use of them, but I enjoyed the fact that it was such an easy hack.

After iframes were disallowed, I was thinking that maybe there was a possibility to have a custom Google search page on your page, but when somebody clicks the advertisements, part of the revenue would go to you. It was really problematic because Google kept changing their codes. We were like reverse engineering the whole infrastructure of their

that to work. And

Then I found out that I could just run it through a proxy. Together with Jonas Lund, I built a simple dedicated proxy, so there's a private server that is basically just in between the user and the Google page, and it also makes sure that you basically never go to other pages.

I still think I have to write a proposal to Google to see how they would respond to a policy to make sure that works like these can remain in existence, because there were several works that disappeared when the Google iframe was discontinued. There were works by Jan Robert Leegte that were made as a comment to mine, but there were also a lot of works that were made with Google image search.

MC: I know this is an odd question to ask you, but how many visitors did you have at the site's peak popularity?

CD: Yeah, I'm exactly the right person to ask that to. I think it was up to like one and a half million visits a year.

There was a nice time, a funny time, when the site was that popular that the domain name was worth exponentially more than the work was as an art work. The domain name was worth in itself about 40 to 50 thousand dollars. The work is in a collection now, let's say they got the domain with a good discount :)

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