



HOW IT ALL BEGAN Klea Charitou in Conversation with Angelo Plessas

KC: What prompted you to start the Eternal Internet Brotherhood? Was the starting point a concern which had to do with the “art making” nowadays, or did you try to observe an alternative condition, outside the typical institutional frame in which art could occur?

AP: The Eternal Internet Brotherhood started abstractly as an initiative for a gathering of different people whom I admired online. It was a chance for an internet hookup of my internet brothers and sisters materialized in a beautiful setting after a prior communication of Facebook likes, Twitter mentions, and Instagram following. It would combine work and holidays together, some sort of residency but not in the conventional sense because there is not an institutional intent or aspiration, no support from anywhere, and it would always take place in a remote place. I was intrigued by the idea of how an artwork could be “produced” or could evolve in a setting like this—without existing in the comfort zone of our cities and our studios. At the same time, the financial situation in Greece speeded up the realization of this idea because many people here, especially in the art community, were very stressed with their lives. I started imagining of moving to India, living in an ashram, and initiating something there. Finally after a series of events and requests, I decided to make this experience a reality for a few days every year. I brought together artists, writers, poets, curators, and architects in the perfection of nature; we created works on the spot but also became closer with each other and shared pleasure. The Eternal Internet Brotherhood has already happened for six consecutive years in Greece, Mexico, the West Bank, Italy, Sri Lanka, and lastly in Germany.

KC: You present the notion of remoteness on the one hand as a reaction to the socio-economic reality and on the other hand as a new arising possibility to discover something about ourselves outside the comfort zone of commodification. How did you manage to combine these two aspects in a project which acts as an invitation for a gathering beyond the geographical terrain of the city?

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AP: We live in cities where capitalist, neoliberal formations are being magnified, and consequently culture is very much affected by it. I find cities more and more dystopian and the quality of life deteriorating. All these “cool” metropolises, hangouts for rich hipsters, are being evacuated by real artists or young creatives, and they are swarmed with bankers and rich people. In the same manner, I have started to criticize the Internet, too, because it’s becoming an aggressive expansion of this system. On the one hand, we have become providers of free labor for corporations, we sabotage our own privacy, and our attention is their biggest merchandise. On the other hand, it’s becoming dehumanizing in social relations. We are becoming gradually distant, superficial, and even narcissistic. Everything is just so easily on your “plate,” ready to be consumed and devoured. I don’t see any rebellious imagination, and under this mindset, there is no quest for the unknown. Out of this context, I have become obsessed by topophilia. Since I have started doing the Brotherhood, I found myself reading only travel guides, or looking into lost and forgotten places where we could go and find new inspirations. The Eternal Internet Brotherhood is all about that: free-yourself-start-browsing-the-physical-world-it-won’t-be-there-forever.

KC: So you claim that physicality or empirical experience is important in order to understand the world but what are your thoughts about technology which has promised to offer a new horizon of knowledge during the last decades?

AP: Since the early 2000s, I have been part of an art movement called Neen, which explores the emotional and poetic aspects of technology and the Internet. I never liked technology aesthetics. Most of the artworks using technology as a statement are gimmicky, didactic, and spiritless. In the Eternal Internet Brotherhood we are exploring new meanings and approaches regarding how the Internet can be viewed as a new situation, reversing the notion of an only-machine and -technological tool. I see the Brotherhood as an integrative format where we explore key issues echoing from the Internet, such as distribution, materiality, and social interaction, layered with mysticism, well-being, and ancient anthropology—especially in the peripheries, where the good traces of the Internet will act as an ideological tool. The ETINTERBRO is a situation for these kinds of reversals and contradictions, having no audience but being full of pleasures, smells, sounds, dreams, and lots of time to look at the stars.