



AKSIOMA
Institute for Contemporary Art
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PRESS RELEASE

Aksioma – Institute for Contemporary Art, Ljubljana, in collaboration with FH Joanneum, Graz, presents:

Golan Levin

F.U.C.K. & QR Codes for Digital Nomads

New Media Exhibition

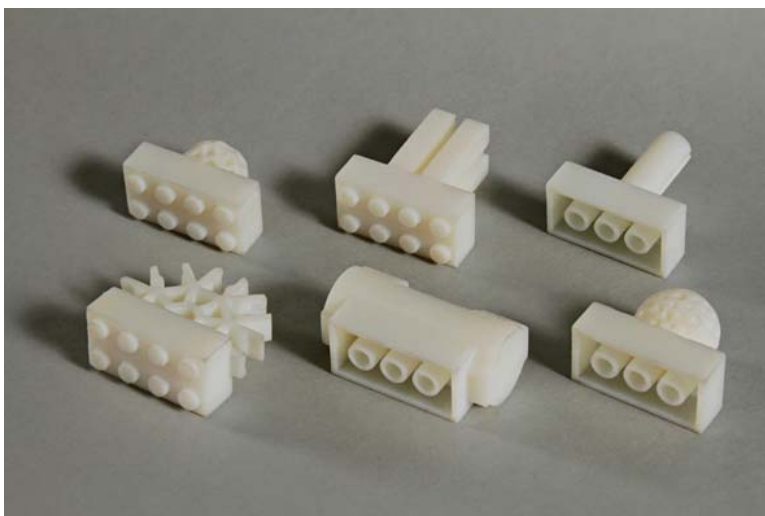
www.aksioma.org/fuck

Aksioma | Project Space

Komenskega 18, Ljubljana

23 April – 9 May 2014

Exhibition opening: WED, 23 April 2014 at 8 pm



Photos available for free download:

<http://www.aksioma.org/press/fuck.zip>



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Golan Levin

F.U.C.K. & QR Codes for Digital Nomads

Most of Golan Levin's artworks focus on the design of systems for the creation, manipulation and performance of simultaneous image and sound, as part of a more general inquiry into formal languages of interactivity and of nonverbal communication in cybernetic systems. The two projects in this exhibition, produced by Aksioma in collaboration with FH Joanneum, Graz, belong to a different set of concerns, more related to hacker ethics and to the extension of the open source philosophy to the creation of tools for social creativity and expression. Both the projects were released for F.A.T. Lab, an organization dedicated to enriching the public domain through the research and development of creative technologies and media.

Today's manufacturers have little or no intrinsic motivation to make their products compatible with anyone else's. Indeed - despite obvious benefits to users everywhere - the implementation of cross-brand interoperability¹ can be nearly impossible, given the tangled restrictions of patents, design rights, and trademarks involved in doing so. Made with **Shawn Sims (Sy-Lab)**, the ***Free Universal Construction Kit (F.U.C.K.)*** presents a remedy providing extensible, post-facto syntactic interoperability for construction toys. *F.U.C.K.* is a set of nearly 80 adapter bricks that enable complete interoperability between ten popular children's construction toys: Lego®, Duplo®, Fischertechnik®, Gears! Gears! Gears!®, K'Nex®, Krinkles®, Bristle Blocks®, Lincoln Logs®, Tinkertoys®, Zome®, ZomeTool® and Zoob®.

By allowing any piece to join to any other, the Kit encourages totally new forms of intercourse between otherwise closed systems – enabling radically hybrid constructive play, the creation of previously impossible designs, and ultimately, *more creative opportunities for kids*. As with other grassroots interoperability remedies, the *Free Universal Construction Kit* implements proprietary protocols in order to provide a public service unmet- or unmeetable - by corporate interests. *F.U.C.K.* adapters can be freely downloaded from the net as a set of 3D models in .STL format, suitable for reproduction by personal manufacturing devices like the Makerbot, an inexpensive, open-source 3D printer.

F.U.C.K. demonstrates a model of *reverse engineering as a civic activity*: a creative process in which anyone can develop the necessary pieces to bridge the limitations presented by mass-produced commercial artifacts. The project also invites people to reflect on our relationship with material mass-culture - and the rapidly-evolving ways in which we can better adapt it to our imaginations.

If *F.U.C.K.* displays the social and cultural potential of 3D modeling and printing, ***QR Codes for Digital Nomads*** (made in collaboration with **Asa Foster III**) shows us what could happen joining open source software, laser-cutting, QR codes and graffiti. QR codes are a form of two-dimensional barcode which are widely used to convey URLs and other short texts through camera-based smartphones. The QR_STENCILER by Golan Levin and Asa Foster III is a free, Java-based, open-source, fully automated software utility that loads user-specified QR code images and generates a lasercutter-ready, topologically correct stencil .PDF. Using this software Levin and Foster III created

¹ Interoperability is the ability of diverse systems and organizations to work together (inter-operate). While the term was initially defined for information technology or systems engineering services to allow for information exchange, a more broad definition takes into account social, political, and organizational factors that impact system to system performance. Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interoperability>



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the *QR_HOBO_CODES*, a collection of 100 stencil designs which, deployed in urban spaces, may be used to warn people about danger or clue them into good situations. These stencils can be understood as a covert markup scheme for urban spaces - providing directions, information, and warnings to digital nomads² and are presented as modern equivalents of the chalk-based “hobo signs” developed by 19th century by vagabonds and migratory workers to cope with the difficulty of nomadic life³. Indeed, the set of QR stencils presented in this project port a number of classic hobo annotations to the QR format (“turn right here”, “dangerous dog”, “food for work”) as well as some new ones that are specific to contemporary conditions (“insecure wifi”, “hidden cameras”, “vegans beware”). The complete set of *QR_HOBO_CODE* stencils can be downloaded in editable PDF format, ready for laser-cutting.

This predefined set of homebrew “info graffiti” intended for civic markup and in-situ information display, will be strengthened and enlarged by many other QR codes custom made by local audience, gallery visitors and participants to the workshop will be dedicated to a deeper understanding of QR code logics and conventional contemporary “digital nomad” semiotics. The workshop will take place at Aksioma Project Space on Saturday, 26 April, 2014, at 10 am and is intended for children aged 8 years or older, accompanied by their parents. It is desirable that participants bring their smartphones and laptops.

Golan Levin (born 1972) is an American new media artist, composer, performer and engineer interested in developing artifacts and events which explore new modes of reactive expression. Levin received a self-designed Bachelor's degree in Art and Design at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1994, and a Master's degree in Media Arts and Sciences from the MIT Media Lab in 2000, as a student in John Maeda's Aesthetics and Computation Group (ACG). After his graduate work at MIT, Levin taught computational design in various schools in New York City, before accepting a position at Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) in 2004.

2 Digital nomads are individuals that leverage digital technologies to perform their work duties, and more generally conduct their lifestyle in a nomadic manner. Such workers typically work remotely - from home, coffee shops and public libraries to collaborate with teams across the globe. They frequently use new technologies like a smartphone, wifi, and web-based applications to enable their lifestyle, and earn an income wherever they live or travel.

3 A hobo is a migratory worker and who is often penniless. The term originated in the Western—probably Northwestern—United States during the last decade of the 19th century. To cope with the difficulty of hobo life, hobos developed a system of symbols, or a code. Hobos would write this code with chalk or coal to provide directions, information, and warnings to other hobos.



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