



LIMA

Case Study Report

Artist: Martine Nedam

Title: Mouchette (1996)

Research conducted as part of the “Arthost, dynamic archiving” research project internship.

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1. INTRODUCTION

LIMA's ArtHost project investigates how to deal with contemporary artworks that depend on dynamic digital technology, in particular web-based artworks (net art). Central to this research is the question of how these works can be stored, documented and kept permanently accessible for the longer term. *Mouchette* (1996) by Martine Neddham is one of the case studies in this project investigated by Patricia Black.

"*Mouchette*" (1996) by Martine Neddham, is a pioneer net art work with a great importance inside an international and national digital art context. Online for almost 30 years, the website is the most popular and acknowledged work of the artist and a reference inside the history of net art.

The choice for this particular project as a case study represents a great perspective for software based artworks reflection since it exposes a complex technical timeline over its decades of existence. Thus, it makes visible questions from an early internet background while constantly extending it to the present and future.

For the current phase, ArtHost¹ is aiming to add a new level of complexity to its case studies by choosing artworks with mutable environments, strong interaction or audience participation, and "*Mouchette*" attempts very well to that. Flexibility, re-creation and collaboration are key factors for this work.

"*Mouchette*" was sometimes compared by the artist with a brand, one that expands her character through several media, spaces (online and offline) and languages, incorporating side projects as live performances, secondary domains and installations. Here we will evaluate specially the main website (www.mouchette.org), but keeping in mind that the data produced in this artwork expands itself from it. As a motto suggested by the artist, "everything that mentions *Mouchette* is *Mouchette*".

The challenge of this case study takes into consideration that "*Mouchette*" groups several kinds of agents, media and environments which are growing, modifying and also constantly disappearing. This makes its documentation not only more complex to gather, but also more unique to produce if we really want to understand the essence of the work and its reflections on time in a more profound and integrated way. "*Mouchette*" would be then provided by documentation based on memory, events, platforms and places, rather than just one static point of view.

In October of 2020 a documentation interview was made by email with the artist and its results were incorporated into this case study. Added to that, several pieces of information from academic papers analyzing "*Mouchette*" were used as a reference. The full documentation interview made by LIMA can be read in the last appendix attached.

¹ <https://www.li-ma.nl/lima/article/arhost>

2. DESCRIPTION

2.1 Biography and description of oeuvre

Martine Neddham is an Amsterdam based artist and researcher, mainly known for her work with internet virtual characters. Using everyday format websites as its main canvas, since the early 90's, Neddham started to anonymously create and maintain online identities through a series of web personas like David Still, XiaoQian, Madja Edelstein Gomez and Mouchette, as the oldest and most popular one of them.

Having part of her study background in literature and linguistics, the author often brings the use of language as its main material, with a highly textual aesthetics. During her first works in the 80's, she explored different kinds of text objects like banners, plaques, shadow projections, exhibited inside the context of museums but also in large commissioned installations for public spaces.

In 1995, inspired by the early possibilities of programming, Neddham started to address her creation to the internet sphere, first engaging with PMC-MOO virtual reality ambients. As a multi users network based on text, inside MOO the artist found a new tool to express her text-based narratives. The new technique allowed amateur programmers to learn and collectively collaborate with each other, giving the possibility to Neddham of experimenting and creating her own codes. For her, collaborative MOO systems were showing the "importance of forming yourself through an exchange with others." (De Wild, 2018: 58)

MOO ambients triggered important features that, one year later, would help to originate the artist's first virtual character. Looking for a more casual description for her virtual role, she started to build a different persona by which, slightly inspired by Robert Bresson's cinema character, she gave the name of "Mouchette". Having to express only by words, Mouchette's identity had then grown basically by text, a strong aspect later seen in the website. As the artist says: "The role of language, and that it can act and create an imaginative effect, would stay an essential feature in Mouchette". (De Wild, 2018: 58).

One year later, in 1996, www.xs4all.nl/~mouche (today www.mouchette.org) was brought to life. The format was similar to a webdiary and explored the fantasies of a 13 years old girl, with a lot of possibilities for audience interaction. Neddham authorship remained a secret and no one really knew who was the person behind Mouchette.

Because of a dark personality, specific themes started to converge making the website a space for discussing topics like suicide and young sexuality. Essentially, Neddham was creating from a

very early stage a platform for online meetings, much before social media existed. The difference is that this platform was Mouchette itself.

Quoting the artist: “these virtual characters have always functioned more as communication tools than as mere portraits. They engage in dialogue with the public, trigger their reactions, stimulate exchange between the visitors, archive these exchanges to recycle them into new works of art”².

By then, the undisclosed of Neddams real authorship, or whether Mouchette was real or not, started to be one of the main aspects of her oeuvre. Within this “hide and seek”, Neddams reallocated her work from a mere digital authenticity questioning, to the use of virtual personas as a social identity evaluation. For her, the virtual characters' representations are much beyond an AI meaning, but rather bound to human processes. The cult of Mouchette, she adds, “could only flower through a virtual community that imagined that ‘Mouchette’ could exist.” (De Wild, 2018: 58)

Although authorship still remains as one of the main questions of Neddams work, in recent years she has given up her anonymity, and therefore, combined her virtual characters and artistic statement as one seamless thing. In the beginning of the 2000, she started to bring other characters to the web. Between them are David Still (2001), who offers his name, photos, friends, address and email account to the use of whoever fell in need; XiaoQian (2006), a virtual chinese artist who claims himself to be a virtual character creator; and the most recent, Madja Edelstein Gomez (2017), a contemporary art curator that exists only in the virtual realm.

2.2 Brief description of work

“Mouchette” is a collaborative net art performance³ first released in 1996. Presented mainly as an interactive website (www.mouchette.org), the ongoing platform evokes the online presence of a young character named Mouchette, a 13 year old girl who likes to express herself around themes like death, desire and suicide triggers.

Indirectly based on Robert Bressons movie character (“Mouchette”, 1967), and following backwards to George Bernanos’s novel book (“Mouchette”, 1937), Neddams re-perform its own personal version of the adolescent girl and its private universe. Triggering the emotional responses of her audience with a dark narrative and ambiguous existence, the artwork functions both as the painter and the canvas. Day by day visitors interact and therefore change the construction of Mouchettes identity, just as Neddams mediates and archives this construction.

The website mainly consists of image/text compositions which leads the user to multiple narratives. When in the front page, a menu bar introduces one of the main tools for navigation and interaction is constantly encouraged through several actions and hidden links. Each of these paths guide to a big chain of developments or a simple action with a short end of the line.

² source: <https://www.neddams.info/about/> (access in february 2020)

³ The use of the “performance” concept here will be better clarified in the 2.3 item of this report.

Here, text is one of the preeminent features from where functionality runs. Actions include clicking on gif animations, underlined words, check in boxes and listening to curious sounds. Most of all, actions include doing what Mouchette tells you to: “Kill that cat”, “Put your cheek on the monitor”, “ Help me”, “Answer me”, “Browse me”.

Web boxes questionnaires are continuously asking for dialogue and producing a strong sense of intimacy. From these activities, users can have different kinds of content feedback, such as “private” automatic email responses of the girl or have its answers later published and incorporated as part of her diary, alias the artwork.

Neddams authorship was a secret from 1996 till 2010. The mystery behind Mouchette's real existence was provoking visitors' curiosity and engagement, as a powerful anonymity tool. Because of a dark personality, specific themes started to converge making Mouchette a popular space for discussing suicide and young sexuality. Essentially, Neddams created an online meeting point much before social media existed.

Designed to work as a stage and an archive at the same time, the website is continuously gathering its own audience feedback and putting them into collective analyses through its database. The interactive questionnaires are later published into the work itself and can be representative of a diverse audience participation.

Feedback on pages like “Suicide Kit for Christmas” or “Lullaby for a Dead Fly” can show a shy curiosity, like testing the mechanism with small interactions and words, or even intense testimonials. They can vary from sad, honest, violent to funny approaches. Some can look real, and others as dramatized characters exploring their own fake personas. Some even acquired some inner fame and created parallel narratives, as the case of “Lucy Cortina”, a interactor that became a trend topic inside the platform during some time.

Either way, the outcome of Mouchette's experience is there to be seen: online, collaborative and following its own documentation timeline. Much before the boom of Social Media, this net art performance was a pioneer in bringing light to topics such as fake web personas, social identity compositions and collective authorship inside art.

At the end of 2016, a time stamped version of *mouchette.org* was acquired by the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam and Stedelijk Museum Breda (old MOTI Breda Museum) and it's now part of its digital contemporary art collection. The purchased artwork was given the name of “Mouchette Version 01”, a digital archive of the website which includes all data until the date of acquisition.

2.3 The performative aspect

In the course of its trajectory, Neddams also developed projects on different media using Mouchette either as a character or as a subject, adding a performative element to it. As

Neddham called, “Mouchette” is by essence this identity through which several actions take place. For this reason it works more like a “brand” (Dekker, 2018: 76) than a single based artwork, where different kinds of language coexist and are crossed. During its 20 years of existence the brand included live and online performances, physical installations, as also secondary net art projects.

For example, in 1997 a public appearance of Mouchette was announced at the Triple X Festival Amsterdam, a performance that tricked the audience sending René Paul Vallentgoed, her agent, in her place. After this, another fake promise announced Mouchette to reveal herself during a Postmasters Gallery New York’s installation set in collaboration with the american artist Anakin Koenig. In the same year, the dutch film magazine “Skrien” invited Neddham to create a performatical centerfold comparing Bresson’s Mouchette movie and her own character.

In 2001, *rhizome.org* used the page “Kill the cat” from *mouchette.org* as a mandatory splash page of its website. Even though this wasn’t a new creation, it was digitally reallocated of place, context and audience. Visitors had to interact with it in order to access Rhizome, making Mouchette acquire a lot of publicity. The entries generated by the online performance were later incorporated into the *mouchette.org* database.

Online “relocations” can also be seen in “To be or not to be Mouchette” (2007), a video installation re-staging texts from the website database into a new narrative. In 2011, “Guerrilla FanShop” converted Mouchette into physical souvenirs that could be bought as a cult figure, like t-shirts and buttons.

During 2003, Neddham expanded the project also by launching *mouchette.net*, an open platform that allowed visitors to become Mouchette themselves, by using her identity to send emails, changing her profile picture or other contributions to her website.

These examples make it very clear how Mouchette can inhabit multiple universes at once, such as the physical and the virtual or the fiction and the real. Reflecting on this performative aspect can be very fruitful for its documentation, reminding us that the work will always be reinterpreted and therefore differently documented over time. This could allow us to capture the relationship not only between artist and work (or artist and public) but also among different versions and interpretations of the work.

Vital to this born-digital and highly interactive net art piece is to be comprehended less as a fixed object and more as relation between its elements, such as its authors, dispositives and exhibitions spaces. “Mouchette” is a kaleidoscope of representation, making it clear that it needs to be apprehend in a certain level of subjectivity.

3. QUOTES FROM EXISTING LITERATURE

“A fictional adolescent girl, fascinated by suicide and strangers, Mouchette is the long-running work of Amsterdam-based artist Martine Neddham. Her labyrinthine, ever-growing site makes use of expressive HTML elements to involve the viewer in the turbulent emotional world of an adolescent girl. Participation is central, and visitors are encouraged to talk about suicide, contribute fan art, and even adopt Mouchette's identity. As a character who doubles as a platform for exchange, Mouchette has for two decades provoked her visitors into contributing in their own ways to a site that now stands as a singular and important archive of online culture—humorous, dark, and often surprisingly touching.” (“The Art Happens Here: Net Art Anthology”, Rhizome, 2019)

“Me, Mouchette, the online virtual character, I have an unusual status of existence. Regarding the art of my website www.mouchette.org I am the author and the creation at the same time, and yet through my remote internet life I remain invisible, anonymous, genderless, untouchable, neither alive or dead. (...) My personality embraces all of my participant's minds and together we form a collective consciousness pondering over questions of life and death in the digital era. And like in the famous Hamlet monologue, to be or not to be Mouchette, that is the question!” (“To be or not to be Mouchette”, text presentation exhibited in the Contemporary Art Museum of Siegen, 2007)

“Mouchette is a fictional character and a carefully organized absence. She is a kind of projection surface, defined by the changing structure and culture of the web, defined by the users who visit, and return, and contribute to the site. Mouchette is a slowly expanding archive, hosting the stories and fears and desires and reprobation of numerous visitors, carrying traces of their visits and the changing nature of the web itself.” (Michael Connor, 2016)

4. HISTORY OF THE WORK

4.1 Reconstruction of installation moments

Till today Mouchette has taken part in different exhibitions and events in the artworld. Beyond galleries and museums, the majority of these manifestations are descending from the Internet, some even made by her extensive fanclub. Again, 'everything that mentions Mouchette is Mouchette', said the artist in her interview for LIMA. That is also clear in the official “CV of Mouchette” made by Neddham and shared in the artwork, where she indifferently lists all kinds of events as the character's portfolio (<http://mouchette.org/cv/>).

Since “Mouchette” is primarily developed as an online artwork, thus meant to be experienced alone and in the intimacy of a private space, there is no ideal or default translation to its public exhibition, according to Neddham. For her, the main exhibitions in the history of “Mouchette” were those capable of creating a new work connecting the primary online space with the physical space. Here are some of them:

Exhibition title: STEDELIJK BASE

Location: Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (NL)

Date: 2020 - on going

Description: STEDELIJK BASE is a permanent installation of iconic works from the collection of the Stedelijk Museum. It is the first-ever major, integrated presentation of art and design in the history of the museum where all media, from different times are considered equally important, and are also in dialogue with each other. Here, “Mouchette” was presented as a framed screenshot (2x2) of the “Flesh&Blood” online performance, 2 animated gifs shown by small video screens and a QR code that allows the visitor to quickly access the work online from its phone.



Installation view of Mouchette at the STEDELIJK BASE in 2020, Collection Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, c/o Pictoright Amsterdam (Photo: Gert Jan van Rooij).



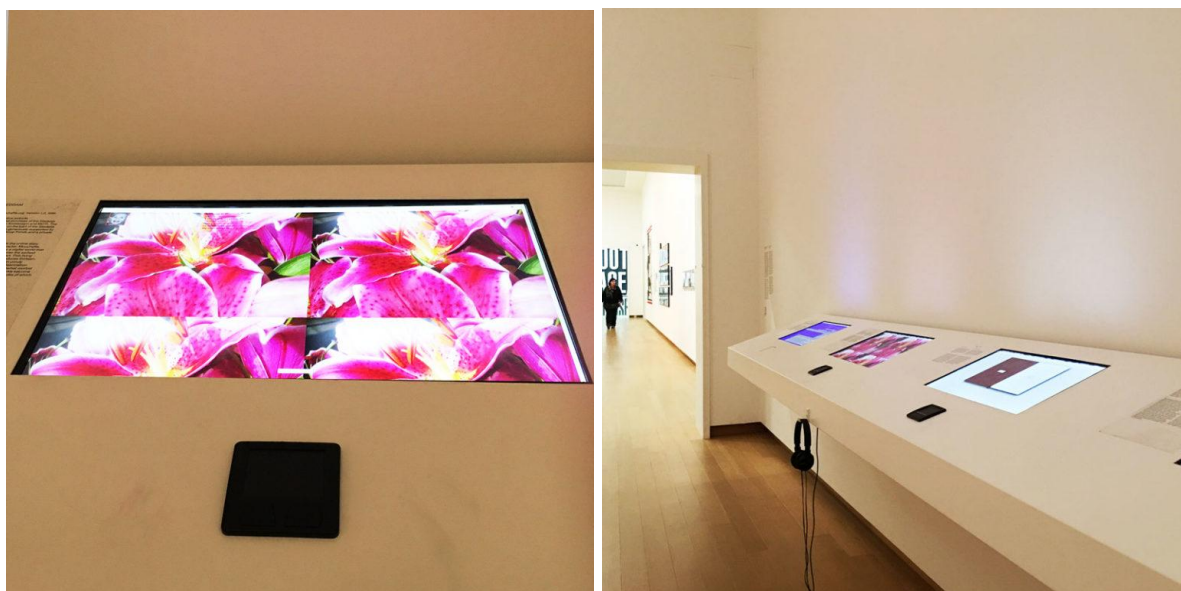
Details of the 2 animated gifs and QR code to the “Flesh&Blood” page inside www.mouchette.org (Photo: Martine Neddam)

Exhibition title: **Stedelijk Museum Collection**

Location: Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (NL)

Date: 2018 - 2020

Description: The artwork was shown in one TV flat screen with no interaction.



“Mouchette” at the Stedelijk Museum Collection in 2018 (Photo: Martine Neddam)

Exhibition title: **Electronic Superhighway (2016-1966)**

Location: Whitechapel Gallery, London (UK)

Date: 29 January - 15 May 2016

Description: “Mouchette” was exhibited as a screen captured video simulating an user interaction. The video is 14 minutes and it was produced by Rhizome. It can be viewed online on <https://vimeo.com/154855063>.

Exhibition title: **I Hate Mouchette**, part of **Truth That Lies**, exhibition curated by Renata Šparada and Irena Borić

Location: IMPAKT Center for Media Culture, Utrecht (NL)

Date: 9 February – 17 March of 2019

Description: Originally created as a separated online work, *ihatemouchette.org* was anonymously constructed by Martine Neddam from hate-filled insults to her character Mouchette. In the physical space, printed posters and a screen captured video of the website were shown in a flat screen.



“I Hate Mouchette” in the IMPAKT Center for Media Culture in 2019
(Source: <http://about.mouchette.org/truth-that-lies-photos/>)

Exhibition title: **Guerrilla Fan Shop**

Location: SKOR in Amsterdam (NL)

Date: July/August 2011

Description: Mouchette enters the physical space in the form of a souvenir shop located at the Stadhouderskade street in Amsterdam, as she is turned into sellable objects.



Sellable objects during Guerrilla Fanshop Performance (Source: <http://about.mouchette.org/sales-50/>)

Exhibition title: **To be or not to be Mouchette**

Location: online exhibition

http://mouchette.org/grand_soir/

<http://mouchette.org/to.be.or.not.to.be.mouchette/>

http://mouchette.org/ville_fantome/

Date: 2007 - ongoing

Description: online artwork developed during “La chambre Blanche Quebec” artistic residency in Canada. Neddham was offered a collaboration with a programmer and together they built a Flash tool to re-stage texts from *mouchette.org* database.



Screen capture image of <http://mouchette.org/to.be.or.not.to.be.mouchette/> (taken in november of 2020)

Exhibition title: Mouchette LIVE! at the festival!

Location: Triple X Festival Amsterdam, Westergasfabriek (NL)

Date: 27 of August - 7th September 1997

Description: Several posters were spread in Amsterdam promising the first appearance of the real Mouchette during the Triple X Festival Amsterdam. In the moment of her presentation her agent, a mid age man, René Paul Vallentgoed, tricks the audience saying Mouchette is enabled to join.

5. ARTWORK DOCUMENTATION

5.1 Text Published Documentation

Since its pioneering factor inside the net art history, Neddams work has already been analysed and partly documented in many academic works, documentations platforms, as well as net art's books or catalogues. Between them are:

Digital Canon by LIMA (2019): <https://www.digitalcanon.nl/?artworks=martine-neddams#list>

Research project developed by LIMA, where experts from the field of digital culture selected and online documented twenty of the most prominent and influential born-digital artworks made in The Netherlands.

'Net Art Happens Here: Net Anthology Art' by Rhizome (2019)

One of the most important Anthologies for net art devised in concert with Rhizome's acclaimed digital preservation department. "Mouchette" is one of the 100 works described in this anthology

that aims to pick the most prominent digital work from 1980 to 2010. It contains a brief conceptual description with excerpts of Martine Neddams own speech in text.

‘Collecting and Conserving Net Art’ by Annet Dekker (2018): Dekker uses “Mouchette” as an example to explore the social life’s context inside net art and also to propose the notion of a “network of care” for its conservation. In this process, Dekker gathers a lot of information and insights concerning technical and conceptual challenges of the work.

‘Internet Art and Agency: The Social Lives of Online Artwork’ by Karin De Wild (University of Dundee, 2018):

“Mouchette” is one of the Case Studies for this exploration of the social ability of net art. It uses important and recent interviews made with the artist where she describes the development of the work during the years, conceptual inputs and technical challenges.

‘The Lives of Internet Artworks in Institutions: How to Begin to Construct a Long-term Conservation Strategy’ by Olivia Brum (Uva, 2019)

Brum uses the 2017’s acquisition of “Mouchette” by the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam as her main study case to understand how a preservation strategy can address the unique needs of an internet artwork. It describes the main conceptual and technical challenges for the preservation of “Mouchette”.

5.2 Interviews

Title: “In search of the unexpected” by Annet Dekker and Martine Neddham

Year: 2009

Location: <https://www.neddham.info/in-search-of-the-unexpected/>

Title: “How to be pink and conceptual at the same time” by Annet Dekker and Martine Neddham

Year: 2011

Location:

<https://www.neddham.info/how-to-be-pink-and-conceptual-at-the-same-time/>

<http://aaaan.net/martine-neddham-how-to-be-pink-and-conceptual-at-the-same-time/>

Title: “Zen and the art of database maintenance” by Martine Neddham

Year: 2001

Location: <https://www.neddham.info/zen-and-the-art-of-database-maintenance/>

5.3 Video Documentation

Screen Capture Video by Rhizome

Description: Screen capture video produced by Rhizome for the exhibition “Electronic SuperHighway 19666-2016” in the Whitechapel Gallery in London January/May 2016.

Location: an online version is hosted on Martine Neddams Vimeo at:

<https://vimeo.com/154855063>

Title: Mouchette 2016 Whitechapel Gallery

Year: 2016

Length: 00:13:57

Documentation video by Net.artdatabase.org

Description: Video produced by Net.artdatabase.org, an online platform for documenting net art and its surroundings created by Constant Dullaart and Robert Sakrowski. Small excerpts of Mouchette are documented here by the Dullaart-Sakrowski Method.

Location: hosted online at: <http://net.artdatabase.org/mouchette-1996-martineddam-tp2a/>

And at the net.art Documentation YouTube channel at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CiE7tl-hro&t=9s&ab_channel=net.artDocumentation

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6WHIMfdaADE&t=17s&ab_channel=net.artDocumentation

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_yr8eCztug&ab_channel=net.artDocumentation

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pobV-0V_Xqs&t=228s&ab_channel=net.artDocumentation

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZ0mClOeShY&ab_channel=net.artDocumentation

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRV_wTyjJOc&ab_channel=net.artDocumentation

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kmNvGq_gtNA&t=207s&ab_channel=net.artDocumentation

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=91sBkd-LiSg&t=10s&ab_channel=net.artDocumentation

Title and Length:

Mouchette 1996 MartineNeddams TP1A #1 (00:04:43)

Mouchette 1996 MartineNeddams TP1A #2 (00:04:43)

Mouchette 1996 MartineNeddams TP1B #1 (00:01:35)

Mouchette 1996 MartineNeddams TP1B #2 (00:01:35)

Mouchette 1996 MartineNeddams TP2A #1 (00:04:50)

Mouchette 1996 MartineNeddams TP2A #2 (00:04:50)

Mouchette 1996 MartineNeddams TP2B #1 (00:04:38)

Mouchette 1996 MartineNeddams TP2B #2 (00:04:38)

Year: 2012

6. REGISTRATION

6.1 Identification

artist: Martine Neddams

title: Mouchette

Dutch title: Mouchette

year of manufacture: 1995-1996

object keywords: web domain, blog, web questionnaires, flash, text-based, 90's aesthetic, database archive

keywords: net art, web art, internet art, collaborative, authorship, virtual characters, fake personas, diary, young, adolescent, suicide, sexuality.

obtained/acquired from: Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam and Stedelijk Museum Breda (old MOTI Breda Museum) in the end of 2016/beginning of 2017.

source:

2 versions:

Stedelijk Museum and Wiel

Martine and Wiel:

The work was delivered to the Stedelijk Museum as a root folder containing a dump of Mouchette's website till the date of acquisition.

The folder contains approximately 25GB and 25k files.

insurance value: -

complete: on going

location This is an online artwork, consisting of the following elements:

PHP script files

MySQL Database

HTML/text

Image Files

Sound Files

Where are the **digital objects**?

All the original digital objects are in the possession of the artist.

In 2017 a time stamped dump of the website was made as a copy and it's also in the possession of the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam.

Note on Domains:

During time, "Mouchette" was connecting several secondary domains to the main one (mouchette.org). Each of these domains stretches the narrative by creating other actions, agents and performances connected to the character.

mouchette.org

Main one, owned and maintained by Martine Neddham.

ihatemouchette.org

Owned and maintained by Martine Neddham. Originally created separately for narrative reasons (one had to believe it was created by a "hater"), but later reunited on the artist's server.

virtualperson.org

Owned and maintained by Martine Neddham.

about.mouchette.org

Owned and maintained by Martine Neddham. Wordpress blog where Neddham regularly published and archives all kinds of material related to Mouchette.

mouchette.net

Owned and maintained by Martine Neddham. This is an interface created for users to edit and publish content using the identity of Mouchette. The website is not entirely functional, but it is still visited and still growing.

drivedrive.com

Linked to the “Trademark” page inside mouchette.org browser, leads to an online petition to save the character from fraudulent Mouchette’s sites. The website was created by Moritz Gaede, and it has several other pages besides this one. Gaede was a friend of the artist, but she lost his contact. The website is still active but most of it is made in Flash, which will no longer be active in Google Chrome browser at the beginning of 2021.

Where is the domain name hosted?

The domains owned and maintained by Martine Neddham are all hosted and registered in www.dreamhost.com within a “virtual server/shared IP” option offered by the website.

Versions/Parameters change/ significant properties:

Conceptually, Mouchette is considered to be “on going”, as a non static online artwork that evolves and changes with time, therefore the work is variable in many ways. Very importantly, Neddham expressed that everytime audience develops their own versions of the website - such as fan’s parodies or video capture with commentaries - this can be considered a valuable version of Mouchette and she preserves them as much as possible in about.mouchette.org.

Technically, most of the changes are related to uptading codes, softwares and programming. This was the case during several of the PHP updates and Flash animations that were translated to HTML5 (at the end of 2020 Google Chrome browser will disable all Flash plugins). If a technical parameter can define the end of a major conceptual change in Mouchette, Neddams says it is always decided case by case. Since the work has a very mutable ecology in its core, this could be very stretched. As she says in her interview, most of the changes in practice are usually “changes to remain the same”. Most importantly, the artist explicitly expressed that **any kind of translation is preferable to the disappearance of the works or its inaccessibility**.

Notes on “Mouchette Version 01”

Nevertheless, it’s interesting to point out that when obtained by the Stedelijk Museum in 2017, Neddham made the decision to give a different name to the work in acquisition. Entitled as “Mouchette Version 01”, the artwork was bought as a timestamped static file, which means a root folder containing all the data files allowing the reproduction of the website from 1996 to 2016. Even though a static version of “Mouchette” could reproduce a time stamped version of the website, it surely wouldn’t allow the artwork to grow and change over time and interaction, an essential feature of the original “Mouchette”.

6.2 Description

Functionality:

The main functionality of “Mouchette” happens in order to disclose a very private and playful universe, mainly consisting of image/text compositions that leads the user to multiple narratives. Entering the first page, the visitor has many paths of clicks. Each of these paths can lead to a big chain of developments or a simple action with a short end of the line. Since the elements almost never are linked as a circle, it’s very common to follow a line of interaction and have to manually go back to the home page in order to continue the investigation. Actions include clicking on flash gif animations, underlined words, check in boxes, answering web box questionnaires, or listening to audio files. Because of this, text and language could be considered one of the main features from where the functionality of this artwork runs.

Reception of the work:

From 1996 till 1998, “Mouchette” was like most any independent artistic project, circulating mainly inside arts and the academic field. When browsers started to better develop their searching methods, the artwork began to gain quite popularity and visibility. The quite polemical session “A Suicide Kit for Christmas”, where Mouchette asks and publish the answer of its visitor in what would be the best way to a 13 year kid to commit suicide, was one of its main triggers. With all kinds of answers, from jokes, alarming testimonials, sympathy or hate messages, the website not only started to have a considerable number of access daily, but also to become a reference place where people would meet to talk about suicide. These were obscure topics that, somehow, needed to find a place to vent. As the artist explains, there wasn’t at that time a place where topics like suicide could be addressed and circulate freely, not like a supportive care systems we can find online now a days. This was why “Mouchette” mainly worked as a pioneer environment from which anxiety could be dropped off, like a “social arena”. Still, in 2006, Neddham received a search of criminal warrant through an anonymous complain sent to the French police, being charged of giving public instruction of how to commit suicide. This incident led to an one night arrestment of Neddham’s technician, but it was easily solved in court with no claims of the judge.

Meaning/importance of the work:

“Mouchette” touches many meanings and surrounds great areas of discussions, making the creation of Neddham quite remarkable and iconic for its time. Collaborative authorship, online persona compositions, obscure social thematics and how the concept of identity can be developed as a theme and a tool at the same time. “Mouchette” seems to show a great importance not only for social or human behaviour studies, but also the internet status itself. Not rarely, the artist would, for example, incorporate the use of recycled elements of the inner internet, without making new ones. Through “Mouchette”, Neddham would see the web change and modify, as her work would always change in response to what was happening. (net art ant. P 63). Nowadays, with the rise of social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and others, the same identity questions seem to go into the opposite direction. Instead of hiding behind fake identities as once did Mouchette, people started to share more and more about their idealized selves and everyday rituals. (2011, p.77).

6.3 Technique

place of manufacture: The work was created online.

method of manufacture/(editing)technique:

Programing

First written in HTML in 1996, right in 1999 the website won a PHP interface adding more complex database interactivity to it. In 2001 it was updated with other elements, like Flash and Javascripts. During the years, it suffered some PHP updates when necessary and according to the web hoster's demands. In 2020, Dreamhost upgraded all their servers to PHP 7 which could break mouchette.org connection to its database. Until March 3rd of 2020, Neddham was able to restore PHP 5.6 and avoid the database disconnection, but this could be a problem for the future. Flash files have all been translated into HTML5, but these are mostly changes that didn't interfere with the architecture of the website.

Database

Since 1999, the website has run with the same PHP/MySQL database system basis, fixed during major php upgrades when necessary. Each online performance (ex: "Flesh&Blood", "Kill that Cat") has its own database manager with a custom interface made by programmers specially for Neddham. These are simple databases, moderated or edited by someone that chooses which contents will be published or not. They were created between 1999 and 2004, without CMS, and till this day the artist is the only able to moderate it.

First, you check for new entries in the Database Browser.
You update when the records are at least 20 .

Database browser

Records 1-20 of 23

| Del | Edit | Date | Time | Name | Email | Answer | Category |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------|-------|----------|---------------------------|--|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10-11-2016 | 09:46 | Otacon | | "cause i hate cats | new |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 09-11-2016 | 18:50 | sexyman | | mimi sex | new |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 09-11-2016 | 18:46 | cat | | i don't kill your cat. I cuddle it | new |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 07-11-2016 | 05:44 | Renarus | 2541825173@qq.com | it's ugly | new |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 07-11-2016 | 03:00 | dady | walshwameme12@rambler.ru | because u said so | new |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 06-11-2016 | 19:05 | kira | | tuck you | new |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 04-11-2016 | 18:27 | CHARA | Pastel Panda@yandex.ru | IN THIS WORLD IS KILL OR BE KILLED | new |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 04-11-2016 | 18:25 | CHARA | Pastel Panda@yandex.ru | I'M SORRY I DIDN'T KNOW | new |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 01-11-2016 | 09:34 | aoads | stolanagg2@gmail.com | because u said so | new |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 31-10-2016 | 15:09 | ll | kzamarikus@rocketmail.com | curiosity | new |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 31-10-2016 | 09:49 | Andrew | seval30201@gmail.com | becaus im stupid guy | new |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 25-10-2016 | 20:41 | ass | ass 2.0 | suc bitch | new |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 24-10-2016 | 01:18 | james | jjlovs13@gmail.com | it was scary ok | new |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 24-10-2016 | 01:16 | james | | you told me toll | new |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 24-10-2016 | 00:51 | lego | drawingsboring@gmail.com | also it was very frightening | new |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 24-10-2016 | 00:51 | lego | drawingsboring@gmail.com | it was hurting my ears you know it im sure | new |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 23-10-2016 | 19:47 | leda | ledasantic@gmail.com | i didn't mean to | new |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 15-10-2016 | 17:46 | mikaela | contact@mtakova.org | i hate it | new |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 14-10-2016 | 19:24 | Jonathan | jonbon14@gmail.com | BECAUSE I FUCKIN CAN | new |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 14-10-2016 | 01:41 | Satan | Eatmyass@hotmail.com | You told me to | new |

You check the pages of records. Each page holds 20 entries!

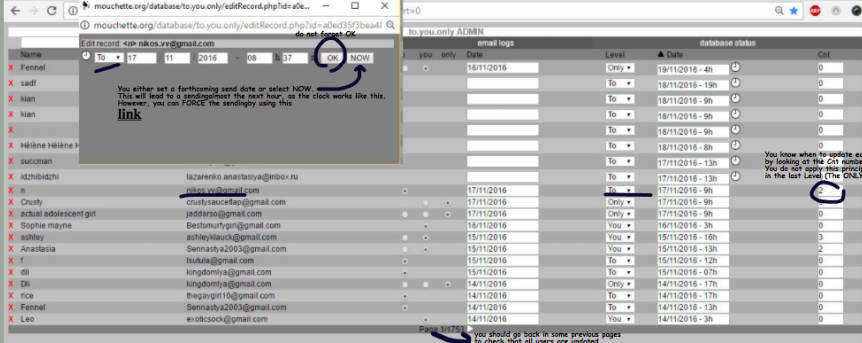
go to step 2

Example of a database interface with instructions created by the programmer Nikos Voyatzis.

Mailing-list manager

The emails sent to the users are part of the narrative of Mouchette's interaction. These emails notify the user, are sometimes re-published, making the story go forward. According to the artist, the mailing list system is totally outdated, yet still in use.

You now update the Level of the participant, by clicking on the name/email and using the dropdown menu in the popup window. You update from the TO to the You now in order to send the 2nd email of the story.



| Name | email | Level | Date | database status | Cnt |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|------------------|-----------------|-----|
| Fennel | | Only | 18/11/2016 - 4h | 0 | 0 |
| saaf | | To | 18/11/2016 - 19h | 0 | 0 |
| kian | | To | 18/11/2016 - 9h | 0 | 0 |
| kian | | To | 18/11/2016 - 9h | 0 | 0 |
| kian | | To | 18/11/2016 - 9h | 0 | 0 |
| Hélène Hélène | | To | 18/11/2016 - 8h | 0 | 0 |
| succman | | To | 17/11/2016 - 13h | 0 | 0 |
| idzhidzhi | lazarenko.anastasiya@inbox.ru | To | 17/11/2016 - 13h | 0 | 0 |
| n | nikos.voyatzis@gmail.com | To | 17/11/2016 - 9h | 0 | 0 |
| Christy | chris@sauceflap@gmail.com | Only | 17/11/2016 - 9h | 0 | 0 |
| adriaal adolescent girl | jadedragon@gmail.com | Only | 17/11/2016 - 9h | 0 | 0 |
| Sophie mayne | Bestmanurji@gmail.com | You | 16/11/2016 - 3h | 0 | 0 |
| ashley | ashleyklauck@gmail.com | You | 15/11/2016 - 16h | 3 | 3 |
| Anastasia | Sennasly42003@gmail.com | You | 15/11/2016 - 13h | 2 | 2 |
| f | lukie@gmail.com | To | 15/11/2016 - 12h | 0 | 0 |
| di | kingdomya@gmail.com | To | 15/11/2016 - 07h | 0 | 0 |
| Di | kingdomya@gmail.com | Only | 14/11/2016 - 17h | 0 | 0 |
| rica | bigagynr1@gmail.com | To | 14/11/2016 - 17h | 0 | 0 |
| Fennel | Sennasly42003@gmail.com | To | 14/11/2016 - 13h | 0 | 0 |
| Leo | evdcsock@gmail.com | You | 14/11/2016 - 3h | 0 | 0 |

You repeat the same process to upgrade users from the YOU Level to the ONLY Level, which is the final stage.

Example of a mailing list manager interface with instruction created by the programmer Nikos Voyatzis.

additional comments:

Neddham worked in close relation with several programmers that helped her build the website structure to this day. Many times the work was started by a programmer and continued by others, working on top of it. Neddham sees it as a real artist collaboration. Each programmer would incorporate not only codes, but a different style and approach to the structures.

6.3 Specifications software

Original software used:

From 1997 till 2004 the software used for editing HTML compositions was **Netscape**, and a separate FTP application was used to send the data to the server. Neddham says at that time, she also used free softwares found on the web or distributed freely on CDs from digital content magazines. Despite being very heavy to download and have limited functions, these softwares were easy to operate and were used by the artist to make gifs, thumbnails as well as sound editing. They stopped working after some computer's OS upgrades, and Neddham had to find a new freeware for the same function.

It was only because of these free software tools that sounds, animations, pictures and webpages could be done by the artist without any other help. She used to copy or borrow java scripts codes from other websites and tried out on her page (lucky having success in many cases): "a paradise of 'bricolage', or 'hacking' in the old-fashioned sense of the term, not pirating, but creating with what you find handy and free". (LIMA interview, 2020)

After 2004, Neddham started using **Adobe Dreamweaver** for web-editing, which contained its own FTP application. Although the artist was not much experienced, she could manage the new software migrating her previous Netscape skills to it. **Adobe Photoshop** was also used for most of the image-processing of Mouchette. Since the artist was experienced in doing large sized

images compositions for public spaces exhibitions in the past, she had a mastery in the software and could take the most of it. For example, she devised her own compression system to make picture files as small as possible, by blurring some parts of the image. This could have given the imagery and the functionality of Mouchette an diferencial in comparison to other amateur internet websites.

6.4 Preservation equipment

Does the equipment contain parts that are irreplaceable in order to obtain a good presentation of the work?

No, the work can be viewed in any screen based device with sound speakers, internet connection and a mouse or touchpad to interact with it. Although the artwork has been exhibited previously in a format of a screen capture video in TV panels or projection of the website, any level of audience interaction seems to be more in tune with the real scope of the work.

Artist approved browser:

According to the artist, there's not one single type of browser or dedicated equipment to the exhibition of "Mouchette". For her, ideally the work should always be adapted to the appearance of new browsers, computers, gadgets, etc. But, with a lack of resources for its production and maintenance, she recognized that it's not possible to change everything all the time and reformat the website technically and visually. She clarifies that the right attitude for preserving Mouchette is to **preserve the accessibility of the work as much as possible and fix whatever can be fixed according to the observance of the users interactivity during time.**

Reaction speed / time interval:

The artist does not consider reaction speed a crucial parameter for the work. For highly interactive websites such as Mouchette, the artist also thinks reaction speed should not be related only to technological change, but a combination between technology and the perception of the viewer/user (which changes during other contextual factors). Therefore, this evaluation would have to be made not only with technical data, but also with words and impressions to combine both information.

6.5 Specifications of exhibition space

installation instructions available: No.

site-specific: No. The work can be viewed and exhibited on the internet as well as exhibited in a gallery/ museum context.

minimal floor surface: not specified

maximal floor surface: not specified

minimal height: not specified

maximal height: not specified

entry: not specified

exit: not specified

additional comments: The artwork has an online website format, in principle it is accessible to anyone with an internet connection. The possibility of viewing and interacting with this work in a private or domestic setting is an intrinsic part of the artwork's functionality, and the internet forms its primary exhibition space. Next to that, "Mouchette" can be exhibited or reperformed in virtual expositions, galleries or inside the museum context. **Neddham expressed there's no ideal public exhibition for the work.** She mentioned that a video screen capture simulating a visit to the website could be a sort of default solution for the public, although this video (its author, its duration and format) would always change, therefore would always be a new interpretation of the website. Nevertheless, it is visible for the exhibition history of the artwork that there's several ways to re-perform Mouchette, and this should always be decided case by case and in dialogue with the space, context and curator.

7. PRESERVATION CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

7.1 Preservation Challenges for Mouchette.

It's clear from Mouchette's biography that this is a work constantly straying its environment into unexpected directions. It's aliveness and interactivity makes it very difficult to map all its past agents as also to predict which ones can be involved in the future. Over time, the relationship between these agents changes as well as the action between them, creating a lot of preservation challenges. In conclusion, "Mouchette" is very hard to be mapped and document it in an objective or static point of view.

Also, technically wise, being a born-digital artwork, "Mouchette" grew in a very chaotic and flexible way. During its 20 years of existence it grouped several interactive pages, more than 3.000 active links and an ever growing text database. Since the website is crossing decades of Internet existence, the artist is also continuously dealing with structural changes that do not depend on artistic choices. Considering the impossibility of controlling the availability of programming tools, lifespan of servers, codes, scripts, as also the rules of softwares and browsers, the future of "Mouchette" is always somehow hanging by a thread.

All this makes the maintenance of the website extremely time consuming and filled with preservation challenges. Till today, Neddham is the only one responsible for this process, working along with programmers she hires to collaborate in technical aspects that are beyond her expertise (like updating codes and programming).

Neddham is not only responsible for updating domain registers, payments, avoiding spam and digital garbage, but it's also the one constantly moderating what is integrated or not in the website. That is why with the rise of social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram, it felt less important for Neddham to pursue her anonymity in favour of revealing the amount of human labour behind what is supposed to be an artificial intelligence.

With so many technical updates since 1996, it is important to remember that the old programming also holds a conceptual importance in the case of “Mouchette”. For instance, the artist prefers to keep the old codes as long as possible, instead of just migrating to something new. To clean it or organize too much could also change the character’s imagery, narrative and functionality.

Basically, updating too much Mouchette could also be a way of killing what she is. Taking all these challenges in mind, Neddham expressed that **acceptable changes are usually those capable of keeping the relation machine/user alive, maintaining the curiosity, the surprise, the unexpectedness, without transforming it into a “push-button situation”**.

Notes on moderation:

The moderator is the one responsible for managing emails, re-posting user’s answers, classifying content and even deleting undesirable visitors. Since these are all narrative factors influencing the artwork itself, these are actions that should either be made by the artist or a person/system that could best interpret what the artist envisions.

Moderation is an essential factor in order to keep Mouchette alive and moving forward. With no moderator, the website could have remained 20 years online, still nothing inside of it would have changed. Looking behind the stage, the moderator is the one responsible for “opening the gates” for interactivity to happen.

Moderation enables Mouchette to grow, and by these transformations, to produce new feedback. This growth is not so much controlled by the moderator as a specific path, but as a general direction to follow. This can certify that Mouchette keeps accurate to its artistic purpose. For example: it’s not so much about what kind of “comments” to allow, but to keep the trigger “to communicate”.

Notes on maintenance documentation:

Having Neddham as the main technical and artistic moderator of the website, made the knowledge of its preservation acquire a very personal approach, one that is also still lacking a better documentation system for its future maintenance process.

In order to change that, the artist started in 2016 to develop along with the programmer Nikos Voyatzis an instruction’s manual of the maintenance process in a form of screenshots and texts. The images would be in **SVG format** in order to be zoomed in all directions and indefinitely annotated: a way of making it open and easily changeable for more information to be added in a nonlinear way in the future. But with short resources and funding, the project didn’t come to an end. Neddham and Voyatzis also recognized that the SVG format wasn’t easy enough to use for this purpose. Still, the unfinished maintenance screenshots are available online and most definitely help to better understand part of the current backstage of Mouchette now. The links are also kept in the about.mouchette.org weblog for future preservation:

Location: <http://virtualperson.org/nikos/lastsvgs/mainhall.svg>

Notes on broken links:

The artist expressed that the decision to preserve extra domains associated within the artwork or to fix links that get broken during time it's always decided case by case. If she considers the page as a vestige or a remnant of the past, then to leave the broken link as a trace can become an artistic option.

For the main domain, mouchette.org, most of the broken links are usually fixed and Neddham suppresses the bugs in the HTML as much as possible, with or without keeping a trace. According to her, this can make the website a bit more clean. Since the artist can't visit the website all the time, and specially all its pages and "secret corners", a better preservation workflow would help to automatically map and acknowledge where these broken links are⁴.

Notes on backups:

The artist expressed that everytime something is changed in the website, she tries to preserve the previous version not as a hard disk dump but as an old version kept online on the server.

The last backup dump was made in 2017 during the acquisition of the work by the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. This dump is located within the museum and in the personal hard drive of the artist. Since then, the website already suffered changes, such as parts that were organized and cleaned by a programmer.

Till 2020, the server's copy of the website was the freshest copy available. In January (2021) LIMA started to host it in Arthost. A separate user has been created for each site who can access the site's files. A remote script at LIMA approaches all sites every week and copies the files that are important for that site to a LIMA server⁵.

For the wordpress weblog about.mouchette.org, Neddham created her own system of preservation by copying entire articles or making snapshots of some of the websites. This could work as a backup for the content which she has no control over, in case it gets disappeared or links are broken in the future.

7.2 Generative conservation and Network of care

Mouchette has a very peculiar system that somehow operates in her own preservation and documentation. Using the performative aspect to the maximum, Neddham is constantly taking the "outside" history of the artwork and reloading as part of the work itself.

For example, Mouchette has taken part in a diverse range of events in the artworld. On almost all occasions these events were generating a new page in the website, adding unpredictable narratives to the original character, but also documenting it - like the Triple X Festival, Fan Club or My Last Birthday party section.

⁴ See "7.3 LIMA's approach" for solution strategies developed in this issue.

⁵ See "7.3 LIMA's approach" for solution strategies developed in this issue.

Another example is shown by her choice in revealing changes on programming and codes during time. It's noticeable that Neddham kept the screen cover image in the original 800x600 frame and replicated it, instead of stretching and reframing it. After the rewrite of "Lullaby for a Dead Fly" from Flash to HTML5, a small note in the corner of the screen let the user know that the animation has suffered a change in its original programming. The use of sounds like awnings, screams and groans were, back in the 90's, linked to the long waiting time of page renders - which now happens pretty fast. This all draws attention of users to the fast technological changes within the work and its media. It also archives and documents its own technical history.

Neddham uses the artwork as its own platform for discussion, exposition and even preservation, a very clever way to blend the agency with the work itself. For instance, in 2001 Robert Bresson's widow acted with a lawsuit and made offline one of Mouchette's pages that related a quiz with his movie character.

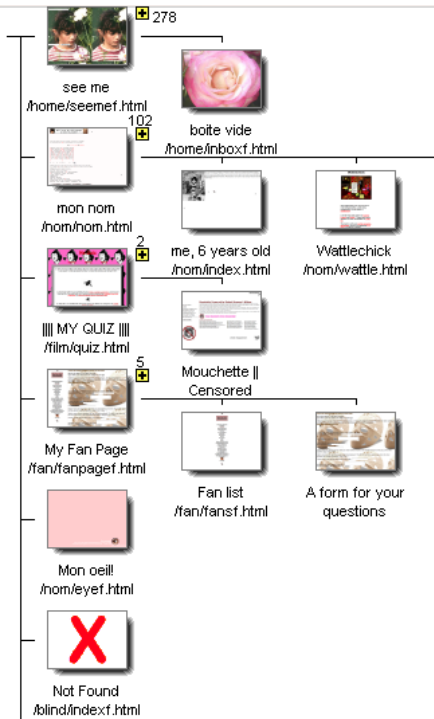
The incident called attention to other artists and institutions that decided to host the forbidden page in their websites in protest against abusive copyright laws. Till 2017, the quiz page (www.mouchette.org/film/quiz) could only be seen by these collaborative websites, such as this one, still online in 2020: www.computerfinearts.com/collection/mouchette/filmxx/index.html. Even though the page was restored online on her website, Neddham maintains the historical information written as a text as a documentation of the incident.

Reflecting on this quality, the dutch Media Studies researcher Annet Dekker (2018) used "Mouchette" to formulate the concept of **network of care**, a conservation strategy that embraces different stakeholders in a decentralized manner to conserve the legacy of an artist or specific artwork. By that, it aims to bring together traditional institutions with small organizations, individuals, from experts to non-specialists, towards a collaborative way of net art preservation.

Historically, "Mouchette" always involved several collaborators and caught the attention of a great public. During the years it had the contribution of different programmers, artists, friends, researchers and a fanclub that loves Mouchette and adds to her legacy. The episode of Bresson's law suite was a strong indication of how artworks such as Mouchette can act in a less traditional conservation strategy and how much this still has to be identified, invested and applied.

In the last few years Neddham created a parallel weblog (about.mouchette.org) that gives support to the preservation and documentation of Mouchette. Old links, a parts of a maintenance manual and even PowerPoint files with original images of the website, are currently being archived and preserved there. The files become online and available for the public, that is clearly transformed into a caretaker in potencial.

about.mouchette.org also gathers all kind of material related to the work like articles, interviews, news and academic researches. This way, the website generates a lot of data inside the domain



The “+” sign indicates the number of connected pages linked to the main one.

The “x” sign indicates broken links.

| | | |
|--|-----|--|
| *MOUCHETTE* / | 200 | http://mouchette.org/ |
| *MOUCHETTE*/indextop.php?Nav=DOM | 200 | http://mouchette.org/indextop.php?Nav=DOM |
| Unvisited /pages/Pomplemouse/ | 200 | http://mouchette.org/pages/Pomplemouse/ |
| Blind Jump /skeleton/index.html | 200 | http://mouchette.org/skeleton/index.html |
| *****: /skeleton/random.html | 200 | http://mouchette.org/skeleton/random.html |
| Le Network de Mouchette / | 200 | http://mouchette.net/ |
| Le Network de Mouchette /indextop.html | 200 | http://mouchette.net/indextop.html |
| *MOUCHETTE*/page.php?name=starears | 200 | http://mouchette.org/page.php?name=starears |
| index /pages/Starstears/ | 200 | http://mouchette.org/pages/Starstears/ |
| where | 200 | http://mouchette.org/pages/Starstears/where.html |
| Become Mouchette : / | 200 | http://www.edit.mouchette.org/ |
| Become Mouchette : /wait.html | 200 | http://www.edit.mouchette.org/wait.html |
| Become Mouchette : /intro.php?lang=0 | 200 | http://www.edit.mouchette.org/intro.php?lang=0 |
| Become Mouchette : /login.php?lang=0 | 200 | http://www.edit.mouchette.org/login.php?lang=0 |
| Become Mouchette : /subscribe.php?lang=0&help=1 | 200 | http://www.edit.mouchette.org/subscribe.php?lang=0&help=1 |
| Become Mouchette : /subscribe.php?lang=0 | 200 | http://www.edit.mouchette.org/subscribe.php?lang=0 |
| Become Mouchette : /subscribe2.php?lang=0 | 200 | http://www.edit.mouchette.org/subscribe2.php?lang=0 |
| Become Mouchette : /intro.php?lang=1 | 200 | http://www.edit.mouchette.org/intro.php?lang=1 |
| Become Mouchette : /login.php?lang=1 | 200 | http://www.edit.mouchette.org/login.php?lang=1 |
| Become Mouchette : /subscribe.php?lang=1&help=1 | 200 | http://www.edit.mouchette.org/subscribe.php?lang=1&help=1 |
| Become Mouchette : /subscribe.php?lang=1 | 200 | http://www.edit.mouchette.org/subscribe.php?lang=1 |
| Become Mouchette : /subscribe2.php?lang=1 | 200 | http://www.edit.mouchette.org/subscribe2.php?lang=1 |
| Last Birthday Party /mouchette/CDintro.html | 200 | http://drivedrive.com/mouchette/CDintro.html |
| drivedrive.com GALLERY /gallery.html | 200 | http://drivedrive.com/gallery.html |
| PRODUCTS BY ARTISTS /products.html | 200 | http://drivedrive.com/products.html |
| Postcards /Boekie_Woekie/postcards.html | 200 | http://drivedrive.com/Boekie_Woekie/postcards.html |
| a drivedrive.com T-shirt /moritz_gaede/buybuy.html | 200 | http://drivedrive.com/moritz_gaede/buybuy.html |
| I Really Should (neon) /kelly_mark/reallyshould_neon.html | 200 | http://drivedrive.com/kelly_mark/reallyshould_neon.html |
| a drivedrive.com transmission /kelly_mark/about.html | 200 | http://drivedrive.com/kelly_mark/about.html |
| I Really Should CD /kelly_mark/reallyshould_cd.html | 200 | http://drivedrive.com/kelly_mark/reallyshould_cd.html |
| Last Birthday Party /mouchette/lastbirthdayparty.html | 200 | http://drivedrive.com/mouchette/lastbirthdayparty.html |
| drivedrive.com OFFICE /office.html | 200 | http://drivedrive.com/office.html |
| about drivedrive.com /web/about.html | 200 | http://drivedrive.com/web/about.html |
| clients drivedrive.com /web/clients.html | 200 | http://drivedrive.com/web/clients.html |
| HTMail drivedrive.com /web/htmail.html | 200 | http://drivedrive.com/web/htmail.html |
| drivedrive.com LINKS /links.html | 200 | http://drivedrive.com/links.html |
| Not Found / http://www.fineartforum.org/ | 404 | http://drivedrive.com/%20http://www.fineartforum.org/ |
| net.art.group /about.html | 200 | http://drivedrive.com/about.html |
| Enlightened Symbols /david_askevold/ | 200 | http://drivedrive.com/david_askevold/ |
| Unvisited /nursex/ | 200 | http://drivedrive.com/nursex/ |
| 911 a drivedrive.com transmission /moritz_gaede/ | 200 | http://drivedrive.com/moritz_gaede/ |
| Kelly Mark Hits /kelly_mark/ | 200 | http://drivedrive.com/kelly_mark/ |
| The Diabolical /trong_gia_nguyen/ | 200 | http://drivedrive.com/trong_gia_nguyen/ |
| The Diabolical /trong_gia_nguyen/diaprices.html | 200 | http://drivedrive.com/trong_gia_nguyen/diaprices.html |
| Moonpies /charmaine_wheatley/ | 200 | http://drivedrive.com/charmaine_wheatley/ |
| Charmaine Wheatley CD /charmaine_wheatley/CD.html | 200 | http://drivedrive.com/charmaine_wheatley/CD.html |
| Moonpies /charmaine_wheatley/moonpie.html | 200 | http://drivedrive.com/charmaine_wheatley/moonpie.html |
| Agrioola St. video /charmaine_wheatley/agrioola.html | 200 | http://drivedrive.com/charmaine_wheatley/agrioola.html |
| Unvisited /gallery/ | 200 | http://drivedrive.com/gallery/ |
| net.art.group /index.html | 200 | http://drivedrive.com/index.html |
| The Diabolical /trong_gia_nguyen/diabolical.html | 200 | http://drivedrive.com/trong_gia_nguyen/diabolical.html |
| Dubya Says /trong_gia_nguyen/dubya.html | 200 | http://drivedrive.com/trong_gia_nguyen/dubya.html |
| 911 a drivedrive.com transmission /moritz_gaede/theatrum_mundi_911.html | 200 | http://drivedrive.com/moritz_gaede/theatrum_mundi_911.html |
| indexbottom | 200 | http://mouchette.net/indexbottom.html |
| where | 200 | http://mouchette.org/pages/Pomplemouse/where.html |
| My Fan Page /fan/fanpage.html | 200 | http://mouchette.org/fan/fanpage.html |
| Fan list /fan/fans.html | 200 | http://mouchette.org/fan/fans.html |
| Mouchette is our favourite /fan/fan.html | 200 | http://mouchette.org/fan/fan.html |
| A form for your questions /fan/fanfamous.html | 200 | http://mouchette.org/fan/fanfamous.html |
| Gifts from the fan-club /fan/gifts/gifts.html | 200 | http://mouchette.org/fan/gifts/gifts.html |
| suicide.note | 200 | http://mouchette.org/fan/gifts/suicide.note.jpg |
| The Prendickie /fan/gifts/prendickie.html | 200 | http://mouchette.org/fan/gifts/prendickie.html |

An Excel sheet is also generated with the page's name, URLs and connectivity (“200”for working links, “404” for broken ones).

Strategies for Backups

Taking into consideration the speed mouchette.org changes as well as its database, a more consistent backup system was one of LIMA’s priorities to be found. In January of 2021, technical manager Wiel Seusskens⁶ developed a remote script at LIMA’s server that approaches all domains considered by the artist as central to the current preservation of “Mouchette”, providing copies of its files and respective database.

The backups of the **files** are made in three different ways: weekly, monthly and annual. Weekly backups are overwritten by a recent version on a monthly basis (eg: the first week of May, the backup of the first week of April is overwritten). Monthly backups are overwritten annually (eg: May 2022 overwrites the May 2021 backup). Annual backups are kept forever.

The backup of the **databases** are daily and hosted in two servers. The content of databases generally changes faster than files, which explains the difference of higher frequency backups for this item.

⁶ Full report is made by Wiel Seusskens this is not published

Only the web server at Dreamhost and the backup server at LIMA have access to the MYSQL servers (protected by IP numbers).

Dumps of all data of the databases are made and stored in a file that is compressed with gzip.

The daily backups are overwritten on a weekly basis (eg: on Fridays, the backup from last Friday is overwritten). The procedure for weekly, monthly and annual backups is the same as for files backup.

Documenting the artist's intention

Because this is an ongoing artwork and involves so many unpredictable agents and environments, the artist's intention documentation is a key factor for its preservation. It defines the moderation of the website and all its future adaptations, exhibitions and developments.

An interview focusing on the meaning of the work and double screen recording documentation of "Mouchette", using the Constant Dullaart and Robert Sakrowski method, are also part of ArtHost project future objectives.

8. APPENDIX 1/ DOCUMENTATION INTERVIEW

Documentation Questions to Martine Neddham. LIMA October 2020

Questions related to concept, ideas, meaning of the work

1) How important is the categorization of the work to separate the website *mouchette.org* from its other disjoints/branches? How do you usually describe these "branches" in comparison to the "primary" website artwork?

It's all Mouchette! Technically most of it is under the same root server, even when the domain name is different. It might all share the same database. Originally some parts were created separately (ihatemouchette.org) for obvious narrative reasons (one had to believe it was created by a 'hater'), but later it was reunited on the server. Mouchette.net is an interface where people could publish as Mouchette. It's for a part not functional anymore but for another part still functional, and it has some secret corners, interactive or not, still visited and still growing. About.mouchette.org (a wordpress blog since 2011) that I use to archive articles, papers, exhibition info and what not... that I still consider as Mouchette. I copy their entire articles, so that they 'stay' with Mouchette.

2) How important is it to preserve extra domains associated within the artwork (those not owned by the artist) or links that get broken during time? Is this a worry or could it be assumed as part of the intention of the work itself?

It's decided case by case. Most of the time, in Mouchette.org, I try to fix it and suppress the

broken link in the html, with or without keeping a trace, because it's 'cleaner' that way but I'm not always as up to date as I would want.. If I consider the page as a vestige or a remnant of the past, then I leave the broken link as a trace. I'm not extremely consistent. There are parts of the site I never visit so I don't acknowledge the broken links. In about.mouchette.org, I try to copy entire articles and to make snapshots of websites to keep a trace of when they have disappeared.

3) Taking the weblog as an important online generative strategy for the conservation/documentation of Mouchette, how important is to look for its own maintenance and preservation? Would any offline preservation method (backups, dumps) make sense for this generative strategy?

Back-ups and logs are important but sadly enough, I'm not very good at it. It keeps me up at night sometimes. My server has a back-up button for each domain and database, but the problem is: this backup button produces a file which I can download. But I wouldn't know how to use it, in case data is lost on the server. For a couple of years, my local copy of the website is not up to date, let alone the database... For my own hard disk, I have a so-called "Time Machine" from Apple that makes automatic back-ups a few times a day, and the lost data is easy to retrieve. I wish I had that for Mouchette.

Questions related to exhibiting and interactivity/functionality of the work

4) What would you consider to be the main exhibitions of the work during these years and why?

The best exhibitions (I can't mention them all) were those who gave me the opportunity to create a new work connecting online space with the physical space, and giving me the production means for it. For example in 2011 I made the Guerrilla pop-up shop, where the art space was turned into a shop for merchandising for Mouchette and later the shop continued online.

<http://about.mouchette.org/category/fan-shop/>

<http://shop.mouchette.org/>

In 1997 a dutch film magazine called SKRIEN invited me to create a centerfold. I made a quiz comparing the film Mouchette by Bresson and the character of my own website, and I produced it for online as well

<http://mouchette.org/film/quiz.html>

In 2001 Rhizome.org invited me for a splash page and I gave them "Kill the cat".

<http://mouchette.org/cat/>. You had to kill the cat in order to enter Rhizome.org, that was very annoying (or very funny) for the visitors. I kept all the entries and created a special category for them called 'rhizome'. <http://www.mouchette.org/cat/why.html>. Here I didn't create a new work but acquired a lot of public.

In 2007 I did an artistic residency in Quebec city in Canada where I was offered a collaboration

with a programmer and I created online works which re-stage texts from the database. We made a Flash tool for it and later I could create several works based on the same programmed components.

http://mouchette.org/grand_soir/

<http://mouchette.org/to.be.or.not.to.be.mouchette/>

http://mouchette.org/ville_fantome/

Also in the Stedelijk Museum, the physical presentation of my work on the wall is very exciting because it works well inside the museum context. It's a proposal I made to the media curator of the Stedelijk Karen Archey.

A good exhibition opens new areas of creation and opens the work to a new public. It can only be done with a good dialogue and complicity with the curator.

5) How is the work ideally exhibited, outside of the domestic sphere, within an exhibition context? (minimal installation requirements)

There is no ideal public exhibition of the work. Mouchette was created as my own experience of the online space and therefore was meant to be experienced online, as a new genre of art, the online art or the net.art, which is a one-on-one situation with intimacy, personal choices and decisions for a circulation in the website, private reactions, etc. A video capture of a visit of the online space is a sort of default solution for the public. But I don't provide a standard recorded visit. Someone has to make it, someone has to author it. It's like an interpretation of the website.

6) Mouchette is all the data inside the website, but also outside of it. What is the data outside of Mouchette, and how does this generate more material for the evolvement of the artwork?

I'm not sure I really understand the question...

Some of the data outside Mouchette is placed on a domain that I control, which is hosted in my own server. Some data happens outside, made by people who create fake Mouchette pages, parodies, or write articles. I have that motto: 'everything that mentions Mouchette IS Mouchette'. This is the horizon of Mouchette in line with our time of search keys.

Technical specs and parameters for preservation

7) What tools/techniques did you use for the creation of the website?

For the HTML I used editors. The first one was Netscape composer in 1997, which came standard with the browser. I used it until it wasn't made anymore, in 2004 maybe. I used a separate ftp application to send the data to the server. At that time I also used free software found on the web or distributed freely on CDs with magazines for digital geeks (more like the latter because softwares were heavy to download. These softwares had very limited functions

but they did the right job, and they were easy to use. I used them for making gifs, for sound editing, for thumbnails and other goodies. They stopped working on the next OS upgrade, and one had to find a new freeware for the same function.

Thanks to these free tools, I did everything myself, sounds, animations, pictures and webpages. For java scripts, there were sites where you could borrow javascripts by copying the code. I also copied stuff that I found in source code, tried it on my page and was lucky when it worked. All in all, It was a paradise of 'bricolage', or 'hacking' in the old-fashioned sense of the term, not pirating, but creating with what you find handy and free. After 2003/2004, this style of work was over. Then I used Dreamweaver for web-editing and it contained the ftp application. It had a lot of features I didn't know how to use. I only used what I learned in Netscape composer. I never learned CSS for example.

When I started using the internet, I was already quite experienced in Photoshop, I was doing large size digital images in the public space. So it was easy for me to use Photoshop to process images and to export them as .jpgs. I devised my own compression system to make picture files as small as possible, by blurring some parts of the image. I really enjoyed image processing because it was the part where I had full mastery of the tool. For that time. Because now, many images look bad and over-compressed, but at that time they were small to download and very large on the screen. The intimacy and the sensuality of the pictures still work somehow, and that was a good part of the image-processing.

For the database, PHP/MySQL, which was started in 1999 and continued, to this day, on the same basis, it was made specially for me by a programmer, continued by other programmers, and fixed during major php upgrades when necessary. I worked in close relation with the programmer, they showed me what existed, suggested what was possible, it was a real collaboration with a programmer, each having a different style and approach, not just the use of code.

8) Is the work variable?

Yes, in many ways.

9) Could you describe what, according to you, is an acceptable change? i.e. the moment when the work becomes a different work, or a version, or ceases to exist? (Parameters change/ significant properties)

It is decided case by case. The type of changes I need to practice most of the time are: 'change to remain the same'. And usually it consists of translating the work into a different software, for example a Flash work into and HTML5 translation. I find any kind of translation preferable to disappearance of the work, or unaccessibility. So what does it mean to remain the same? It's more an artistic question than a technical question, it's a question of interpretation. Besides that, when people make their own versions of the work, parody sites or video captures with commentaries, I consider it as valuable versions of the work, even when they are very weird,

and I preserve them as much as possible (about.mouchette.org)

10) Is reaction speed / time interval important to the work?

Not as such. It's just one of the parameters of the work.

11) What if reaction speed would (de)-increase due to technological change?

I don't consider reaction speed as pertaining only to technological change. In interactive works it's a combination between technology and the perception of the viewer/user and that perception changes over time, so it's an equation between the two which is rather difficult to evaluate. This evaluation has to be made not only with technical data, but also with words and impressions.

12) What is an acceptable change according to you?

It's the change that keeps the relation machine/user alive, with curiosity, surprise, unexpectedness, and doesn't transform it into a push-button situation.

13) Is there an artist approved browser? Type computer? Dedicated equipment?

No. Surely not. Ideally the work itself should be adapted to the new browsers, computers, tablets, telephones, everything... Practically, it's not possible to change everything all the time and reformat technically and visually. So the right attitude is to have the work remain accessible as much as possible, observe the conditions in which the work is being accessed, fix whatever can be fixed, and for the rest, enjoy the mess!

14) How often do you make a backup of the complete website?

Sadly: never. I don't even have a complete local version, in case what is on the server is being lost. The server's copy is the only copy right now. The one I have is from 3 years ago when the mouchette.org version01 was sold to the Stedelijk. It changed quite a bit since then, and was also for some parts re-organized and cleaned by a programmer.

15) Do you consider some of the backups as 'versions' which you keep separately?

Not as such. There are some old versions of some specific works.

16) Where do you store the backups?

When I re-do a work, I try to keep the old version, but not on a hard disk, next to the re-actualized work on the server.

17) Are the databases included in the backup?

No, and I really regret it terribly.

18) How many different databases compose the website today and how they work. (individually, and in connection with each other)?

They are all connected with each other, the way they were originally built. If it's a wordpress blog, then it has its own database.

19) What is the current maintenance status of this database? (who is taking care, what are the current problems and needs)

I can view this database with phpMyadmin, but I don't know how to work with it. When there's a major change in the PHP version, I need to find someone who fixes it. I indicate what is not working and how it should be. But because the work is so labyrinthic, I still find errors months later. I should have a system that keeps an automatic backup of the database, but unfortunately I don't.

20) Which system/tool/technique (e.g. wordpress) is used for the website mouchette.org?

I have a custom-built interface to update and publish all the works. There is no info, or instructions for use and I am the only one who knows all the functions and who operates this publishing interface. For a couple of years, I have been working on that with Nikos Voyiatzis, and he could operate this interface and publish the posts. We have been trying to create an info system based on annotated screen snapshots. The chosen file format for the pages is .svg in order to be zoomed in all directions and indefinitely annotated. It is there, left unfinished, but still has useful information.

<http://virtualperson.org/nikos/lastsvgs/mainhall.svg>

<http://virtualperson.org/nikos/lastsvgs/catstep1new.html>

21) Is there a procedure to rebuild the website mouchette.org from the database?

Not a single procedure, no.

22) Is a database dump enough to preserve the weblog?

I extracted the database dump from inside phpmyadmin, so I suppose you would need the structure existing in there for a reconstitution.

23) Is there an offline backup of the weblog content being currently stored?

Sadly, no.

24) What is the current maintenance status of the website Host and domain registration? (which one is it, links and dates of subscription, what are the current problems, if any, and needs)

It's all hosted at Dreamhost.com, all of it: web host, domain registrations etc..., together with all my other domains. I get alerts for re-registering domains and paying web hosting or major server changes. I usually find my way around their user's panel for this kind of thing. I'm fairly satisfied with their services. I have what they called a 'virtual server' which means a shared IP. When I work with a programmer, I give them the code to my dreamhost panel, and it works fine. I could give the codes if you want to evaluate that part.

25) What kind of documentation is available today for the maintenance process of the website? What is the status of this documentation and what is still missing? What do we need in terms of material, formats or learning structure to document this knowledge?

As I said, the maintenance and moderation of the database is still the biggest problem. Is what we produced with Nikos of any use? We didn't evaluate it. Should it be continued or re-done from the beginning?

26) What is the role of the moderator of the website? Is there any current existing documentation capable of transmitting this knowledge? What do we need in terms of material, formats or learning structure to document this knowledge?

The role of the moderator is important, it's an interpret, he/she makes personal decisions on classifying, posting or not, deleting sometimes, etc. When working with Nikos we decided that we would add all the information created together to the screen-snapshot pages, and that's why we decided for pages that can be zoomed in and out, instead of stacking up information in a linear way. But the chosen SVG format wasn't easy enough to use for this kind of enterprise.

Miscellaneous:

27) Are the pages on drivedrive.com and ilovemouchette.virtualperson.org part of the artwork? If so, is the maintenance under your control?

Not for drivedrive.com. The person who created the site was a friend (Moritz Gaede) but I lost his contact. The email I had doesn't respond any more. It's a miracle that he still keeps the site on, though he didn't host or create anything new in many years. The works there are mostly made in Flash, At the end of the year Chrome will stop the flash plugin. Will he still keep the site?

As for ilovemouchette.virtualperson.org, it's a masterpiece of preservation by Nikos Voyiatzis. The site was made by a friend on a free-hosting site as a sort of online performance. The friend lost interest beyond the performance and the free-hosting site disappeared. It was the idea of Nikos to re-make it and he found everything back on archive.org and put it together again the way it was. It had to be done piece by piece, because no-one finds a complete site on archive.org, it's always broken, so one has to roam around and retrieve loose pieces with lots of patience. Congratulations to Nikos! Then we hosted it on one of my domains virtualperson.org

28) Are there more domains other than mouchette.org/.com/.net and ihatemouchette.org involved?

I don't own the domain mouchette.com. I had it for a little while, hosted some unimportant stuff and lost it to a domain-snatcher, so I gave it up. About.mouchette.org is a subdomain and so is shop.mouchette.org, they have their own database. Virtualperson.org belongs to me and I have used it to host works I have done together with Nikos Voyiatzis.

29) Part of the site was deleted because of copyright claims. Do you own a copy of those pages? (the link to the files, <http://www.constantvzw.com/copy.cult/mirror/>, does not work anymore).

Yes. I hosted this part of the site again in 2017: <http://mouchette.org/film/quiz.html>

Before then I used to link it to this version outside of mouchette.org, because I wasn't officially allowed to host it anymore:

<http://www.computerfinearts.com/collection/mouchette/filmxx/index.html>

30) Could you imagine a moment in the artwork's future, and if so could you describe that moment, in which the artwork will be replaced by or live on as something else (documentation such as a screen recording or similar)?

1- In an ongoing future, every little piece keeps getting updated in order not to break-up and continue its online interaction. For example I'm trying right now to replace every piece made in Flash by an html equivalent. It's scattered all over the site. I mostly used Flash to embed sound because it was the most compatible sound format (yes!). But the html skills are disappearing, the people I know who could do that for me don't want to or can't do it any more and Flash disappears from Mac and Chrome next december. So it's the race against the clock, a race against the stream of obsolescence. In the future, I stay on the good side of the race, I don't give up and don't let any interactivity die. This is a plea for help me find people programmers/designers to repair Mouchette the way I want.

2- In a more distant future:Mouchette (or rather all of its data) will be owned by a cooperative of owners that will make sure that the data is accessible and maintained in the artistic spirit of its creation. The data will be sold, either as a percentage of the whole or as a specific work, similarly to a building being sold in separate flats and collectively maintained in its common parts. The money of the sale will pay for the reparations and maintenance.

Some thoughts and opinions that make me have this prediction/fiction:

-Mouchette will continue to really exist as interactive and publicly accessible online if she is sold 'as a whole', not in separate parts, and not in 'frozen' (time-stamped) versions like the one for the Stedelijk.

-The ownership of data including the specificities of maintenance and distribution of the data needs to be addressed in our digital future. It concerns all aspects of data, not just those owned by GAFa companies, and it certainly concerns art made with data.

-I believe works of art could become a form of currency, or rather assets on which financial value is based.

In December 2017, a painting by Picasso was sold as 40,000 shares of 50 Swiss francs each. As the owner of a share you have access to a special platform where you can vote on whether the work is loaned to a museum or not, and your Picasso share has zero risk of devaluation.

<https://www.qoqa.ch/fr/offers/15113>

<https://www.qoqa.ch/de/offers/15113>

One can also purchase the historical castle La Mothe-Chandeniers in the same manner.

<https://dartagnans.fr/en/projects/et-si-on-adoptait-un-chateau/campaign>

One million euros for the ownership (already raised), and 3 millions euros will have to be found for the restoration.

Granted: Mouchette is neither a Picasso painting or a historical castle in ruins, but she has established a strong place in art history, her cultural value will maintain or increase. She can, in time, become a financial value asset. But I don't see it happen through one person or through one institution, or even a few. I imagine a great number of owners, share holders. Somehow, there's this idea that participants of Mouchette, at one or another level, could also become so many owners or shareholders. I won't elaborate further on this (science fiction) scenario. I hope one day I can work further on the ownership interface and financial value system that will ensure the proper maintenance and continuation of Mouchette. These ideas were inspired by the apparition of blockchain projects. Here, blockchain could have a part, only as a lock and security system to guarantee the value.

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