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**If/Else**

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# Summary

**Binary Disc** explores the intersection of social media, anonymity, and the archival impulse in a digital age oversaturated with information. The artistic component of this thesis consists of a web-based artwork and an interactive installation for engaging with the web-based artwork. The interactive installation was exhibited as part of Kuvan Kevät 2025 at the Academy of Fine Arts, Uniarts Helsinki. **Binary Disc** is Conceived as both an artwork and a critical experiment, in the form of a new social media platform that invites and encourages people to upload a single piece of content, after which they permanently lose access to both their contribution and the platform itself.

At its core, the project employs a binary code system: each participant receives a code ending in either *1* or *0*. a structural reference to the most fundamental logic by which machines process and categorize us. By enforcing the one-upload-only rule, **Binary Disc** interrupts the endlessness of digital feeds and accumulation, instead imposing scarcity, finality, and disappearance as conditions of interaction. Within this system lies a further layer of unpredictability: the **Red Horse**. Printed only once during the exhibition. This ticket grants its holder extraordinary power to alter, or even delete, the entire archive. This mechanism functions as a stress test of anonymity and authority,

The written thesis component, **If/else**, traces **Binary Disc** from its initial conception to its full realization, situating the project within broader theoretical, artistic, and cultural contexts. It examines the technical execution process, the conceptual framework and staging questions of permanence, randomness, and authorship while engaging with theories of deindividuation, and digital memory. By drawing on philosophical, psychological, and literary references from Lynch and Sunstein to Zimbardo and Golding the work situates itself as both a critique and an embodiment of our networked condition.

In this thesis written component, **Binary Disc** is situated at the intersection of Interactive Art, New media and Internet-based Art. The written component concludes with an analysis of what I expected from the project, and what I have observed and encountered so far.

At its core, **Binary Disc** is not only a digital archive of people's memories or interactions, but also a mirror or even a pause, reflecting how humans navigate identity, control, and disappearance within the infrastructures that shape our collective digital existence. Also, as

**more than an artistic concept for me, it's an experiment.** a formal system altering social interaction by changing the rules of online identity and content sharing.

# Preface

Before beginning this project thesis, I need to make a few fundamental points clear that will be repeated throughout the text.

- This text is neither a psychology nor a sociology thesis, it is a textual accompaniment to a web-artwork and interactive installation. The reason that psychological and sociological experiments and theories have been drawn on in this text is that the idea for **Binary Disc** grew out of my interest, as an artist, in these types of experiments. Most of my artistic projects have their roots in an engagement with knowledge from other fields. I typically encounter a text that is thought-provoking and exciting for me, I find it deeply inspiring, and I look for a way to reflect on it in my artistic process. I sometimes think of my art practice as a hybrid of science and art which both are extremely important to me. So, this text as well, is something in between.
- My master's thesis project, **Binary Disc**, and especially this text, do not claim scientific knowledge. The experiments I conduct and draw inspiration from, may be wrong or right, ethical or unethical, proven or unproven or validated or challenged. For me these experiments are simply interesting as cultural artifacts. Their results are deeply thought-provoking for me and as an artist, I draw inspiration from the ideas they surface about society and human interactions. Although I have tried my best to indicate critique of the things that inspire me, I am not trying to present a balanced or even well-reasoned argument. (Also, let me be honest with you: I strongly believe everything is possible when we talk about human behavior.)
- As an artist and a person, I have presuppositions, but I have made an effort to ensure this project is not built upon on them, in the spirit of conducting an open experiment. However, sometimes I leave my traces because I am creator of it (apparently!)
- My written and spoken language is often slightly ironic and sarcastic. Since there are no strictly determined norms for thesis writing in the fine arts, I like to keep this tone in the writing style of this thesis as well. However, for the sake of clear reading, I have tried to put such instances of irony or sarcasm in parentheses.
- **This is a crucial insight I didn't fully grasp until the long conversations I had with Daniel Peltz during finalizing this paper**, which occurred in my prose. I left certain issues and phrases within this written component unexplained. This is a very important

issue with deep roots in my lived experience and formed me and my ‘Weltanschauung’ (especially works of art).

I have always, sometimes deliberately and sometimes unconsciously, guided the audience of my artworks to a **border of despair, insufficient clarity, non-transparency, frustration, and irritation, and then left them there.** These are the very qualities that connect the audience (and in this written component, the readers) more closely to my lived experience. This method emerges as a direct response to living under conditions where authoritarianism (in my country, Iran) has cast a shadow over all aspects of life. Clarity is constantly suppressed. Under such a system, clarity itself is dangerous: it is monitored, suppressed, or weaponized.

Needless to say, that there is no necessity or pressure of using this tone in this text, but over time, being exposed to such a situation has eroded my sense of freedom (even though I fought for it many times). Crucially, this situation has completely permeated my linguistic and behavioral fabric. Therefore, after acknowledging this unconscious strategy (in this text specifically), I will remain faithful to the original text itself and my approach. Instead of now clarifying some unexplained issues and phrases within the text, I accept this tone in this text which is inseparable from my artistic practice, and I choose to share this frustrating experience directly with the reader.

Hope you enjoy reading this text!

# 0000000000001, Binary Disc: From the Ashes We Archive!

*“We live in a world where there is more and more information, and less and less meaning.”*

*Jean Baudrillard, Simulacra and Simulation (Baudrillard 1994, 75)*

**T**he era of big data<sup>1</sup> over the past twenty years has been a revolutionary shift in human communication. With the introduction of various social media platforms, the number of users continues to grow daily, to the point where life without them is now nearly unimaginable. This increasing pervasiveness has reached such a level that humans have adopted and utilized a hand gesture of ‘scrolling’ as part of their daily behavior. It is valuable to consider the sheer volume of content we both publish on and are bombarded with daily via social media. *Based “on an average of 143 minutes per day, per user, the world spends 720 billion minutes per day using social platforms. Over a full year, that adds up to more than 260 trillion minutes, or 500 million years of collective human time”* (Kemp 2024). These numbers represent an unimaginable amount of data exchanged in this space. But why? What makes us so eager to share our daily lives here? And what drives us toward this proliferation in publishing?

Before we dive into the question, let's talk a little about the project itself. **Binary Disc** is the intersection of many ideas and questions that have been on my mind. It's an idea I've had for years but never had the chance or resources to execute.

**Binary Disc** is a kind of De-Familiarized<sup>2</sup> social media. I simply disrupt the familiar shape of social media to create a new engagement pattern. On this platform, a user is **only allowed to upload content once**, and that **content can be anything**. However, they need to know that once they upload it, **their access to the content is gone forever**, and **they lose the**

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<sup>1</sup> Big data refers to massive, complex data sets that traditional data management systems cannot handle. When properly collected, managed and analyzed, big data can help organizations discover new insights and make better business decisions. (Annie Badman, Matthew Kosinski 2024)

<sup>2</sup> De familiarizing first defined by Russian literary theorist **Viktor Shklovsky** he indicates “*that the purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar', to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged*”. (Shklovsky 2017, 80)

**ability to change or delete it.** They will also lose access to the website forever (though they won't know this last part until after they upload). The upload process on the web website has its own complexities, and the user needs an entry ticket to enter the upload process. This ticket will be printed for them by a printer machine in physical space.



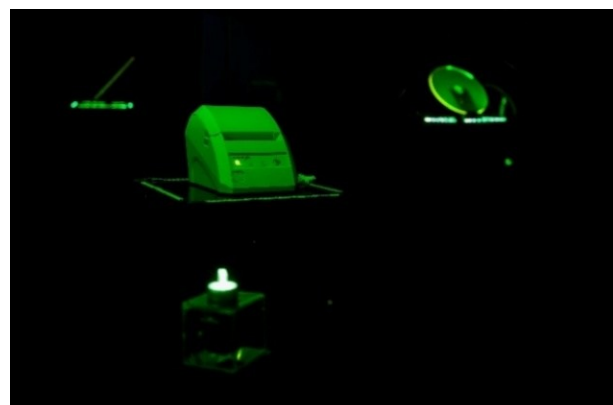
*Ticket which user could receive in the installation space*

The ticket, which the user receives in the installation space, contains a unique 12-digit binary code, the project 's slogan (“From the Ashes we Archive!”), and a QR code to enter the website. By scanning the QR code, the user is taken to the website and, by entering their code, starts the upload process.

But all of this is just the tip of the iceberg. *How?* Let's take a moment to review the project's evolution. As I mentioned, the initial idea for this project started years ago. The first iteration of the **Binary Disc** website was simply a basic content upload website with all the same upload limitations already described.

After years, the idea was revitalized during my studies, and our MFA exhibition, **Kuvan Kevät**. The idea itself transformed and underwent fundamental changes following many consultations with my professors, supervisors and friends (along with many practical tests!). The first draft of installation idea included two separate rooms. One contained a computer, microphone, and all the necessary materials for content upload, as well as a hidden camera that live-streamed all the user's actions to the other room for display. (Please imagine this concept, as I am terrible at drawing.) This idea was eventually abandoned because the concept of surveillance became much more prominent than the original idea of making a digital collective memory, and it was replaced by the another and final execution process which will detail next.

The final setup involved a room containing a disc, a printer, a display screen, and a small switch that controlled all the electrical processes in the room. Users were encouraged to follow the instructions before accessing the room. After entry, they would turn the switch, which triggered the following sequence:



1. the lights in the space would turn off,
2. an introductory video would start,
3. After about a minute, the printer would dispense a ticket for the user with a QR code and binary code to upload their contribution to the **Binary Disc** archive.

The video lasted approximately three minutes, and after it ended, the light in the room returned to normal.



Before



After

Since I didn't have the necessary knowledge to execute such a complex project, and even an experienced programmer couldn't have executed several complex hardware and software projects in such a short time, I turned to **AI** for assistance (yes, all the fundamental codes for this project were written by AI, Amazing, isn't it?).

## The Special Ticket

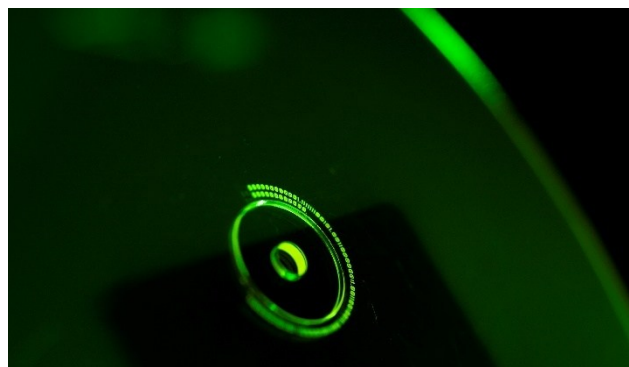
In the final days of concluding and refining codes for launching the website, while I was reviewing and editing the project's user interface, a new idea came to me. “*What will happen if we have a plot twist?*” I told myself. This Idea/Plot twist was rooted in Philip Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment in 1980. The results of that experiment were always astonishing to me that human behavior, under special conditions, can display evil and sometimes immoral behavior. (We'll discuss this experiment and its connections to this project in detail in later chapters.)

Implementing the reflection of this experiment in the project wasn't easy for me, and I wrestled with it for a long time until a great (In my opinion!) execution idea came to me: **The Special Ticket**. This ticket would be printed randomly, only once, during the exhibition for one person, granting them God-like power in the **Binary Disc** (I am not a religious person but the term God-mode is widely used in IT communication which is the state that user has near-full control on vital information and is on top of the hierarchy) . I named this person the **Red Horse**,

taken from one of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse<sup>3</sup> (Again I am not a religious person, I always look at those stories as great mythological narratives), who was tasked with inciting war on the human race.

**Dirk Paesmans**, Belgian video and new media artist, once said that: *“We explore the computer from inside and mirror this on the net, when a viewer looks at our work we are inside his computer... and we are honored to be in somebody’s computer. You are very close to a person when you are on his desktop. I think the computer is a device to get into someone’s mind”* (Mark Tribe, Reena Jana 2006, 6) I agree with this perspective. For example, my idea is to have the audience encounter the work ubiquitously; they can easily interact with it on their desktop or on their phone (an even more intimate interface). The art is designed to be always present, open to changes, and conducive to constant interaction, with the audience just a few clicks away from the artwork (or, in my case, a part of it) , However, this core understanding of intimate, decentralized audience interaction is not a novel concept but a fundamental characteristic of a whole genre of internet- based art .but what happened if all data storages, hosts and servers just get vanished? Internet-based art is accessible, yet vulnerable. During my search I was looking for many Net artworks that are no longer accessible nowadays. So, I was thinking what can I do in case the **Binary Disc**’s website vanishes one day?

I arrived at an idea for *Physical Discs*, which wasn't part of the project from the beginning. The inspiration for the disc's creation came from the **Voyager Golden Record**<sup>4</sup>, which had the fundamental human information (To be more precise, based on NASA’s point of view) engraved on it and was sent into space toward the



*Binary codes will be engraved in sequence until fully cover the disc.*

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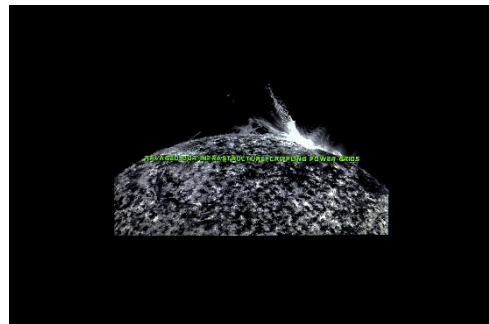
<sup>3</sup> The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse Conquest, War, Famine, and Death are figures from the New Testament's Book of Revelation, appearing as the first four of seven seals are opened. They represent the destructive forces of the end times, riding on white, red, black, and pale horses, respectively, and are often seen as harbingers of the apocalypse, though interpretations vary on the exact symbolism of the first horseman.

<sup>4</sup> The Voyager Golden Records are two identical phonograph records, one of each which were included aboard the two Voyager spacecraft launched in 1977. The records contain sounds and data to reconstruct raster scan images selected to portray the diversity of life and culture on Earth and are intended for any intelligent extraterrestrial life form who may find them. The records are a time capsule. (Ken 2020)

outside of the solar system. However, on my project's **physical disc**, each person's identifier (their unique binary code) would be engraved. Although the Voyager Golden Record was made for possible communication with outer space, the **physical disc** in my art installation serves as a token of remembrance and appreciation of **Binary Disc**'s user and aimed at recording a part of their digital identity, which would be lost forever if the **Binary Disc**'s data centers were destroyed.

## The Final Narrative

Finally, in the last days before the opening of Kuvan Kevät, the overall narrative of the **Binary Disc**'s introduction video also changed. In the initial narrative, the user would witness a dry, simple, and direct introduction to the project. But after finishing the construction of the space, I decided to make maximum use of it. As I observed the room became completely isolated, covered in dark reflective panels that would



Part of the video which would play after a visitor turn the switch on.

separate the individual from the outside world for a brief moment. Also, the playful/game-like aspect of the project which was present in my previous works (Yes even in harsher works of mine in my opinion) wasn't satisfying enough for me. For this reason, I ended up creating a fictional narrative which was told by an Artificial character called **WIFUP** about an era when all technologies and infrastructures had been destroyed by a massive solar storm. Now, the **Binary Disc** is the only remaining data center from that historical period, set up by presumably philanthropic people to give this lost identity one last chance and to encourage humanity to leave something behind in the collective digital memory. But for the sake of clarification, I will bring the full script below: (so if you already watched the video, you could pass this section)

*“Hello! Good news everyone. The great blackout is finally over. Energy supply after the magnetic storm has reached a point where in addition to turning the gears of remaining factories, we can allocate the surplus to recover one of the existing datacenters on earth and wireless telecommunication until further notice... OH! Sorry I forgot to introduce myself. I am WIFUP. The internal maintainer of a data center which we call Binary Disc. I am proud to announce that Binary Disc is now the last vanguard of human heritage and the final page of collective memory after the great blackout. A dark period when devastating electromagnetic pulses ravaged*

*our infrastructure, crippling power grids and, rendering most technology unusable. But not anymore, it is amazing, isn't it?*

*Anyway, what do we do at Binary Disc? That's very good question. Binary Disc is aimed at recording human experience in a more organized matter. IT IS A PROJECT FOR MANKIND. In this project you are allowed to upload anything you wish to leave behind. However, each person is only allowed to upload one piece of content. Our resources are so limited, but you all have a share in them. Remember, to preserve historical integrity and due to our storage technology, you cannot change or delete your content. Therefore, think carefully about it.*

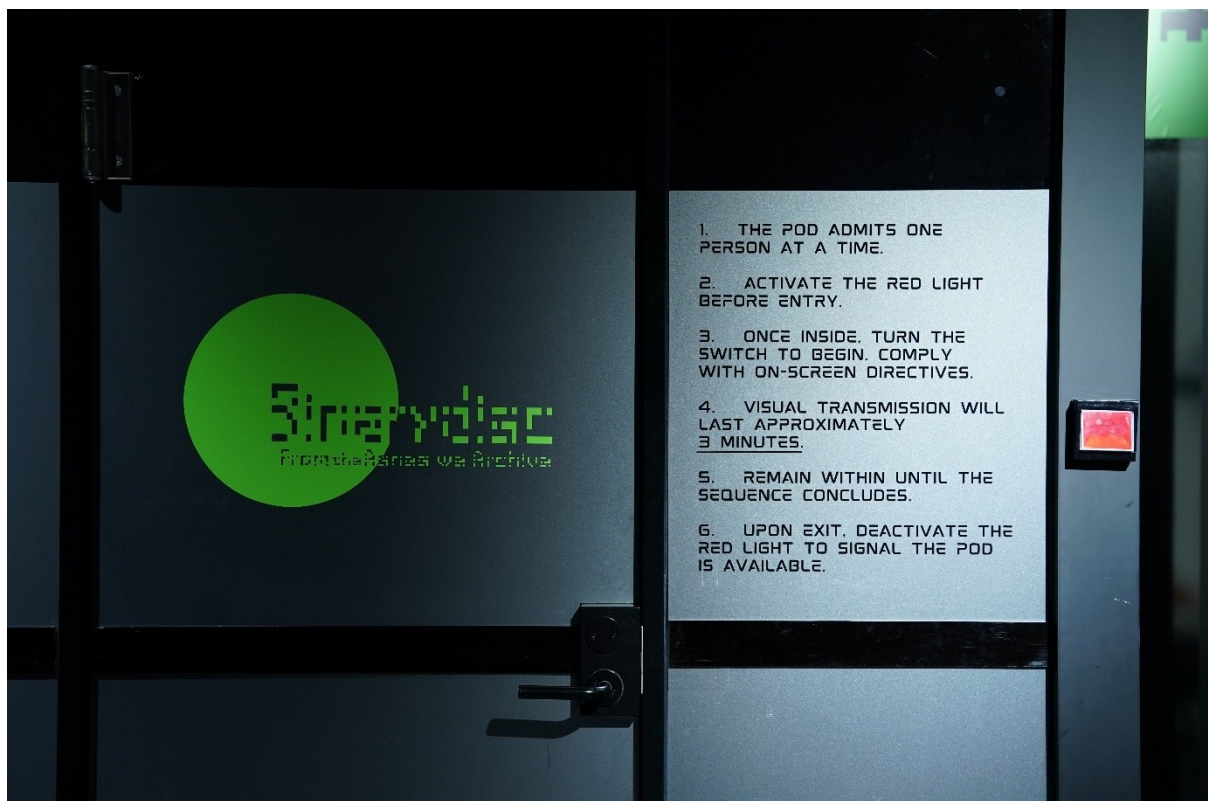
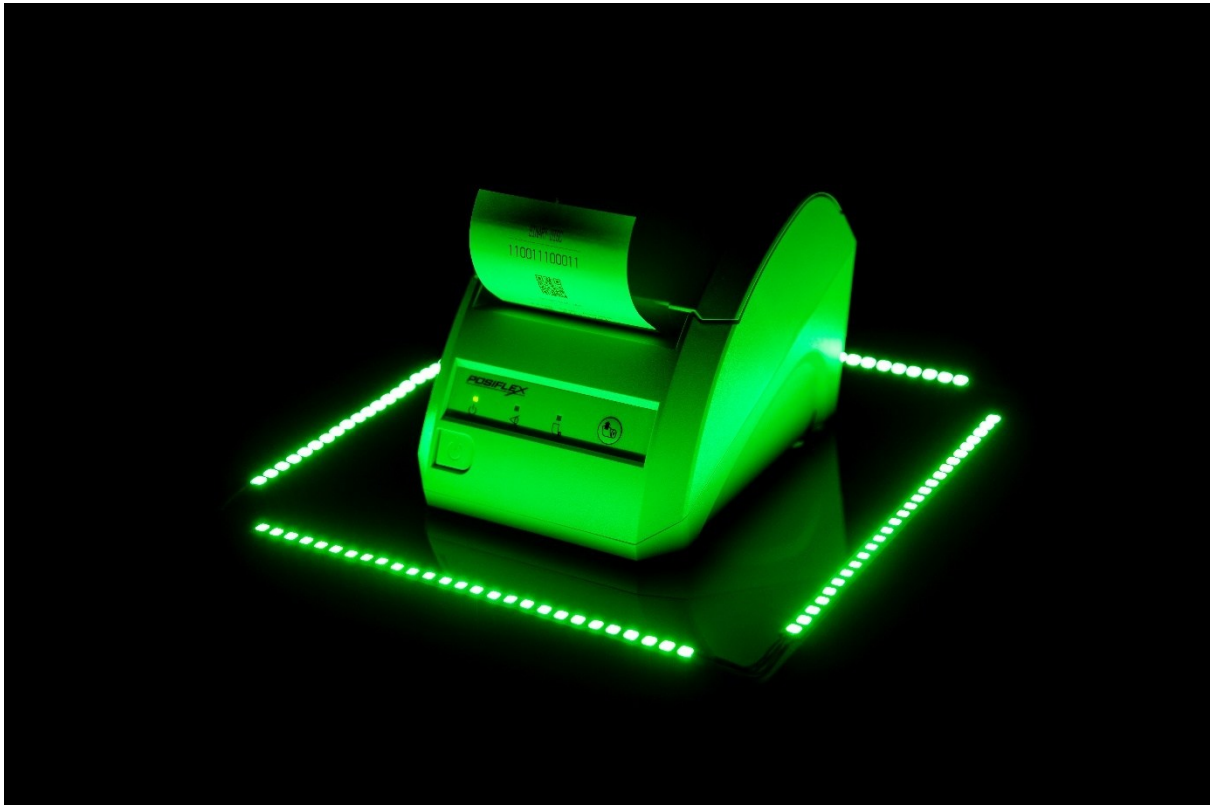
*In the room you're in there is a small printer. While you're watching this video, it will print a code for you, please take it .... (Printer starts working and print a paper which is user ticket) .... Did you take it? Okay! Nice. Don't lose it! Unfortunately, the system, due to its primitive architecture, is only capable of generating binary codes. Obviously, better than nothing it will allow you to upload your content to the datacenter. Also, by sharing this code with anyone you know, you allow them to view your content. However, I am quite sure that after a period of being unaware of the world beyond your sight, you are a bit curious about strangers' content, yes?... Of course you are!... So, there is an option that allows you to randomize the code. Without knowing its owner. Since this information is very new to you, I assume you haven't prepared anything yet or haven't had enough time to think about it right now. I understand! A QR code has been printed on the paper you have, which allows you to access the user interface. Take your phones out your drawer, plug them in; and a night when you're enjoying a stary sky, visit the Binary Disc, upload whatever you want, and you will be part of the Binary Disc project, Additionally, the codes of participants will be engraved on the Disc as token of appreciation and remembrance. We learnt our lesson!*

*If we have enough budget, we might even send it outside the solar system. Ha Ha Ha!*

*Thank you for your cooperation and looking forward to seeing you again soon!*

*Binary Disc: From the Ashes We Archive!"*

(As you've noticed), **Binary Disc**, which I initially considered a simple upload/ content-viewing social media project, gradually turned into a multi-layered entity of different concepts, which I will discuss in more detail in later chapters.



# A Pole in the River

*“We become what we behold. we shape our tools, and thereafter our tools shape us.”* (John M. Culkin 1967, 51-53)

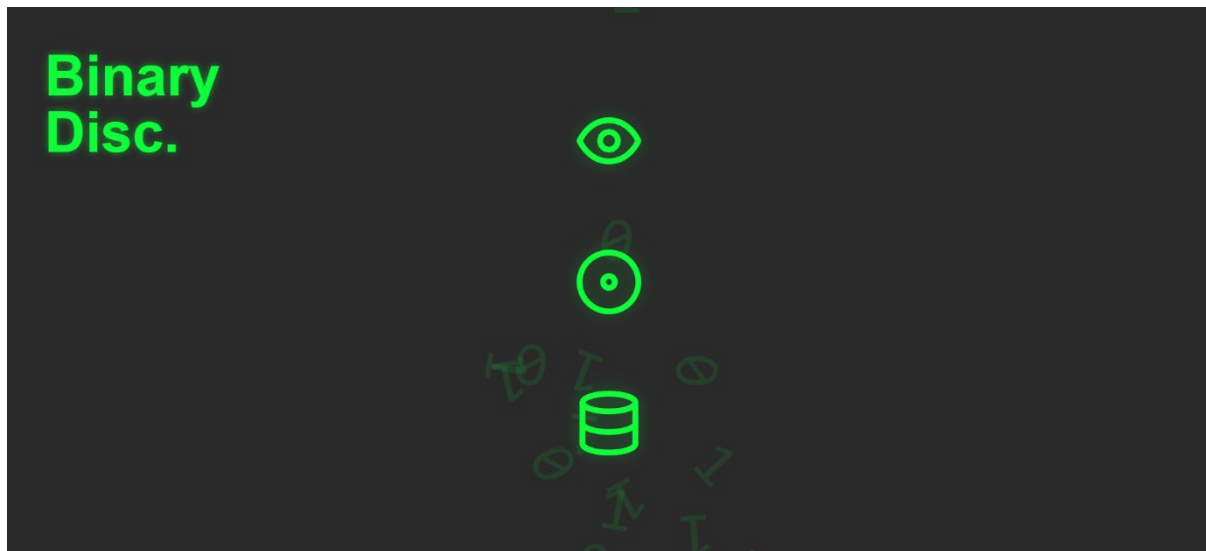
First, allow me to say that I am not all against social media. I use X and Instagram on a continuous basis. I rarely upload anything, but they are, in any case, an inseparable part of my daily life. I suspect I am not alone in this; the massive flood of social media users easily proves this point. Even **Binary Disc** is not a detached critique of social media, but a reflection produced from within its environment. Like **Binary Disc**'s audience and me, the work cannot escape the logics of digital platforms; rather, it operates by making those logics visible through a different lens. So, the work's resonance therefore depends on the very structures it questions, highlighting both our reliance on and our entrapment within social media culture

**William James**, known as important figure of American psychology, has a famous saying: When a flood of a particular idea begins, you can't do much. In such a state, trying to stop it is like putting a pole in the middle of a river to block the water *“round your obstacle flows the water and ‘gets there just the same.”* (W. James 1963, 164-165). Of course, in 1907, when this was written in his book *"Pragmatism"* there was certainly no sign of the immense and unstoppable wave of technology. This metaphor simply shows that powerful ideas (if we consider social media to be one in this case) and movements have their own force, and direct suppression of them usually leads to failure. In such circumstances, instead of resisting, it is better to understand the current and, instead of fighting it, go with it or interact with it in other ways. Now, I, too, intend to pause and, by placing a pole in the river's current, better evaluate the depth and direction of the flow, or even, in a way, intensify the existing process<sup>5</sup>

Okay now let's start by introducing the website's user interface. The website's design is very simple and includes three features: an eye icon to view content from someone who has provided their personal code, a disc icon to begin the upload process, finally, a database icon to view random content

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<sup>5</sup> . I can say that there is also many of modern or contemporary theory about resistance and aesthetics of it, but I argue that this theory still holds true



*Binary Disc Home page*

As you see, the user interface bears no resemblance to modern social media interfaces and more like early-stage websites in 2000's or even could be considered as slightly more polished version of **Net Artworks** in those era. There is also absolutely no sign of existing algorithms of content personalizing on social media apps. In **Binary Disc**, there is a deliberate and extreme emphasis on **anonymous interaction**. The project is structured to enforce a degree of user detachment: if a participant chooses not to upload a picture of themselves, their experience remains entirely anonymous. Furthermore, the viewing of content is severely restricted and often **randomized**. Users will only be able to view shared content randomly, unless another user has explicitly shared their unique code, which allows for direct, non-randomized access. This mechanism highlights the tension between personal digital presence and enforced isolation.

## Dice in the Machine

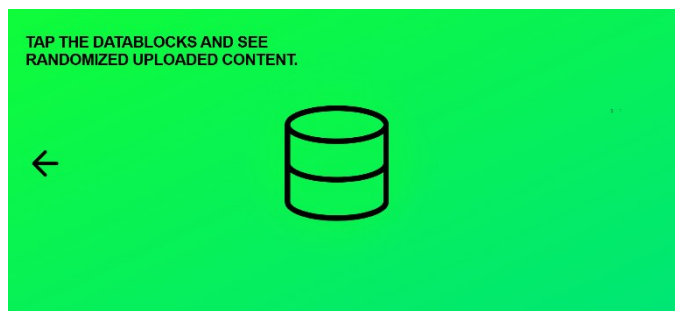
*“Cram them full of non-combustible data, chock them so damned full of 'facts' they feel stuffed, but absolutely 'brilliant' with information. Then they'll feel they're thinking, they'll get a sense of motion without moving.”*

*Ray Bradbury Fahrenheit 451 (Bradbury 2021, 282)*

As I mentioned earlier, one of the three core functions of the **Binary Disc** website is to view randomized uploaded content. When a user enters the website home page and taps the

icon which is visually represented by database blocks, the system fetches and displays a completely random selection of a piece of content from the archive. This selection is intentionally blind: it is not based on chronology, media type, or user history; a user may even see the same content multiple times consecutively. but why did I emphasize randomness on **Binary Disc?**

Nowadays the content display algorithm is a very important feature on social media applications. It's an almost new trend (since 2009) that, by recognizing the user's interests and prioritizing them or by feed personalizing for display and scrolling, compels you to spend more and more time on social media. But a very high potential danger is hidden in this process, I believe. when I was reading the book *Internet of us* by **Micheal Lynch**, he indicates a point which was really compelling for me. he indicates that “*Internet allows us unprecedented control over the sources and types of information we receive, to dip into the flow of information where and how we wish, and to extract and isolate what interests us more quickly, all in the comfort of our pajamas. It allows us to get what we want—or what we think we want—faster.*” (Lynch 2016, 41). I think the process of finding and following topics of interest is a very natural matter during human socialization, we are socialized people and it's always pleasant to have a common interest to talk about with someone. From communist cafés to workers' or artistic clubs, they have all been formed to gather intellectual sustenance, find common ground, and reinforce beliefs. However, when social media became an important part of daily lives this situation turned a bit different. They allow us to achieve this important goal without the hassle of a busy and inconvenient physical life with others and without having to possibly hear opposing views. in addition, existing algorithms, after recognizing our interests, expose us to more and more of it so that our scrolling doesn't end too soon. Simply, the algorithm creates an echo chamber. It constantly repeats and reinforces a particular point of view, making it feel like the only valid one.



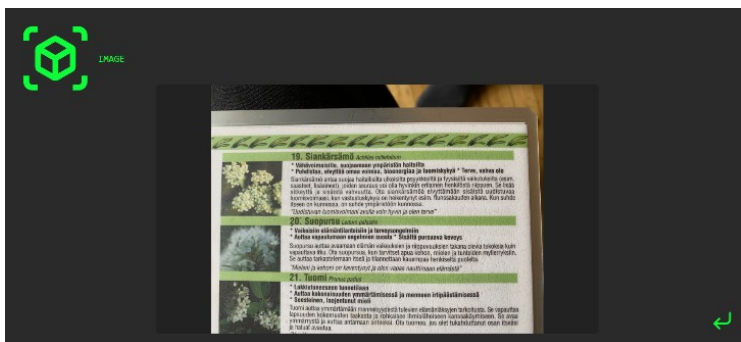
**Cass Sunstein**, American legal scholar, and one of the important thinkers in the field of digital culture, states that one of the main reasons the internet leads to polarization is: “*repeated exposure to an extreme position, with the suggestion that many people hold that*

position, will predictably move those exposed, and likely predisposed, to believe in it. " (Sunstein 2007, 69-83)

(Sounds familiar, doesn't it?)

"So, with a steady diet of Fox News, conservatives will become more conservative. Liberals who only read the Huffington Post or the Daily Kos will become more liberal." (Lynch 2016, 41) As Sunstein says, "as diverse people, not originally fixed in their views and perhaps not so far apart, end up in extremely different places, simply because of what they are reading and viewing" (Sunstein 2007, 69-83)

. The number of social media users and the time they spend on these platforms increases day-by-day, accelerating this alarm. The content that appears in our feeds is so closely tailored to our existing interests and those of our similar peers that if we like a post, our friends will



Content viewing page's user interface on Binary Disc Website

probably like it too, and vice versa. Of course, one cannot claim that a human being with such mental complexity is composed of only a single opinion. However, social media easily takes on the essential role of amplifying the

more prominent opinion. Nevertheless, this fragmented society, in the long run, will trigger a potential alarm, as the individual can ultimately become so submerged in the bubble of their own beliefs that encountering and accepting new, and sometimes opposing, views become more difficult than ever. In the worst-case scenario, it can even increase cultural fascism or cancel culture in user.

As **Karl Popper**, Austrian British philosopher and academic, said:

*"of a society in which men practically never meet face to face in which all business is conducted by individuals in isolation who communicate by typed letters or telegrams, and who go about in closed motorcars.... Such a fictitious society might be called a completely abstract or depersonalized society."* (Popper 2013, 166)

In any case, the random viewing of content on **Binary Disc**, without the ability to manipulate or interfere with it, can be a serious practice in preparing to face anything. Although **Binary Disc** community is still a small and almost specific one, my hope is that as this community grows, this process of random encounters can create a significant space for reflection.

## The Mask Eats the Face

*“His soul was mad. Being alone in the wilderness, it had looked within itself, and, by heavens! I tell you; it had gone mad.”*

*Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness (Conrad 2008, 136)*

in 1969, **Philip Zimbardo**, American psychologist, conducted a controversial experiment. This experiment explored how anonymity influences aggressive behaviour by having female college students believe they were administering painful electric shocks to two other women under a cover story about creativity under stress. Participants were divided into two groups: a **deindividuated condition**, where their identities were concealed with hoods, coats, and numbers, and an **individuated condition**, where they wore name tags and were treated as unique individuals. Each participant, working alone in a cubicle, was asked to shock two confederates, one previously described as pleasant, the other as unpleasant across twenty trials each. The shocks were never real, but participants believed they were painful, as they had been given a sample before the trials began.

The results revealed stark differences between the groups. Women in the deindividuated condition delivered **twice as much shock** as those in the individuated condition, showing no distinction between pleasant and unpleasant victims. In contrast, individuated participants shocked the unpleasant woman more and the pleasant woman less. Furthermore, deindividuated women increased shock duration over time, suggesting an escalating cycle of emotional arousal and loss of restraint. The study concluded that anonymity fosters indiscriminate and heightened aggression by weakening personal accountability (I am looking at this experiment just as a possibility in human behavior)

Another Example which was conducted by **Scott Fraser**, clinical psychologist, in 1971: In this study, he investigated whether **anonymity** and the opportunity to compete for prizes

would lead children to engage in more aggressive behavior. He set up a Halloween party where some children wore costumes that made them less identifiable. The children were given the chance to play competitive games to win tokens for gifts, with some games being non-aggressive (e.g., retrieving a beanbag) and others being potentially aggressive, requiring physical confrontation between two children (e.g., competing to get the same beanbag from a tube). The study's design was set to observe if the children's feeling of anonymity from their costumes, combined with the competitive environment, would lead to an increase in pushing and shoving. *“The data are striking testimony to the power of anonymity. Aggression among these young schoolchildren increased significantly as soon as they put the costumes on.”* (P. Zimbardo 2007, 302)

in both experiments, like any others, had their share of critics ethical, methodical and theoretical. However, when I read about these experiments it was interesting for me that *anonymity triggers something within a person. But what? And how? (or does it mostly lead to harsh behavior?)*

Based on **Leon Festinger**, American social psychologist, definition a group phenomenon which we have called **deindividuation** has been described and defined as a state of affairs in a group where members do not pay attention to other individuals qua individuals, and, correspondingly, the members do not feel they are being singled out by others. (Nickerson 2024) Which can lead to increased *“sense of being absorbed by the group atmosphere, which can cause people to conform to the emergent norms of the crowd, sometimes resulting in antisocial or aggressive behaviors”*. (Marie Gould, Alexandra Howson 2021)

as I understood in deindividuation effect, usually:

- **Anonymity** is high
- **Group size** is large
- **Arousal and excitement** are high

In contrast to classical deindividuation theory (or maybe the other side of the coin in comparison to mentioned experiment of Zimbardo and Fraser) the **SIDE model (Social Identity Model of Deindividuation Effects)**, developed by **Russell Spears, Tom Postmes**, and colleagues, expands classical deindividuation theory to digital and mediated environments. Instead of seeing deindividuation simply as a loss of self, SIDE argues that anonymity does not erase identity but shifts which identity becomes salient. In online spaces, when personal identity cues such as names, faces, and social context are removed, individuals become less

guided by their personal norms and more by the situational or group norms embedded in the environment. For example, in a hostile online forum, anonymity may embolden aggression because the perceived norm is antagonism, while in a cooperative digital space, the same anonymity could strengthen solidarity. Thus, **anonymity heightens the influence of context rather than erasing identity altogether.** (Reicher, S. D., Spears, R., & Postmes, T 1995) (Postmes, T., & Spears, R. 1998)

This phenomenon explains why people may engage in behaviors online both positive and negative that they would not exhibit in face-to-face interactions. The delayed nature of communication, coupled with a sense of anonymity and the lack of social cues, reduces the fear of immediate consequences or social judgment. This can lead to hostile or aggressive behavior, but it can also foster greater openness and self-disclosure, as individuals feel less inhibited to share their thoughts and feelings.

At this point, you might find yourself saying that on **Binary Disc**, as I've mentioned before, there is no direct attempt to form group. Typical social interactions in this virtual space are very limited. Of course, group formation is an inevitable and gradual social process, but one can accept that in **Binary Disc**, this issue is not as prominent as the feature of anonymity, which is the direct result of Deindividuation effect, So when I encountered these theories I intend to simply give a fertile ground in **Binary Disc** for potential power of the Anonymity, because I think being anonymous would be a state which can be taken advantage or disadvantage of it easily, In **Binary Disc** I assigned each participant a binary code (in this situation I could also discuss about the potential power of dehumanizing but let's not getting into that!) and even in content display process when you want to see a content Randomly the binary codes assigned to that will not be revealed. You have no name, you have no visible trace; you're just a number so you can easily vanish in system, However, I am emphasizing one more time: anonymity is the possible point where the seeds of a Hobbesian state of nature <sup>6</sup>might be sown.

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<sup>6</sup> The state of nature for Hobbes was a state of lawlessness and chaos. Without any government organizing this individual hunt, mankind is to compete for things it needs for survival, such as food and shelter. And while good and evil are relative to Hobbes, the greatest evil is one for everyone: the fear of violent death. (SAATI 2021)

# Glaucon's Ring

*“Sure, this robe of mine doth change my disposition.”*

*William Shakespeare, The Winter's Tale (Shakespeare 1912, 77)*

I read *Lord of the Flies* by **William Golding** years ago, and the narration in it really stuck with me for a long time. While writing this, after referencing the book multiple times in different books, I was teased to read it again. In one part, after painting his face, Jack Merridew sees his reflection in the water not as a choirboy, but a monstrous figure:

*“He looked in astonishment, no longer at himself but at an awesome stranger. He spilt the water and leapt to his feet, laughing excitedly. Beside the pool his sinewy body held up a mask that drew their eyes and appalled them. He began to dance, and his laughter became a blood thirsty snarling. He capered toward Bill, and the mask was a thing on its own, behind which Jack hid, liberated from shame and self-consciousness.” (Golding 1997, 75)*

In all previous experiments, it was emphasized what a significant role dissociative anonymity can play in arousing people self-disclose or act out more frequently or intensely than they would in person. Apparently, *“they loosen up, feel less restrained, and express themselves more openly”*. (Suler 2004, 321) It is undeniable that it also has other reasons such as invisibility, a- synchronicity, solipsistic introjection, dissociative imagination, and minimization of authority. But let's focus on anonymity and invisibility in this chapter which are more significant and revealed easily on the first layer of using **Binary Disc**.

*“Anonymity can be conferred on others not only with masks but also by the way that people are treated in given situations. When others treat you as if you are not a unique individual but just an undifferentiated "other" being processed by the System, or your existence is ignored, you feel anonymous.” (P. Zimbardo 2007, 301)*

**John Suler**, Professor of Psychology, in his article *The Online Disinhibition Effect* indicates that when people can separate their online actions from their real-life identity, they feel less exposed and are more willing to share personal information or act out. They don't have to take full responsibility for their online behavior because it can't be directly linked back to

who they are offline. This creates a split identity, where the **online self becomes a separate part of who they are**. This allows them to avoid accountability for hostile or other negative behaviors, almost as if their usual moral and ethical restraints are temporarily turned off. *“In fact, people might even convince themselves that those online behaviors “aren’t me at all.”* (Suler 2004)

This situation can reach the climax when it blends with invisibility, it can be considered that these two terms have overlaps but, in this case, you can be identified yet physically invisible which can amplify intense actions. It can be more understandable if you imagine what you would do if no one knew you and what you would do if you became unseeable right now.

Anonymity also has a significant impact on the breakdown of community bonds, as it erases in-group identity. In his book *Goodness Paradox*, **Richard Wrangham**, British primatologist identifies the breakdown of group bonds as one of the main causes of violence in society. In a section of this book, referring to the observations of **Maurice Davie**, he asserts that every society has two moral codes: an external and an internal one, and both stem from the same interests. *“Against outsiders it is meritorious to kill, plunder, practice blood revenge, and steal women and slaves, but inside the group none of these things can be allowed because they would produce discord and weakness.”* (Davie 1929, 18)

Examples of this can be found in a variety of cases, from primitive tribes to modern and civilized societies. Ultimately users without reputational cost may lean toward calculated destruction.

So, this is the potential power of anonymity which I was talking about, it might easily lead you to act differently *“but what is this action?”* I was asking myself. Is it a Mask-Off behavior of us? Something that we always hide? does it stimulate our dark side? Or does it just make us see our true self better? Does it bring us power or just make us feel so vulnerable? These are all questions I was asking myself when I was executing **Binary Disc**, I wanted to give people a sense of anonymity and freedom simultaneously to see how do they act? And how do they decide and ultimately see what they are going to plant into the fertile ground of **Binary Disc**.

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## Red Horse: Has the Moment of Confrontation Arrived?

*"Maybe there is a beast... maybe it's only us."*

*William Golding, Lord of the flies (Golding 1997)*

**R**

*ed Horse* represents the culmination of what **Binary Disc** has been subtly cultivating: a god-like (again!) power that grants nearly absolute control to a single individual, capable of fundamentally altering the established rules of engagement. This individual is an unknown, an identity-less entity chosen by chance. Yet, where did "Red Horse" originate?

Approximately fifty years ago, **Philip Zimbardo** designed the **Stanford Prison Experiment**. The main purpose of the experiment was to investigate how readily people would conform to the roles of **guard** and **prisoner** in a simulated prison environment. To do this, 24 male college students, who were deemed psychologically healthy and stable, were randomly assigned to one of these two roles. A mock prison was set up in the basement of the university's psychology building to create a realistic setting. The participants were paid \$15 a day for their involvement in what was scheduled to be a two-week study.

The experiment was terminated after just six days because the participants quickly and deeply adopted their assigned roles, leading to alarming and unforeseen consequences. The guards began to exhibit increasingly authoritarian and abusive behaviors, subjecting the "prisoners" to psychological and emotional torment, including forced nudity, humiliation, and sleep deprivation. The prisoners, in turn, became submissive, depressed, and showed signs of extreme stress and emotional breakdowns. The results suggested that the **situational factors** the power dynamics, uniforms, and defined roles, had a much more powerful influence on behavior than the individual personalities of the participants. which, despite numerous criticisms demonstrated that humans are not inherently malicious. A "good" individual, under specific circumstances, can undergo a remarkable transformation. A well-intentioned person can, when subjected to conditions such as social roles, authority, deindividuation, and group dynamics, become malevolent. (P. G. Zimbardo n.d.)

Returning to "Red Horse". The user upon accessing a dedicated page and watching a personalized video featuring an individual voiceover named *Seer*, the Red Horse user realizes a distinct difference from other participants. The voices of two characters, *WIFUP* and *Seer*, become entirely robotic, signaling that pretense is no longer necessary. The name *WIFUP* - which is acronym- is revealed to the user (not directly, but through a hexadecimal code)<sup>7</sup>, and it is ultimately stated that whatever **Red Horse** decides will dictate the destiny of **Binary Disc**. The user is presented with three options, which in some respects parallel the three groups of prison guards' behavior in the Stanford experiment:



1. **Transfer the Code:** The user can personally or anonymously transfer this code to others and have someone else take their place (comparable to the Guards with Gray Personalities **strict but fair**, following prison rules.).
2. **Destroy Red Horse:** The user can eliminate Red Horse, thereby completely relinquishing this godlike power (comparable to the good guys; they showed a little kindness to the prisoners and never punished them).
3. **Wipe all Content:** The user can destroy all content and binary codes, causing significant damage to the site's infrastructure (comparable to the hostile, arbitrary, and inventive in finding ways to humiliate the prisoners. These guards seemed to thoroughly enjoy the power they held)

Still, it is undeniable that there are clear differences between the approaches present in **Binary Disc** and the Stanford Prison Experiment (SPE):

- The SPE was about group dynamics and systemic abuse within a hierarchical structure, whereas the Red Horse function is about singular, not group, power.
- The Red Horse function is explicit and known, while in the SPE, power emerged and escalated through social interaction.

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<sup>7</sup> As I want to preserve the integrity of the **Red Horse** and its unique status (as only one person holds this designation), I have chosen to keep the underlying acronym unrevealed even within this text.

- The Red Horse function is a designed feature to provoke thought; the SPE was an observational experiment.

Despite all the differences, as mentioned before, vandalism is more prevalent in situations where identity remains concealed, and no one can feel the sense of community. **Binary Disc**, with its inherent characteristics, provides fertile ground for vandalism.

However, this issue clearly presents another side of the coin. **Rutger Bregman**, Dutch historian, in his book *Humankind: A Hopeful History*, asserts that human nature is fundamentally good, cooperative, and compassionate. Through a wide range of historical events, scientific studies, and real-life stories, Bregman dismantles the "veneer theory" the idea that civilization is just a thin mask hiding our true, savage nature. and he mentioned that *"The real Lord of the Flies is a story of friendship and loyalty, a story that illustrates how much stronger we are if we can lean on each other."* (Bregman 2021, 75)



*The only version of Redhorse ticket Which I have, I printed it during testing the printer function. it's fading away slowly.*

he refers to the occasion happened on 1965 when six Tongan teenage boys, bored with their boarding school life, stole a boat and set off on an adventure. They were caught in a major storm that destroyed their boat and left them adrift for eight days before they washed ashore on the uninhabited volcanic island of 'Ata. The boys, ranging in age from 13 to 19, found themselves stranded with no supplies. However, unlike the fictional narrative, their experience was a testament to cooperation and resilience. They made a pact on the first day to never fight and to work together to survive. They were able to find food, including feral chickens and wild vegetables from an abandoned village on the island. One of the boys, who would later become an

engineer, managed to start a fire with sticks, which they kept burning continuously for over a year. In September 1966, an Australian fishing boat captain, Peter Warner, spotted the boys' fire and rescued them. He was amazed to find them all in good health, and their story, a powerful counter-narrative to the brutal world of *Lord of the Flies*, became an inspiring tale of human kindness and cooperation. As biologist Frans de Waal mentioned about the William Golding's novel *'there is no shred of evidence that this is what children left to their own devices*

*will do*” (Waal 2013, 214). Ultimately the assertion “*Homo homini lupus est*”<sup>8</sup> (Plautus, 1894,66) proves incorrect.

It is worth noting that the abilities I have described cannot be fully categorized as strictly **black, white, or grey** characteristics. For example, the ability that I assume to be a "black" action (wiping all content) could ultimately act beneficially for **Binary Disc** community.

Ultimately, this ticket was distributed to a random person during the exhibitions, meaning we have one **Red Horse** somewhere (I wish I had informed regular users about the Red Horse somehow, not about its function but only about its existence.). However, to which side of the scale this issue will ultimately tip remain uncertain. We are still waiting, the "Red Horse" user has watched the video and has **entered the incorrect password for data deletion, repeatedly.**<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Plautus used it to describe one person's predatory nature toward an outsider. Thomas Hobbes also used it to describe the general, savage state of humanity without political order. Which both definitions could be relevant in my context.

<sup>9</sup> I connected Red Horse interactions on its own specific webpage to a Telegram bot. So, I can monitor them but nothing more.

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## Is this Just an Experiment, or Is It Art? or Both?

**T**o be honest, writing this chapter and attempting to contextualize **Binary Disc** as an artwork or define its position in the art world isn't easy for me. This difficulty arises because the project is primarily driven by theoretical/sociological interests (I suspect **Binary Disc** is not alone in this situation in the art world.). I spent a long time reading to be able to create and execute it. In fact, I use the word "**execution**" for this project, which is a bit strange and unfamiliar in the art world; signals how I position this work.

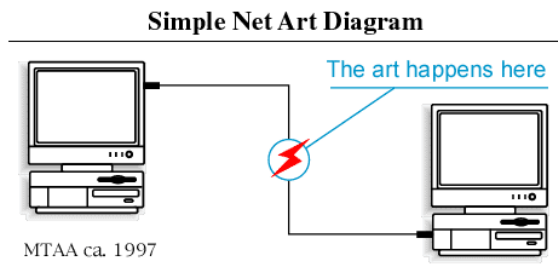
This project feels more like an **experiment**, an open-ended question that leans more toward my scientific interests than my artistic ones. However, art is my language to approach and attempt answering my own questions (apparently!).

For me, **Binary Disc** is more about sitting shoulder-to-shoulder with the audience and observing. It's a project for examining, learning, and taking notes. As I mentioned earlier, it is the culmination of many unanswered questions for me. Are they artistic questions? Maybe or maybe not. But are they scientific questions? Yes, they are.

I am quite sure these questions have already been answered in scientific fields, but as **John Locke** once said, "*The floating of other men's opinions in our brains makes us not one jot the more knowing, though they happen to be true. What in them was science is in us but opiniatrey*" (Locke 1975, 58) Anyway, to avoid getting too personal, I'd rather find the answers for myself than just rely on others' opinions.

I can say that **Binary Disc** is an experiment, but experiments can also be artworks when framed as cultural propositions rather than scientific proofs. Whereas science seeks empirical truth, art here seeks experiential meaning. **Binary Disc** does not test a hypothesis but stages a situation. Its value lies not in what it proves but in what it provokes.

To find the artistic roots of **Binary Disc** I need to do *Reverse Engineering*, due to no direct influence or inspiration of specific artwork that prompted me to execute this idea. Let us, therefore, do the reverse method together to find possible relations between my project and other artworks in its field.



The term “New Media” has a long history throughout the art history, expressing itself in various ways, from Dadaist collage to contemporary Tech Art and Hacktivism, this situation also holds true for Interactive Art, from **Marcel Duchamp’s** works to our contemporary

period. Moving forward in history, we reach the era from which my art originates.

While categories like New Media art, Net Art, and Interactive Art are often presented as separate, their histories are deeply entangled. The **Binary Disc** project does not emerge from a single lineage but precisely from this overlap: it is New Media in its technological ground, Net Art in its database-driven structure, and Interactive Art in its reliance on the audience’s agency. It can therefore be said that **Binary Disc** positions itself in the intersection of those fields.

To proceed further with this reverse engineering, I suggest breaking down **Binary Disc’s** conceptual/functional layers and keywords. Rather than searching for one solid source of influence, each layer reveals a different historical resonance, and together they form a network of relations that situates the work within the broader field.

Identity and anonymity are terms which have been widely searched and been used among Net artists. After a relatively long time of thinking and searching in my brain’s database to see if these two terms can be rooted in something else than (only) a theory, I recalled



*Mouchette.org Home page*

an interesting artwork **Mouchette.org** (it was absolutely a Eureka moment for me! And in this chapter, we are going to have many other Eureka moments as well!). In 1996, a website appeared on the internet, presumed to be the work of an adolescent girl. On the homepage, visitors encounter a close-up of a flower in an unnaturally bright color which flies and ants are crawling on its petals, alongside an image of a girl and the following text: “*my name is mouchette/ I live in Amsterdam/I am nearly 13 years old/ I am an artist*”. As users browsed more and more on the website, they would be suspended between the questions of whether

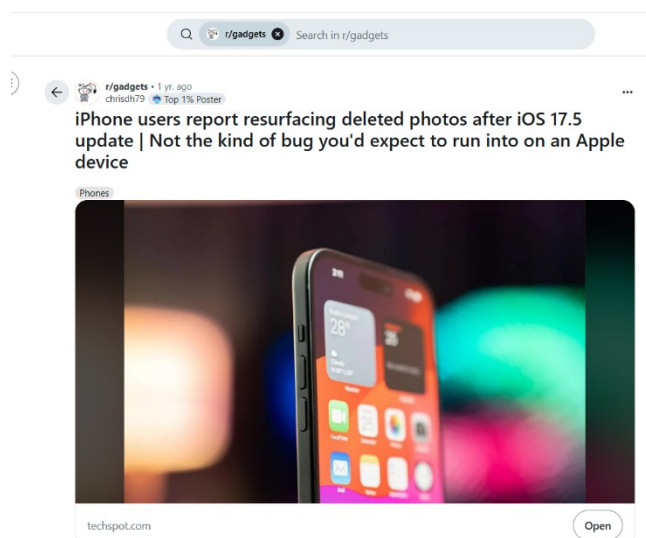
website really belonged to the 13-year-old Mouchette? Or if she was just a fictional character<sup>10</sup>?. The most important thing about this website is that the identity of the person (or artist) behind it has never been revealed.

When I first encountered this website and its concept, I realized how identity can be easily manipulated on the internet with the help of anonymity. This was just one example for me of how anonymity can overshadow your persona (or a replica of you!) in the vast world of the internet. This led to my decision to use anonymity in the **Binary Disc** to see how people take advantage of this possibility as well.

Another "*Eureka!*" moment for me was when I was trying to figure out what made me pay more attention to Instagram (or social media in general) and the enormous amount of content being uploaded. I recall when I was much younger and visited the Tehran's TADAEX in 2016. While exploring, I encountered a piece called ***Keep on Moving*** by **Matin Abedi**. 'Keep on Moving' was a real-time, interactive data visualization project. It displayed a large world map showing the locations of international airports. The system was connected to the Instagram API and constantly scanned for new photos that were geotagged (had their location data attached) at any of the world's airports. When the artwork found a new photo, it would pop up on the map at the exact airport where it was taken. (Sadly, documentation about this large festival was incredibly weak. The organizer's gallery for this event was shut down some years ago, and much information about the festival has been lost.)

The important part of this artwork for me was that the map was updating incredibly fast. It was a pop-up machine gun with no pause; I was staring without blinking. "*If it were just one shot, would it still be fired at this speed?*" I asked myself.

Lastly, about the irreversibility of the contents, let me just show you a screenshot from many reddit threads:



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<sup>10</sup> Mouchette persona at some point is could be related to the Robert Bresson's movie "Mouchette" which about a girl who is raped in a forest and commit a suicide after.

During my searches I also found another interesting work which speaks to permanence as Golden Voyager Record spoke before. **Trevor Paglen**, *The Last Pictures* (2012) served as inspiring moment for me, in this work A micro-etched silicon disc of 100 images was mounted to a satellite launched into geostationary orbit as a time-capsule intended to outlast human civilization. As he said: “*This project was inspired by an image that came from my work tracking secret satellites. Over the course of my work on satellites, I realized that certain kinds of satellites – those in geosynchronous orbits – experience virtually no drag from the atmosphere below and consequently stay in orbit for extremely long amounts of time – millions or billions of years. I realized that it’s entirely possible that one day in the distant or not-too-distant future, when humans are long extinct, a ring of dead satellites will continue circling the planet in perpetuity.*” (Paglen n.d.)

Both discs (Golden Voyager Record and The Last Picture Artifact) were constructed of durable material like gold and copper, this raises a question in me: “*Why not plastics?*” is it not the most recognizable, ubiquitously produced material of modern human civilization?



*The Last Pictures Artifact, 2013*

The vulnerability of internet-based artworks, which I mentioned previously, was the most important factor leading me to create the physical disc. For instance, **Douglas Davis's** *The World's First Collaborative Sentence* (1994) is recognized as a classic in Internet Art. Launched at Lehman College, the project was a continuous, collaborative work (a "sentence without a period") where the public could submit diverse multimedia content, like words, images, sound, and web links, using both online and traditional mail methods. (The World's First Collaborative Sentence 2025) **Binary Disc** is conceptually close to this work, specifically in its aim to create a collective memory. However, what drew my attention to Davis's piece was when I found out **Whitney Museum of art's** later tried to resurrect it in 2012, they found it broken by link-rot and legacy code, effectively frozen and partially erased. This led me to ask: “*is there any way that I can preserve at least part of the Binary Disc*” And this is how the use of a physical disc in my art installation was born.

Another Highlighted moment for me was when I heard about *Data Shadow* (2015) by **Mark Farid**. visitors entered an 8 × 2 m shipping container one at a time, were asked to sign a consent form, joined the container's Wi-Fi, and then the installation projected a Realtime

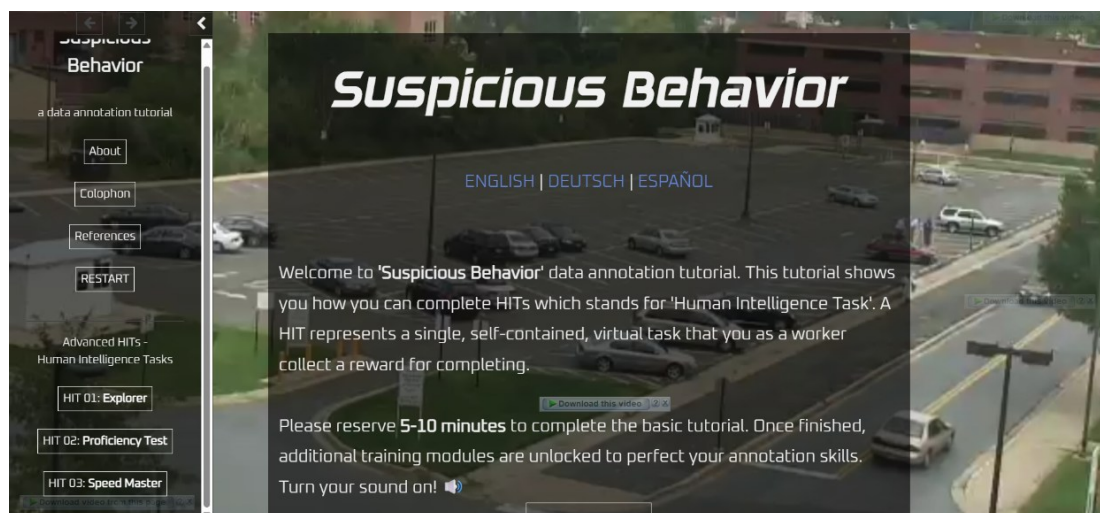
“digital shadow” of the participant, on one wall of the container, filled with characters from recent texts/WhatsApp messages and, on the opposite wall, a collage of images taken from the participant’s phone. When the visitor left, the collected info was deleted.



Data Shadow (2015) by Mark Farid, All Saints Gardens, Cambridge

Well, **Binary disc** and Data Shadow might seem different on the first impression and from technical gestures aspects, yet they intersect in their critique of digital systems and the way they structure human experience; and, most important think that they share almost the same audience experience, Mark Farid’s Data Shadow and my **Binary Disc** project both place visitors inside systems that quietly but powerfully shape their experience. In Data Shadow, stepping into a shipping container and joining Wi-Fi suddenly exposes private photos and messages, showing how easily our hidden lives can be taken and displayed. In my project, visitors receive a binary code that seems meaningless at first but immediately changes what they can access and how they move through the space. While Farid’s work makes people vulnerable through forced visibility, mine makes them powerless through restriction. What connects the two is the way both works transform a simple action entering a space into a confrontation with unseen forces that decide how much freedom or control a person really has.

*Suspicious Behavior (2020)* by artist duo **Linda Kronman and Andreas Zingerle (aka. KairUs)** is also an important source of inspiration for me. In this work, the media art duo place visitors directly in the role of a data annotator. The participant works through a fictional training module, learning to label surveillance clips as ‘suspicious’ or ‘normal.’ This process lays bare the hidden human labor, normative biases, and classificatory rules that underpin seemingly "intelligent" computer vision systems.



My work and Suspicious Behavior might seem different in technical gesture (again!), but I think the similarity unfolds on the agency procedural of users. Both works place participants in constrained roles inside a system whose rules dramatically shape their perception and choices. Both projects force visitors to confront how digital infrastructures - whether a moderation pipeline or a one-upload/irreversible archive - produce moral and social outcomes. In both the content can be translated as behavioral data. in Suspicious Behavior this data leads to a fictional machine learning outcome. but in **Binary Disc**, it is to observe how people react afforded anonymity.

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## Conclusion: This Is the End, or Just a Draft?

*“Where there is power, there is resistance”*

*Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality (Foucault 1978, 95)*

**Y**es, I agree. My view of human behavior is (a bit!) pessimistic, and to be honest, most of my ideas for how people would interact with **Binary Disc** have not **yet** come to fruition. Anyway, as **Alfred Korzybski**, Polish American philosopher, says: *“the map is not the territory”*. (Korzybski 1994 , 17) Also, for several reasons that I will bring up next, it is better not to draw a single conclusion based on the available and obtained data on the platform. Simply because people consider it as a form of art (and themselves as audience) not as a scientific experiment (or themselves as experiment volunteer). but I think the reasons for this can be sought in the following: (as I mentioned, this is a kind of experiment for me and now I want to analyze the reasons behind people’s interaction with **Binary Disc**.)

- **Controlled crowd vs. random crowd**

Unlike Zimbardo’s prison experiment (or classic deindividuation studies where strangers are lumped together), the **Binary Disc**’s participants weren’t a fully random population. They were a **self-selected, art-show audience** with tickets in their hands for entering the upload process. That means they already carried some sense of **shared context, cultural capital, and artistic normativity** into the platform. They likely understood the "rules of the game" as being experimental, creative, and non-destructive.

- **Art frame as normative boundary**

The very fact that this took place within an **artistic/curated frame** shaped expectation. People likely perceived their upload as a gesture within an art project, which has norms of experimentation, wit, or seriousness. In SIDE terms: the **salient social identity** wasn’t “I am anonymous so I can break rules” but rather “I am a participant in this art experiment, so I should play along meaningfully.”

```
TuOlk ...Täällä ei ole deletenappia, kuten ei ajassakaan. Olkoon
tulevaisuutatulevaisuus valoisampi maailmasaailmassa kuin nykyisyys!
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- **Absence of incentive for deviance**

Many experiments that show vandalism or harassment under anonymity which we've talked before also involve conditions of **frustration, power asymmetry, or norm ambiguity**. In **Binary Disc**, there was little to gain from user "disruptiveness/trolling". no audience reward, no competitive advantage, no chaos incentive. That reduces the likelihood of deviance.

So, *is the "dark side" always dormant unless something activates it?* at some point yes, I think, most people are risk-averse, socially conditioned, and seek belonging. To deviate, they need to see that someone else has **broken the window** first or that breaking it will be rewarded. Once that precedent exists, the barrier drops for others, and escalation becomes likely. Also, the artistic frame already sets a strong boundary: people assume they should contribute something 'valid' (The term Valid is also vague I know, who can credit something to be valid?) for the project. Without someone breaking that and being rewarded (by attention, visibility, or even your encouragement), the group norm which I mentioned earlier stays intact.

It's worth mentioning that most of the uploaded content on the **Binary Disc** did not resemble what one might expect from a last photograph or a treasured memento. Like the kind of final, carefully preserved image that carries the full weight of memory (classic!). The uploaded texts were full of spelling mistakes and redundant words and the number of photos of themselves, and their loved ones were very small and limited. Well, I think these are the conclusion points regarding **Binary Disc**. My guess was that in the face of the discussed features and existing limitations, the audience and users would be divided into two categories.

- The first category: Those who upload intensely personal, serious, and lasting content.
- The second category: Those who, in a way, revolt against the limitations, rebel, and leave behind intentionally random, ironic, or absurd content. They are, in a sense, rebelling and resisting the heavy weight of singularity, permanence, and "the last."

To my surprise, the second category clearly includes more people.

Let me elaborate on this issue further.

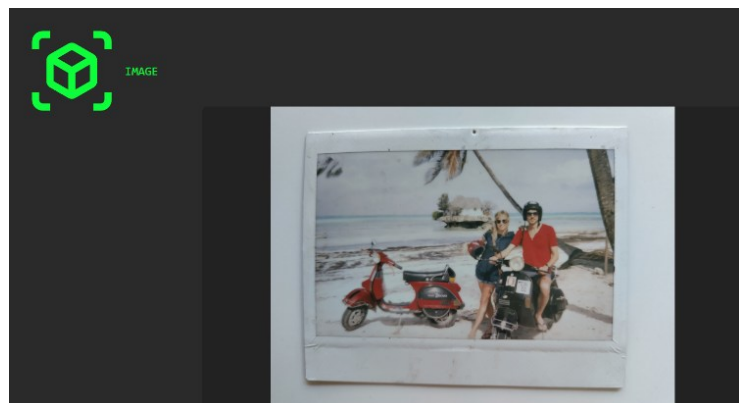
## The Rise of Randomness in the Face of Permanence

Since most of the content was so far removed from the classic and conceivable way of dealing with unique content meant to last forever, people, instead of participating in a ceremony of leaving behind a cultural/historical and readable version of themselves, leaned more towards vague, ironic, and strange content. This can be resonated with what Philosopher **Michel Foucault** calls “*counter-conducts*” practices that resist prescribed subjectivities. The **Binary Disc**’s platform prescribed the subject position of archival subject (one who leaves an immutable trace). Participants partially refused that position, instead performing randomness to contest its seriousness.

One element that I was surprised by in my conversations with people about **Binary Disc** was the significant age gap observed in their content choices. Those who were hesitant, doubtful, and uncertain about what unique element to upload were primarily 35 years of age or above. Conversely, those who immediately uploaded content to the platform were mostly in the 20 to 35 age range. (interesting, right?)

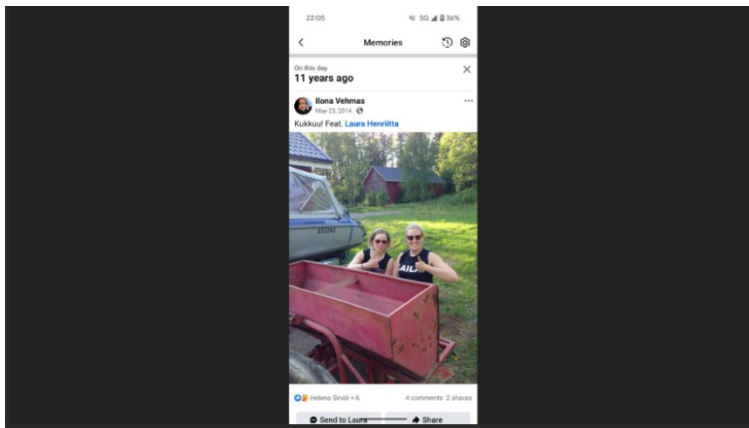
## The Invisibility of Binary Codes

As I said before, the number of photos people uploaded of themselves, or their loved ones, was very limited. This issue could relate back to the binary codes. They are profoundly anonymous. They are deindividualized and separate the author from the text's context. Your content is submerged in a sea of numbers and other random content, and you won't even have access to it anymore. For this reason, the photo loses its readability or its indexicality. Meaning, the photo did not belong to any identity that could be referenced. If you encounter the content of people who have uploaded a photo of themselves on this platform, you'll understand what I mean better. In the end, your personal image no longer belongs to you, but to an unknown system that gives equal validity to a text about a morning bowel movement and your photo. It's understandable that this could evoke a feeling of discomfort for some. Furthermore,



the irreversible nature and lack of re-access to the person's photo will multiply this burden. This could be a response for people to expose themselves less to exploitation or manipulation.

Of course, one could also imagine that for some, a selfie is too raw, too accessible, and too vulnerable to be part of an artistic project. Or it's not playful and conceptual enough. (Now that we don't know who is going to know, let's have more control over what should be known.) I also question myself:” *do people upload their content for themselves or for others?*”



*In comparison to the previous photo, Ilona Vehmas tried her/his/their best to bypass the lack of indexicality by uploading the screen shot from a Facebook page with username. But I am wondering was this image uploaded by the same person in the image or not?*

## The Apocalyptic Narrative

The most fundamental request of **Binary disc** was to think about your content as material which is going to be the last thing that will remain of you in the digital memory. I was hoping that this classic framework would, at least in theory, increase a person's sensitivity toward uploading content. But, in practice, another story has unfolded. I won't say that I was disappointed, but I was hoping for something serious. (Maybe next time, I'm still in the phase of practicing art!) - I also was hoping for more 'vandalism' throughout people's reaction and am still considering whether **Binary Disc** reached this point or not-. I believe that people, instead of taking this sensitivity seriously, have had an ironic, in-the-moment, and superficial interaction with it. This is something that can be discussed within the theoretical framework of Slovenian philosopher **Slavoj Žižek** describes as "*cynical distance*": contemporary subjects often engage with ideological frames (in this case, the apocalypse story) not by rejecting them, but by inhabiting them ironically. (Zizek 2008) Participants played along with the idea of the final archive, but their contributions mock the very gravity of that scenario.

I comeCôme mhfenctttt

# Final Words

**I** intend to end this relatively long text with a section from **Alexander Solzhenitsyn's** book, "*Cancer Ward*":

*As every man goes through life he fills in a number of forms for the record, each containing a number of questions.... There are thus hundreds of little threads radiating from every man, millions of threads in all. If these threads were suddenly to become visible, the whole sky would look like a spider's web, and if they materialized as rubber bands, buses, trams and even people would all lose the ability to move, and the wind would be unable to carry torn-up newspapers or autumn leaves along the streets of the city. They are not visible, they are not material, but every man is constantly aware of their existence.... Each man, permanently aware of his own invisible threads, naturally develops a respect for the people who manipulate the threads. (Solzhenitsyn 1974, 192)*

These threads are the data that are increasing day by day by us. A thread that is categorized and coded as zeros and ones. Today, the existing mechanism in virtual and technological communication has become so close to us that we feel its presence less than ever. Instead, it is better to look more carefully at the **Brave New World**<sup>11</sup> that the internet and virtual space have created. This project was a pause to look again, with a bit of distance, at the process of creating and consuming information in the virtual space.

I hope this text has ultimately created more questions than it has answered. I suspect that sometimes intensifying a problem might be the best way to find a better solution. And now, I invite you to come and sit next to me, shoulder-to-shoulder, to observe this horizon of uncertainties.

Hello, I am heppy, ohheppa .... it is not possible to make mistake, and change the content. I love it.... just one and forever, as a marriage, or to be child, or to be young, or to be, or to die. Hug you

---

<sup>11</sup> Title of the book by **Aldous Huxley**

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