Daniel Moreno Roldán

Banal Poop

In collaboration with @atractive_smithers

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The term 'shitposting' is used in the digital sphere to describe a type of content that at first glance seems irrelevant, absurd or crudely crafted – some would say 'coarse'. Memes, collages, self-animation, crude renderings, extreme and sometimes arbitrary mash-ups may seem like a lot of entropic noise to the untrained eye. It is a broad and massive artistic expression that shapes much of the online social traffic. Its antecedents are most likely Dadaism and the extensive underground DIY fanzine culture of the latter half of the 20th century. In fact, I wonder if shitposting is a kind of archetype, for if we go back to ancient Roman writers, figures like Martial can already be found complaining about trolls and plagiarists graffitiing city walls with their verses. In one of the first online manifestations, the Usenet network created by Tom Truscott and Jim Ellis in 1980, shitposting turned what was intended to be a decentralised bulletin board system for academic purposes into a chaotic, ungovernable space where, among other things, mafia-like groups of users spent their time by posting messages that simply said 'meow' for the simple chaotic pleasure of doing so.

In this exhibition, Daniel Moreno Roldán conducts an exercise in digital archaeology to show how certain banal content typical of social media greatly surpasses the merely chaotic. How it was (and still is) widely used as a tool for social organisation and activism, how it has in turn been assimilated by the corporate world, and how this seemingly innocuous flow of information has largely shaped the ideological imaginary of younger generations.

Shitposting is undoubtedly the artistic universe with the highest production volume per second. Each instant generates thousands or millions of posts with some kind of artistic-political dilettante vocation that are rarely considered by the more selective art world. At the heart of the exhibition is an audiovisual installation made up of 'obsolete' TV sets and a central projection that synchronises a selection of banal viral content with a set of animated pieces featuring curious creatures acting as guides: a small plant, a patient undergoing psychological therapy as well as some other surprising characters. All the screens are in the 9:16 format typical of mobile phones, the natural environment of banal poop. This little plant and this psychological patient present the themes and examples of them can later be seen on the screens.

Visitors will notice that the themes have been classified according to a specific taxonomy. There is, for example, a block entitled 'La banalidad en tiempos de la desesperación' (Banality in times of despair), which explores the practice of shitposting for social purposes on TikTok. Or the block entitled 'La reivindicación como tendencia' (Protest demands as a trend), which examines the danger of platforms monetising activism and swallowing it into the system, deactivating it. These section titles are presented on screen with a design that recalls certain advertising campaigns by the MediaMarkt company, which has appropriated the aesthetic of shitposting in order to promote its products more effectively on social media.

What we therefore have is a narrated anthology of shitposting (in strictly etymological terms, 'a selection of flowers') that sheds light on multiple aspects: its scathing, sarcastic, virulent, irreverent nature. But above all, the exhibition sheds light on the key function of shitposting as a political tool. Although digital activism born in the 4Chan forum through abstract groups such as Anonymous has used shitposting to carry out actions

against corporations or situations of abuse of power, the far right and large corporations are seemingly the ones that have best understood how this type of content can be used to produce attractive, subliminal propaganda. In fact, conservative ideology propagates its ideas perhaps more effectively and pervasively than elsewhere with the slogan 'ultra-right ultra-fun' and through shitposting.

At the same time, the aim is to reflect on the abysmal distance and disconnection that exist between the standards of contemporary art and the valuation of this type of massive free art in its fair measure. It is for this same reason that Daniel Moreno Roldán wanted to justify and elevate this form of telluric creation. Not only as a researcher and archaeologist, but also as a creator, given that it can be noted in his curriculum how, over the years, he has gone from working on purely contemporary art projects to producing animation and amusing videos for networks (which, as we can see here, eventually end up being contemporary art projects in their own right). In a context in which some 50% of the content that existed online in 2013 has already disappeared, this exhibition is relevant as a starting point for an archaeology of the digital in its most popular dimension, to be staged before hard drives lose their integrity or corporate servers decide to erase historical data.

The presence in the room of the collective @atractive_smithers allows us to observe in situ how this kind of content is manufactured, whose potentially political and at the same time dilettantish vocation becomes manifest (I think 'dilettantish' is a precise, happy word, even necessary in this era of hatred and censorship). The @atractive_smithers group is made up of people who organise themselves through WhatsApp groups and proliferate memes that they post en masse on Instagram. The group's content ranges from the most hermetic inside joke to silly mockery of political leaders in the Barcelona context. They have set up their studio in one of the chapels for this exhibition and will be working in front of the public throughout this exhibition, making postcards and fanzines and simulating the usual creative and collective dynamics that they carry out in their daily work.

A pirate radio station has also been set up in the room to be used for FM broadcasting of two public activities: a podcast with Estela Ortiz and Project UNA, as well as a new episode of Miguel Noguera's *Infrashow*.

The same use of radio and cathode ray tube TV sets seeks to connect with a position of degrowth (simple, self-managed, decentralised technology), as well as to offer a thesis, an inclination of the author for the recovery and intensification of activism through these 'apparently' harmless media. I say 'apparently' because shitposting-directed propaganda has demonstrated a decisive power of transformation at both the political and entropic levels. Also striking is the contrast between the turbo-capitalist, accelerationist dimension in which shitposting is embedded and the more punk, DIY aspect of this exhibition, which uses quasi-traditional, slow means of communication, such as a radio station built with obsolete materials from other decades.

In the era of the proliferation of the dead Internet, dominated by bots and AI agents, it is necessary to preserve and condense the human spaces of resistance, given that their effect and power on society today is much more pervasive than their ethereal dimension suggests. Finally, the ironic, joyful dimension of Daniel Moreno Roldán's art has to be celebrated. Far from being opaque and pretentious, this exhibition information sheet cancels itself out as soon as visitors enter further into the exhibition and its multifaceted, banal content.

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Writer

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