

“Tumbling Down the Rabbit Hole: Art Criticism on Social Networks and Internet Freedom”

Abstract

Since 2012, the New York-based curator and critic Brian Droitcour has been using his account on the online platform Yelp to write exhibition and art reviews. In reaction, Orit Gat analysed some questions about Yelp and its potential use as an art-criticism tool. By taking Droitcour as an example, Gat seemed to be encouraging the reader to view the Internet as a place where one could find new ways to write about art, opening up to a larger number of writers and a more diverse audience and range of styles. This article argues to the contrary: the online and social-media experience has been personalized to such an extent that exposure to diverse views and writing has become increasingly difficult. A Czech translation of this essay has appeared in the paper edition of the journal.

Keywords

art criticism – social networks – social media – contemporary art – internet

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TUMBLING DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE: ART CRITICISM ON SOCIAL NETWORKS AND INTERNET FREEDOM

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1 You can read his reviews here: <http://tcour.yelp.com> (accessed 24 Jun 2016)

2 Orit GAT, "Art Criticism in the Age of Yelp", *Rhizome*, 12 Nov 2013, <http://rhizome.org/editorial/2013/nov/12/art-criticism-age-yelp/> (accessed 24 Jun 2016).

Since 2012, New York-based curator and critic Brian Droitcour has been using his account on the online platform Yelp to write exhibition and art venue reviews.¹ This caused a reaction: on November 12, 2013, Orit Gat published "Art Criticism in the Age of Yelp" on the Internet-based journal *Rhizome*. In her paper, Gat analysed some issues about Yelp and its potential use as an art criticism tool. In taking Brian Droitcour's writing as an initial example – and, consequently, going through its deontological problems – she wrote:

In this time of "quiet crisis" of criticism, the standing question is whether Yelp is a solution or a problem. [...] I suggest a similar expansion of the practice of writing to include Yelp [...]. To say that Yelp democratizes criticism is too popular a term – and too problematic a wording when discussing an economy of free labor and the large corporation that benefits from it – but by changing around who is in and who is out of the reviewing game, it does shake up the structure of criticism.²

By taking Droitcour's case as an example, Gat seemed to be encouraging the reader to view the Internet as a place of dialogue; a universe still partially intact

where one could find new ways to write about art, opening up to a larger number of writers and a more diverse audience and possibilities of styles. The social platform as a place where to publish, mentioned to inject some “new blood” into the “regular” art criticism world, seems to be an inspiring idea indeed. However, it leads one to question if Droitcour’s case is unique. Considering the whole writing production about criticism online (without entering into the discourse about the style of writing), is the use of Yelp to write about art emblematic? And, if yes, why and how is the use of a social platform such as Yelp different? To answer these questions we have to look for existing alternative ways to write about art online; however, before starting I’d like to specify that by “alternative ways” I mean writings that take place on the Web that have no correlations with current traditional print media, e.g. the Internet versions of *Frieze*, *Artforum* or *Art Press*, or online magazines such as *e-flux* whose structure is based on a frame of reference derived from traditional journalism. This is in line with Gat’s articulation, which focuses on new social platforms.

There are indeed four privileged channels for art criticism on the Internet: blogs, forums, communities and social networks. The most common way to write online is to create a blog, which is an informational and discussion website that can have one author or multiple contributors who publish its content anonymously or not. *ArtFCity* (www.artfcity.com), *Art Sucks* (www.artsucks.com) and *Art Ravels* by Linnea West (linneawest.com/blog)³ are examples of art blogs. Along with blogs, one can find Internet forums, websites where the users can discuss different threads through posted, fixed messages. Forums can be topic-specific (progressive rock music, Japan, visual art, etc.)⁴ or community-related (Harvard University Forum,

³ Jane JANE CZKO, “5 NYC Art Blogs You Should Be Reading”, *Huffington Post*, 26 Sept 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/09/26/nyc-artbloggers-5-blogs-_n_3997011.html (accessed 24 Jun 2016).

⁴ *ProgArchives.Com*, <http://www.progarchives.com/forum> (accessed 24 Jun 2016); *japan-guide.com*, <http://www.japan-guide.com/forum/quedisplay.html> (accessed 24 Jun 2016); *thegradface.com* <http://forum.thegradcafe.com/forum/79-visual> (accessed 24 Jun 2016).

Berlin Expats Forum, etc.)⁵. Community-related forums are similar to web communities; however, communities often have a more complex structure of interactions between members, e.g. vote-systems giving more or less visibility to the topics and comments considered more or less relevant by the users. Therefore, users' overall judgement defines the visibility of a theme: this is the case of Reddit (www.reddit.com).

Web communities such as Reddit share some common points with popular social networks such as Facebook, Yelp or TripAdvisor, despite the fact that almost all Reddit users have nicknames for "posting", whereas social networks aim to avoid the anonymity of those who ask for their services. In addition, social networks are online services whose software interacts directly with the user's computers, allowing a personalised experience for everyone; social networks claim connectivity between the users as their strongest asset.

The social network Yelp was born in 2004 as an informational email-based website reviewing local services. It was founded by Jeremy Stoppelman and Russell Simmons, who were in their late 20s at the time and strongly believed that "the average Joe or Jane is the best critic".⁶ Stoppelman and Simmons wanted to cover the need of having some insider tips for someone new to a city or a specific geographical area, having their idea based on their personal experience after moving to San Francisco. Re-designed in 2005, Yelp's popularity exploded in 2006, making it today one of the world's leading references among platforms of its kind.

Following this quick overview of the possibilities to write online, one could conclude that today a large number of options exist to approach the discussion about art on the Web. Yelp is only one of them. How then would its use by an art critic be different?

⁵ Harvard Alumni Association Discussion Forum, <https://post.harvard.edu/olc/membersonly/HAA/dgroups/showMain.jsp> (accessed 25 Aug 2016); *InterNations Berlin Community*, <http://www.internations.org/berlin-expats/forum> (accessed 24 Jun 2016).

⁶ Heather MADDAN, "Casting the Net: Yelp Is on the Way", *SFGate*, 18 Jun 2006, <http://www.sfgate.com/living/article/CASTING-THE-NETYelp-is-on-the-way-2494549.php> (accessed 24 Jun 2016).

Let's consider Brian Droitcour's use of Yelp. A writer, translator and curator based in New York City, Droitcour started to use his Yelp account to review shows and art venues in February 2012. As he explained to Orit Gat,⁷ it all apparently started without any serious purposes: "I was talking to someone at an opening about the Ai Weiwei show at Mary Boone Gallery," Gat reported Droitcour explaining to her, "and we were trying to figure out if it was still open. When I Googled it, one of the top results was a Yelp review and I was like, 'Oh my god, I really want to review galleries on Yelp.'"⁸ The joke has so far turned into a four-year long project, and during this time Droitcour has been reviewing 72 art galleries, 21 museums and several other non-profit spaces and unconventional art venues (shown in his Yelp account under the category "Art & Entertainment").⁹ The reasons that apparently made him pursue this project are the public's quick accessibility of the review, as well as greater stylistic flexibility in the writing process. Gat reported "As an art writer, when you write a review at times you feel like it's just giving the gallery something to publicize, another page in the binder, another line on the CV for the artist. I was just super frustrated with reviews,' Droitcour explains. Yelp reviews, generally speaking, are not included in such binders."¹⁰

According to Droitcour, Yelp would then allow more freedom for the critic, being able to use the social network as a new place for experimenting with content, style and the public. Ultimately, the answer to the question "what makes writing about art on Yelp different?" seems then to rely on the social network's very articulation: the user-generated content constantly expands the platform's material and builds its virtual structure, making it a living, organic system. This ever moving, interacting creature is then

⁷ GAT, "Art Criticism in the Age of Yelp".

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ All these data are from Droitcour's Yelp account, visible here: <http://tcour.com/index.php/present/yelp/> (accessed 24 Jun 2016).

¹⁰ GAT, "Art Criticism in the Age of Yelp".

the perfect place to reach quickly and efficiently the largest audience possible, allowing an instant response to any kind of discussion. The reverse of this incredible machine is the impossibility, for the ordinary user, to keep track of or research its overall material. As we will see, this fact might then disprove Gat's theory about the use of Yelp as a way of "shaking up the structure of art criticism by changing around who's in and who's out of the reviewing game". Not only this: it opens up other deontological questions about writing on the Internet, especially those related to problems of its archive: how to keep track of everything that is produced online? How to structurally archive its elements and study this material in order to follow art criticism's historiography and knowledge? Since the very beginning of the digital art age some artists have been trying to answer these questions. Archiving the Internet is in fact at the core of the work of net pioneer Olia Lialina, who since the late 1990s has collected, organised and studied early Internet pages. Lialina's Internet archaeology emphasises the immortality of data, yet her work seems a Sisyphean task due to the incalculable size of the Internet. Another example of an attempt to archive the Web is the initiative "404 page not found", a website collecting old pages. It started in 2009 with the purpose to uncover websites created between 1994 and 2001 which had rarely been updated since. A more recent example: in 2013, Kenneth Goldsmith, launched the initiative "Printing out the Internet", from an original idea of Aaron Swartz, aiming both goals: archive and accessibility.

Indeed, there are some initiatives willing to deal with the conservation and studies of the Internet; I am not stating that data are impossible to save and store. However, when I point out the impossibility

to really archive the Internet I am questioning the existing methodologies because collecting them in closed servers seems to me to fundamentally differ from archiving them for further studies. There is in fact a problem of accessibility: vast data analyses have so far been made and used more by private corporations rather than by Internet historians or in technology studies. As for its definition, an archive is a collection of documents of historical interest that are available for research, the notion of “archiving the Internet” would imply first, that everything that is online has a historical interest and second, that there are common, defined agreements to organise and study it. Therefore, even though it is actually possible to save data, there is still a lack of satisfactory results in building an archive of the Internet, nor is there a well-developed database for art criticism writings online – if such thing is possible, for the Internet has constantly been growing and expanding for thirty years and continues to do so.

A second aspect to consider, when thinking about the use of social network as Gat intends, is the question related to online professionalism (this touches on multiple problems, such as who is writing, and for whom? What is written and how? How are writers remunerated? Why are they actually being paid if there are a lot of volunteers spontaneously posting review material that can be published and discussed?). All these questions are related to the fact that the Internet is (more or less) open to everyone and everywhere. That means that there are a lot of voices online. Yet, this plurality is not organised in a generally agreed ruling system, like a democratic system rules a specific country – even though this could errantly lead to the mere illusion of democracy in its multiplicity of the expression of ideas. In fact,

11 Cait MUNRO, “Jerry Saltz Got Banned from Facebook”, *ArtnetNews*, 4 Mar 2015, <https://news.artnet.com/artworld/jerry-saltz-got-banned-from-facebook-273607> (accessed 24 Jun 2016); Randy KENNEDY, “Jerry Saltz, New York Magazine Art Critic, Suspended from Facebook”, *ArtsBeat Blog*, *New York Times*, 4 Mar 2015, <http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/03/04/jerry-saltz-new-york-magazine-art-critic-suspended-fromfacebook/> (accessed 24 Jun 2016).

12 Cait MUNRO “Jerry Saltz Wins National Magazine Award for Commentary”, *artnet News*, 3 Feb 2015, <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/jerrysaltz-wins-national-magazineaward-for-commentary-241175> (accessed 24 Jun 2016); Andrew M. GOLDSTEIN, “Jerry Saltz on His (Brief) Exile From Facebook, and the Virtues of Medieval Torture Porn”, *Artspace*, 10 Mar 2015, http://www.artspace.com/magazine/interviews_features/qa/jerry-saltz-on-facebookand-medieval-porn-52674 (accessed 24 Jun 2016).

13 Josh DZIEZA, “Art Critic Jerry Saltz Suspended from Facebook”, *The Verge*, 4 Mar 2015, <http://www.theverge.com/2015/3/4/8151355/artcritic-jerry-saltz-suspended-from-facebook> (accessed 24 Jun 2016); Jerry SALTZ, “I Got Kicked off of Facebook for Posting Images of Medieval Art”, *Vulture*, 6 Mar 2015, <http://www.vulture.com/2015/03/facebook-banart.html> (accessed 24 Jun 2016).

one often forgets that the Internet is a tool based on mathematics. It is an instrument regulated and controlled by national laws and international agreements between governments, corporations and users. Yet, its use as a tool of criticism has not been limited to Droitcour and Yelp: Facebook too has been subject to a large discussion on this matter. To explain this, let's consider the Jerry Saltz vs. Facebook's case.

On the 4th of March 2015, New York Magazine art critic Jerry Saltz was banned from Facebook.¹¹ According to his platform timeline, Saltz joined the social network in 2008; since then he has been using his Facebook page to post images, comments and reviews that could be perceived as provocative to some audience.¹² The Facebook ban lasted for a week, during which the international online press examined Saltz's case, wondering why he had been blocked from accessing his social profile or interacting with other community members. It is still unclear why the ban was imposed; however, on the very same day Saltz commented on the event with a message from his Twitter account:

To all the purity police who complained to Facebook that my Medieval + Ancient pics were "sexist", "abusive" and "misogynist": congratulations!! You got me axed from Facebook. You pay in blood, but not your own. XXO.¹³

Furthermore, this case opened a Pandora's box of online comments about freedom of expression within social platforms: a lot of online writing about this case consisted of more or less justified accusations against Facebook and its censorship policies.¹⁴ As the debate

¹¹ Bojan MARIC, "Why Was Jerry Saltz Banned from Facebook?", *WideWalls*, Mar 2015, <http://www.widewalls.ch/why-was-jerry-saltzbanned-from-facebook/> (accessed 24 Jun 2016); "Jerry Saltz on Medieval Art, Censorship and Facebook", *Phaidon*, 16 Mar 2015, <http://de.phaidon.com/agenda/art/articles/2015/march/16/jerry-saltz-on-medieval-artcensorship-and-facebook/> (accessed 24 Jun 2016); Emily GREENHOUSE, "Facebook Can't Tell the Difference Between Art and Porn", *Bloomberg Politics*, 12 Mar 2015, <http://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2015-03-12/facebookcan-t-tell-the-differencebetween-art-and-porn> (accessed 24 Jun 2016).

reached dimensions increasingly distant from the truth, Saltz posted a public announcement when he got his Facebook account back, stating again what he claimed from the very beginning of the *querelle*: on March 22nd, he wrote (on Facebook) that “he didn’t run afoul of Facebook’s ‘community standards’, that Facebook had informed him personally that he hadn’t violated any community standards nor was it the fault of any mysterious algorithm of censorship. Actually, “Facebook received so many complaints” about Saltz’s posted material from his “friends” and followers that the company had to kick him out.**15**

The Jerry Saltz vs. Facebook case is indeed emblematic of our perception of the social networks virtual world. Let’s keep in mind that the real causes of Saltz’s ban are still unclear since Facebook never released an official statement explaining the ban and all that we have is Jerry Saltz description. According to a 2014 article of *Wired*, the complex network of Facebook images’ monitoring system works quite efficiently in recognising and erasing from its database violent or pornographic images and videos thank to three levels of control: The first shield is done by mathematics: algorithms automatically detect potentially “dangerous” images, selecting them and sending them to the censorship centre. The machine isn’t yet sophisticated enough to judge if the picture of a naked woman has been made with pornographic intent or artistic purpose. That’s why the second protection level is given by human labourers that sort the selected images and actually cancel or allow them on the platform. The third level of control is done by the users themselves. If Facebook receives a considerable amount of protests regarding the material posted by a user, the company has the right to evict that particular user from its services for a restricted or prolonged period.**16**

15 “For the many who are posting stories and images about how FACEBOOK censors images: you who think that I too ran afoul of FACEBOOK ‘community standards’ and had my account deleted: you who think I am a soldier against FACEBOOK’s censoriousness around images: You got the whole thing wrong. 1. I did NOT run afoul of FACEBOOK’s ‘community standards’. 2. Facebook very specifically informed that I did NOT violate FACEBOOK ‘community standards’. 3. I violated ART WORLD ‘community standards’, which are far more conservative and puritanical and stringent than a company like FACEBOOK. 4. Facebook received so many complaints about so many of my images from MY Facebook ‘friends’ and followers, that I got kicked off Facebook. 5. That is why I am deleting all these continuous posts about Facebook’s outrageously conservative policies about posted images. 6. Facebook is far more open than the art world. 7. Smiling Facebook friend and follower faces tell lies; and I got proof...” (From Jerry Saltz Facebook account, posted on 22 Mar 2015).

16 Adrian CHEN, “The Laborers Who Keep Dick Pics and Beheadings out of Your Facebook Feed”, *Wired*, 2014, issue 23, <http://www.wired.com/2014/10/content-moderation/> (accessed 24 Jun 2016); *idem.*, “Inside Facebook’s Outsourced Anti-Porn and Gore Brigade, Where ‘Camel Toes’ Are More Offensive than ‘Crushed Heads’”, *Gawker*, 2012, issue 16, <http://gawker.com/5885714/inside-facebooks-outsourcedanti-porn-and-gore-brigadewhere-camel-toes-are-more-offensive-than-crushed-heads> (accessed 24 Jun 2016).

Jerry Saltz was banned because of the third level of control, according to his own statement. Furthermore, he pledged that “Facebook is far more open than the art world”.¹⁷ As a matter of fact, the public image of Zuckerberg’s company benefitted from Saltz’s ban impact in public opinion. In public discussions, companies like Facebook can often be blamed for only caring about their own interests when taking decisions. Stating that the red flag was raised by users implicitly contradicted this impression: it wasn’t the CEO dictator that banned Saltz, because Saltz was publicly judged by the people, the majority of whom apparently decided to kick him out. “Internet fanatics”, as Evgeny Morozov called them,¹⁸ praise the power of the multitude online as a new and pure form of democracy, which is indeed problematic, although this will not be discussed in here. What is interesting for us is that in Saltz case, the multiplicity of online voices (if, after all things considered, it was really the cause of his ban) showed the limits of this system, in which the figure and the authority of the expert is taken over by the blind magnitude of the crowd. Simultaneously, the fact that Saltz never blamed Facebook for his ban and the fact that he was re-admitted to the platform put Facebook on the side of freedom of speech.

There is also something else that needs to be pointed out: Facebook, as many other online companies, makes its profits through users, increasing its income by the number of interactions on its servers. By allowing Jerry Saltz to post and exchange with his many followers and friends, Facebook increases the platform’s users’ traffic, making it more valuable on the market for its owners and administrators. It was then in Facebook’s interest not to lose such a prolific and active member as Saltz.

Another example of Facebook’s marketing policy regarding its apparent engagement in plurality consists of Facebook Instant Articles. Facebook Instant Articles

¹⁷ SALTZ, “I got kicked off of Facebook”.

¹⁸ Evgeny MOROZOV, *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom*, New York: Public Affairs 2011.

are – for now – only related to the *New York Times* and *National Geographic*. The idea is very simple: this service offers the possibility for the publisher to write directly their articles within the social network, without redirecting the reader to an external source (as it is the case today). Facebook Instant Articles promotes a standardisation of the publishing format, a quicker uploading and a faster consume of the news by the users. Again, this is in line with more traffic on the platform, meaning more interactions and therefore increased income. New York Times and National Geographic publishers and writers are therefore no longer interacting with the social network as independent forces, while using the platform to augment the traffic to their own pages: instead, they become generators of content themselves within the global platform.¹⁹

¹⁹ Daniele RIELLI, “Se Facebook si mangia tutto”, *Quit the Doner*, 31 Jul 2015, <http://www.quitthedoner.com/se-facebook-si-mangia-tutto/> (accessed 24 Jun 2016).

This project, even if it is presently in its embryonic state, could eventually lead to the global annihilation of external sources, which today allow the reader to have greater access to different points of views: independent sources are bricks in the construction of individualistic and original ideas which are necessary for a sane critical debate. Ultimately, independent sources are already hard to find since we are experiencing a Web that is based on a predictive system.

The predictive system is a system of algorithms designed to suggest products, activities, information sources, discussion groups, etc.; it is also used by search engines. This elaborated network works on each user’s browsing history. The purpose of the predictive system is to create an *à la carte* experience of the Web for every user, meaning that it isolates everyone from the global flow of information. If it was an offline place, the predictive system would be a strange library. Imagine going to the library for the first time to research a specific topic. The library attendant lets you in and, since it is your first time there, you can move around

freely. You browse in every library's section and then you take what you need for your research and you leave the library. The next day, thinking you might need something else for your research, you go back there. But this time, the library attendant recognises you and, without you asking for them, he has already prepared a pile of books related to the ones that you took home the day before. When you ask to browse the shelves yourself, he tries to convince you that you might really need only the books that he has already prepared for you, while giving you access only to a restricted area of the library. Frustrated, you take some of the books that he has proposed for you, but you are finally able to get something new. In time, you go back to the library again, this time without any specific research request. The library attendant still recognises you and shows you two piles of documents that might interest you based on any book that you have touched during your past two visits. Suddenly, you don't need to browse anymore, since the attendant is already partially fulfilling your needs. And so on, until you forget the purpose of freely browsing library shelves while expecting the library attendant to fulfill your expectations practically without even asking him anything. In claiming to be doing you a favour and offering you a perfect service, he is actually preventing you from accessing some documents.

The predictive system has changed our way of living and perceiving the Web, which became a personalised experience keeping each user within his or her own bubble. Eli Pariser already pointed this out in his 2011 book *Filter Bubble: How the New Personalized Web Is Changing What We Read and How We Think*.²⁰ As Pariser writes:

Most of us assume that when we Google a term, we all see the same results – the ones that the company's famous Page Rank algorithm suggests

²⁰ This book was also the inspiration for the exhibition *Filter Bubble*, curated by 89plus (Hans Ulrich Obrist and Simon Castets), Zürich: LUMA Westbau Kunsthalle, 31 Oct 2015 – 28 Feb 2016.

are the most authoritative based on other pages' links. But since December 2009, this is no longer true. Now you get the result that Google's algorithm suggests is best for you in particular – and someone else may see something entirely different. In other words, there is no standard Google anymore.**21**

In fact, in December 2009 Google announced through its blog that it would start using a “personalized search for everyone”**22** while radically changing the way search engines work.

These considerations aim to stress that the Internet as it is conceived and structured today is not the “ultimate land of freedom”,**23** nor – to go back to Orit Gat – a place where “new blood” can be injected to the art criticism dying body, nor are social networks actually tools to “shake up” the present situation. Besides, it seems to me that today's online art criticism on alternative platforms such as social media has negative rather than positive consequences: as we could see, the problems relating to the collection and archiving of what is written online make it hard for us to access it and study it and therefore it might cause problems in terms of the historiography of criticism; in addition, publishing on social platforms devalues the profession of the art critic, since there are too many voices online and no structure able to generate new globally agreed standards of writing and production; ultimately, the existence of the predictive system doesn't truly open new, unforeseen exchanges because the Internet experience of everyone of us is already too narrowly personalised – and if we don't take action against this state of things, it is going to be even more so in the near future.

21 Eli PARISER, *The Filter Bubble: How the New Personalized Web Is Changing What We Read and How We Think*, London: Penguin 2011, p. 2.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 2 and following.

23 “Das Internet ist für uns alle Neuland” (“The Internet is for us all a New-Land”) is a sentence that German chancellor Angela Merkel pronounced on 19th June 2013 during a meeting with U.S president Barack Obama; Merkel wanted to stress the fact that the Internet is a quite new political territory where there are a number of new possibilities. This sentence resonated within the Web: showing the ignorance with which politicians often talk about the Internet (which has existed for more than 30 years and is far from being a new territory) it was used to create satirical images against the colonisation of the Net by governments and corporations.

However, refusing to use the Web and its potential to write about art would not be the solution. As critics, writers and users, we need to find new approaches to the Web to challenge the actual trends. Only the use of alternative systems to access the Web, such as encrypted browsers, operative systems and platforms could defeat the current system and allow new ways to develop art criticism online. And this is not exclusively related to art criticism, it is an important step to build up a new online community that is conscious about the filter bubble problem and wants to resist it. The Internet is an amazing tool and should be used by everyone at its full potentialities. As journalist and hacktivist Jacob Applebaum stated at the World Forum for Democracy in 2015 right after the terrorist attacks of November 13th in Paris:

We must be extreme in our openness, in our welcoming nature, we must be extreme in a commitment to justice. So there is technology today that helps us to confirm, to ensure, and to expand our liberties, where we have a right to read, and we have a right to speak freely, and a responsibility to be good to each other. These people [international intelligence services, NdA] wish to weaken our infrastructure, they wish to enable private and government censorship on the Internet, they call for back doors, or front doors which would put us at risk. There are two things you can do right now if you would like. First, you can install [...] encrypted voice calls and text messages without backdoors, beating targeted and mass surveillance. [...] And you can install the Tor browser, which will give you the ability to browse the Web and to be anonymous on the Internet, where you'll actually be able to

do things without leaving a data trail where spies can twist it and harm you later. And where it will make it more difficult for people to target you for other kinds of cyber-crime. [...] We should secure the Internet, and to ensure that such things are more difficult, if not impossible. Our security situation today is not a matter of security versus privacy. Our security requires strong privacy, and our security requires autonomy, it requires transparency and accountability, it requires free speech, it requires fundamental human rights to be respected. And rather than less democracy, we need more democracy. Rather than less secure systems, we need more secure systems. And we need to use them, to run them, and to fund them.**24**

24 Jacob APPLEBAUM, "We Need More, not Less Democracy", *Open Democracy*, 20 Nov 2015, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/wfd/jacob-appelbaum/more-not-less-democracy> (accessed 24 Jun 2016).

As we can see in this quote, the problem related to the expression online and the use of the Internet as a tool for democracy is a large one, to which, I believe, good and independent art criticism online is closely related. In fact, quality web criticism relies on the very same structure and general approach to the Internet by its users. As professionals, we should get together to find new and appropriate ways to use the Web and its potential in order to open new writing possibilities and to secure a proper archive of what is done online.