PREFACE

This PhD project has to be seen in the context of my long-standing professional career as an artist of which this thesis is a preliminary culmination. In the following I will briefly sketch this context and highlight the steps relevant to my artistic development.

After studying painting at the Munich Art Academy, Germany, I joined the University of Fine Arts Hamburg, where I became interested in media-based conceptual art. In 1992 I co-founded *frauen-und-technik* (women and technology) and in 1994 *-Innen*–two women artist groups–and carried out initial experiments with digital networked technology and interactive television, thus pursuing my interest in gender and technology. In this context I also collaborated with *van Gogh TV* at *documenta* art television in 1992. After being awarded my Diploma in Fine Arts in 1994, I worked for two years in the media industry (Philips Media Germany) as a Product Manager for CD and CD-i, where I had the opportunity to acquire product management skills. In 1996 I received a DAAD-fellowship (German Academic Exchange Service) and left Philips Media Germany to live in New York City for six months, where I undertook research into the emerging genre of Internet Art. In the following years I produced various media art projects and interventions in the context of institutional critique and art activism, exploring the relationship between art and politics.

From 1997-2001 my main activities were dedicated to the concept of Cyberfeminism. In 1997 I initiated the *Old Boys Network*, an international cyberfeminist alliance of about 200 members worldwide and was responsible for the communication infrastructure of the network. A mailing list and a website provided the active platforms for the presentation and discussion of cyberfeminist theory and practice. To this day I maintain the archive at www.obn.org. As part of my activities for *OBN* I organised three international conferences: *first Cyberfeminist International* at 'documenta x' in Kassel (1997), *next Cyberfeminist International* in cooperation with 'next5minutes,' conference for tactical media in Amsterdam/Rotterdam (1999), and *very Cyberfeminist International* in Hamburg/Bremen/Oldenburg, funded by the EU (2001). In the context of cyberfeminism, I also realised several works on the topic of women hackers, as well as the web-based project *Improved Tele-vision* (2001) that ironically responds to a series of previous appropriations of a piece of music by Arnold Schönberg by enabling the 'user' to freely choose the speed of the piece.

In 2001 I also undertook an EMARE residency (European Media Art Residency Exchange) at the Visual Research Centre (VRC) in Dundee. During that time, I became acquainted with the notion of artistic research. After my residency I maintained an

active relationship with the VRC–in particular with Prof Nigel Johnson–which later on would contribute to the decision to start my PhD project at Duncan of Jordanstone, College of Art and Design.

After the global networking experiences of the *Old Boys Network*, I became interested in testing the potential of the Internet for networking local communities so in 2003, I started the mailing list *echo* for art, criticism and cultural policies in Hamburg. Thanks to its 1,350 subscribers the mailing list became the informational backbone of the local art and culture scene and was instrumental in organising various initiatives and protests. Due to my PhD commitments I handed over the list to a group of Hamburg-based administrators and moderators in 2009.

In early 2006 I initiated the project *THE THING Hamburg* (http://thing-hamburg.de). The online magazine for art and criticism was modelled after *THE THING New York*, founded by Wolfgang Staehle in 1992. The basic idea of *THE THING* is to provide the framework for an artist-initiated discourse on art and politics. As a member of the editorial group, the project provided me with the opportunity to gain experience in editorial work and enable experiments in experimental writing. *THE THING Hamburg* was run by a group of twelve cultural producers and was active for three years. Carrying on the idea of the *Old Boys Network*, my main interest was to develop an Internet-based independent infrastructure and to experiment with forms of organisation, understanding them as aesthetic formations. This idea was also the starting point for the project *TammTamm - Artists informing Politicians* (2005), also based in Hamburg. The project was a protest against the planned Maritime Museum in Hamburg and took the form of dialogues among the 121 members of parliament and 121 artists. The documentation of the dialogues and further material were published on the project's website and attracted nation-wide media attention.

Parallel to the aforementioned activities, I continued to realise individual projects, mainly experimenting with institutional critique, by challenging notions of authorship, authenticity and originality. The strategies applied in this context included automated appropriation and re-working of already existing material, digitally based multiplication of identities and non-ascribable authorship, in order to critically explore and shift the basic operating principles and norms of the art world. The set of works *This is not by me* (2004-2010) which constitutes the practice part of this thesis is to be intended as outcomes of such an approach.

It is based on two early Internet art projects, *Female Extension* and *net.art generator*, which will be discussed at length in the first chapter of this thesis.
It is also worth mentioning four further projects:

- *Re-visiting Feminist Art* (since 2006): with regards to the concept of repetition by re-enacting early feminist performances;
- *MuseumShop (2007 and 2009): for* the aesthetic and economic implications of art reproduction;
- *DEJAVU® – First Plagiarism Detection Software for Visual Art:* a critical response to the plagiarism panic;
- *Another Originality (2010)*: concerning the notion of authenticity and authentication.

For the documentation of these projects see APPENDICES 3.2 – 3.5.

Most of the conceptual works produced between 1997 and 2011 have an Internet component and involve several media, for instance writing, performance and video. They are characterised by the conflation of aesthetic practice, political practice and critical theory, and thus transgress the boundaries of autonomous art. Although my artistic practice is inspired in both content and methods by post-modernist philosophy and anti-modernist aesthetics, it is not my interest to give up the notion of art altogether, but rather I understand it as an expression of the search for the 'new artist' and the 'new art' in a networked society under the conditions of informational capitalism. Doing research as an artist is part of that search. It transgresses the boundaries of autonomous art and opens up an opportunity to address a critical issue in depth by developing an innovative trans-disciplinary practice-led methodology.

My work on intellectual property, and copyright in particular, has to be seen against the backdrop of my ongoing interest in the mutual influence of art and politics. Politics are implicit in arts and culture; cultural and educational policy and the role of art in society determine the conditions for cultural production. On the other hand, the use of aesthetic practices within political and social discourses expands the repertoire of strategies in these fields.

For detailed and up-to-date information about my activities, including exhibitions, lectures, workshops, teaching and research, please visit my homepage: http://artwarez.org.