

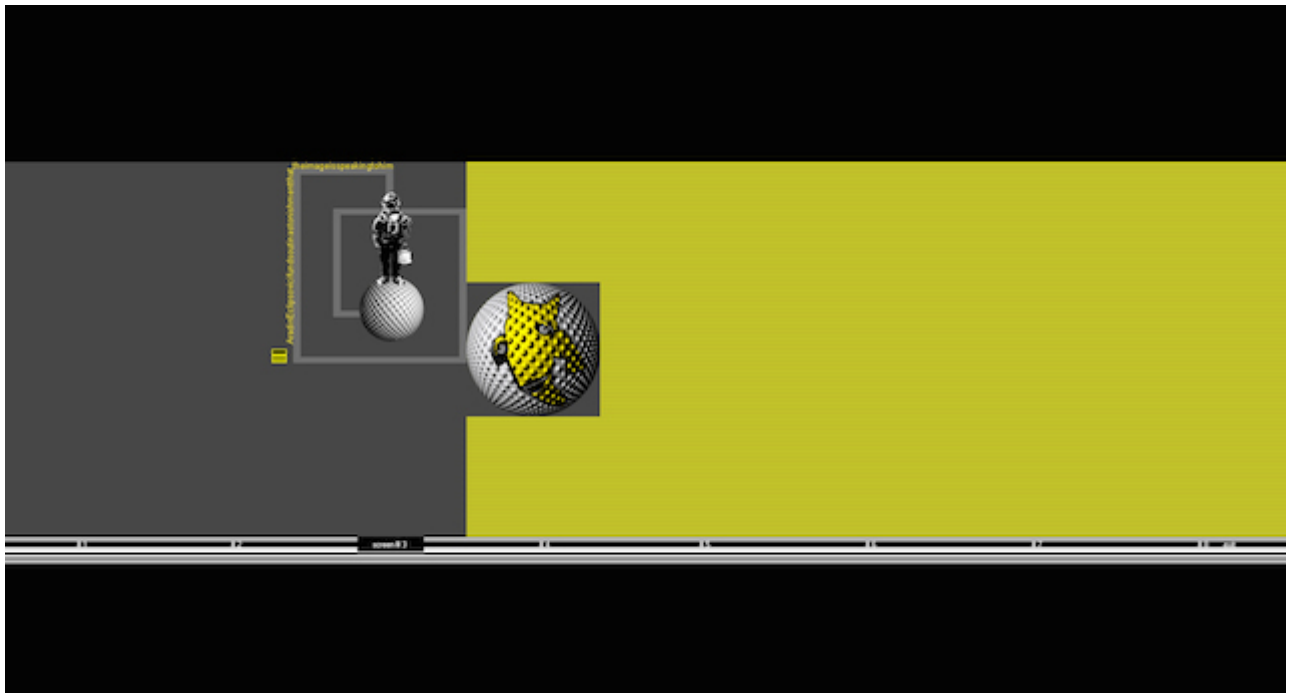
The reVoltaire Archive, *Slightly further than a million light-years away*

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*"I am The Golden Virus
says The Golden Virus
don't worry
je suis un virus calin
I will grant you three wishes
only if you really want to get rid of me" [1]*

It all begins with an introverted "I" and an extroverted E-Y-E, passionately dispassionate, endowed with visionary abilities and sharpened senses. "The characters of the reVoltaire archive witness various events having taken place in Arad along time." [2] Some of these events may be historically accurate, hence verifiable, while others are fictional, if not entirely invented. Occasioned by a cosmic event of illuminating proportions – the August 11, 1999 solar eclipse, which created impressive meteorological effects and cast unusual shadows over the town of Arad, Transylvania – this "web site story" interjects poetic potential of equal magnitude onto the viewer's screen. Browsing amongst twitching bands of glorious pixels of loud yellow and purple blue, Aradin Eclipsovici catches the golden virus. "Don't worry," the virus whispers.



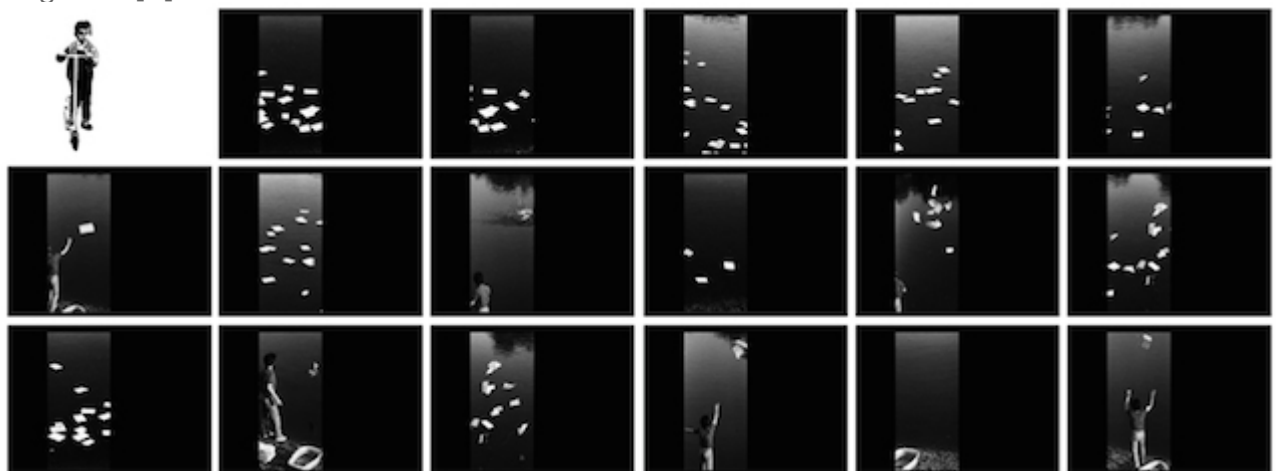
Detail from The Golden Virus & Other Web Site Stories, 1999. © Calin Man. (Used with permission.)

What is ... who is reVoltaire? Re+Voltaire, (Caba)RE(t) Voltaire, Revolt+air+e? A cyber-aristocrat? A multiple persona? An impostor? Trickster? Storyteller, mythmaker, Wunderkammer collector, chronicler, re-enactor, web-explorer, inventor, Gordian knot maker, untangler, perpetually hidden, out of sight ... reVoltaire.net is all and none of the above. This elusive, web-based archive, was

assembled and designed by Romanian net.artist Calin Man (born 1961). A work in permanent progress, it advances equally in retrospect – an exercise in duration proceeding uninterrupted in digital space, with more precise boundaries yet to be set: “reVoltaire’s archive features a number of characters with no spectacular biography and lazy above, who motivate their existence only through their name. rarely one of these characters undertakes anything and then the importance of the action can be ignored without any fear.” [3]

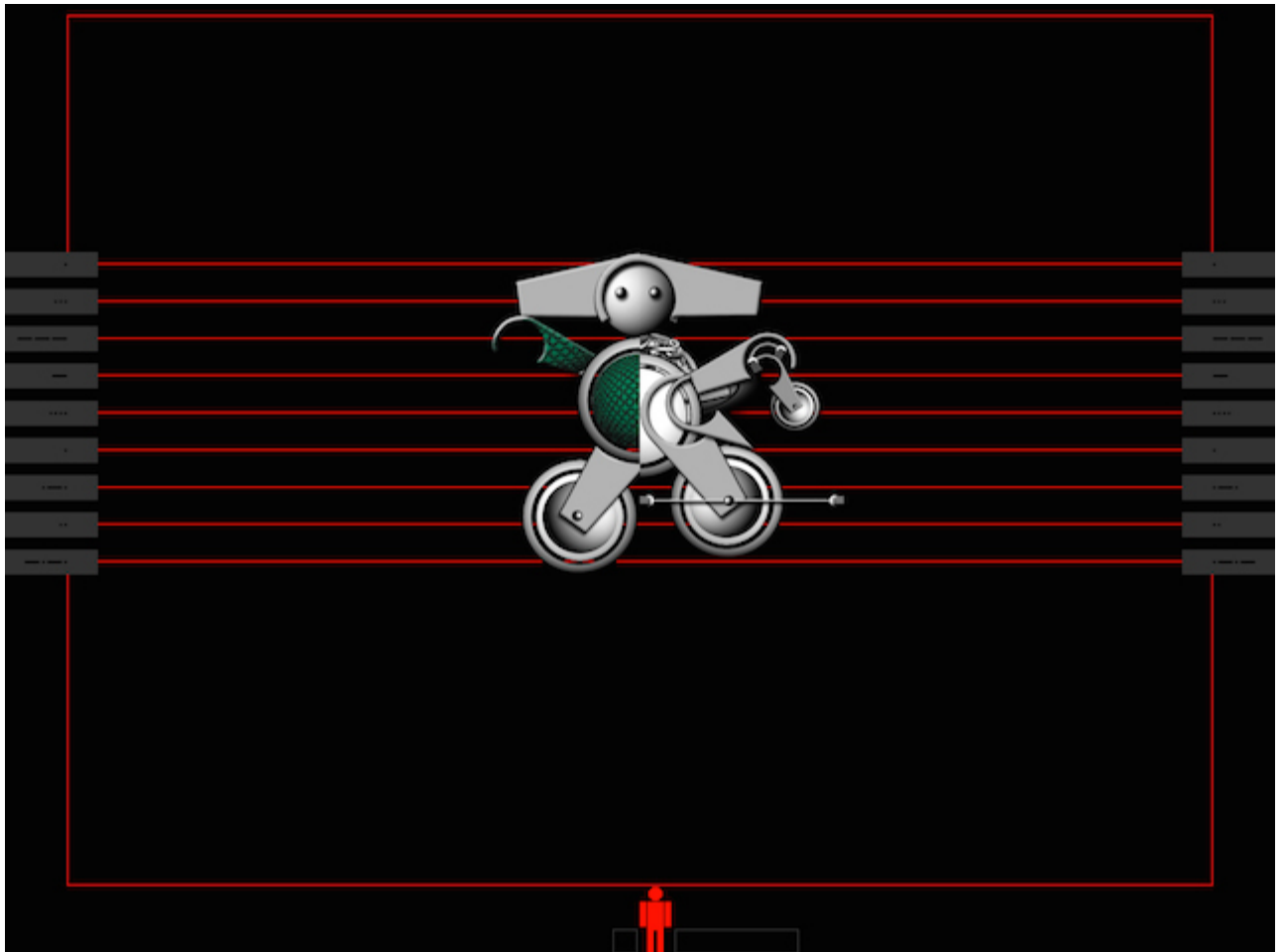
Even the skeptics will have to agree to remain confused. *Et tu?* Pataphysics might offer the closest, most sympathetic, precedent for the type of theoretical precepts and systems of classification employed here – an immaterial ‘physics’ of the matter-of-fact, a perpetually shifting subject, focus, method, and experimental outcome. [4] Man’s fine-tuned apparatus only obeys impracticable rules. Framed by a series of aleatory conditions, all instructions for use are clearly stated: *if ... then*. There should be no argument there. Otherwise, the golden virus, fidgety like the golden fish, will slip right through our fingers in a preposterous vanishing act. (Imagine an anxious pencil mark, past midnight, breaking onto the surface of a composed Sol LeWitt line drawing.) And all will have been but a capricious mirage.

The archive has been “developed on the same given equation that has 1, 0 or -1 as a result.” [5] Occasionally, this nebulous whole morphs into more stable and coherent parts, spitting out files, machine-like. Fictional characters abound. Having destroyed the entirety of his literary oeuvre, the author now uses code as his disguise. [6]



Calin Man, *what's happening*, 1986-1994, svhs, © Calin Man. (Used with permission.)

Amongst his most immediate precursors we recognize Alfred Jarry, Franz Kafka and Tristan Tzara. Take for instance *Esoth Eric*, protagonist of yet another Maniacal “web site story.” According to its biography, this “hypermedia application” was born in Zadar (a pun, translating to “in vain” in Romanian). [6] Released into the digital realm, *Esoth Eric* becomes the protagonist of an epic saga, learning through the extensions of its mechanical arms to navigate the narrative twists and turns of the interstices of the web. The series of parallel plot lines converge toward the hero’s encounter with the “other,” indeed a counter-self, yet also an equivalent, *antiEsoth Eric*. [7]



Main menu, Calin Man, *Esoth Eric*, 2003, hypermedia application, 2 computers, 2 monitors, 2 multimedia projectors, commissioned for the Romanian Pavilion, 50th Venice Biennial, © Calin Man. (Used with permission.)

As travel companions, we duly follow suit: would all be happening (continuously, repeatedly) were we not here?! The “dated-ness” of the aesthetic interface becomes a part of the core identity of the archive, signaling its viewers. More self-aware, touched by the temporality of this difference, they can now identify, learn or at least intuit that there is a longer history at stake. The archive is thus made to perform, capriciously, a significant parenthetical function, inserting itself, in bits and through pixels, within larger cognitive narratives of the aesthetic-experiential realm. After all, one of the most productive tasks of such an archive (or collection) is its movability; its critical mass resides in the singularity of fragments. All parts can and should be revised, as time passes. Ideally, narratives would be kept in flux, hypothesized, contested, redesigned.

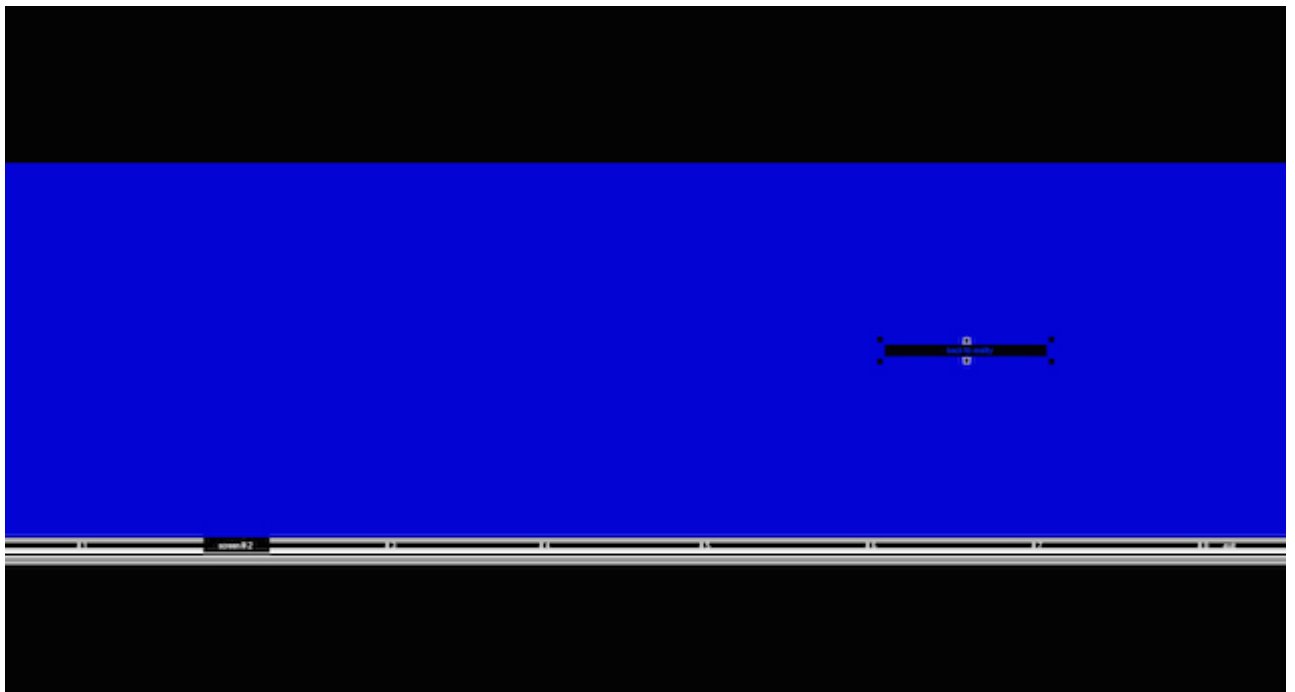
While affected by chance, or destiny, no “revoltarian” piece is entirely absurd. Instead, all contain substantial histories, tools for grasping the multivalent narrative possibilities of the digitally networked world. Man’s projects cross multiple genres, skipping from online to offline; hybrid characters press through the boundaries of the screen; moving images are broken down through code, sound through text; instead of chaos, alternative logic ensues. The techniques employed relate to interventions from the early nineties, when, dismissive of the unidirectional communications networks of the recently fallen Communist propaganda machine together with the experimental arts and media group *kinema ikon*, Man manipulated

news content transmitted by the national TV broadcast (the Romanian revolution toppled the Ceausescu dictatorship in December 1989). [8]



Screenshots from kinema ikon, *ready media*, 1995, media installation, cd.rom, vhs, 25'47" © kinema ikon. (Used with permission.)

Equally influential is the author's background in literary studies, alongside his interest in chronicling local histories during real and imaginary travels from Arad, where he is based, through Transylvania, Eastern Europe and beyond. [9] Since 1996 reVoltaire has been voyaging through the web, passing through from dial-up speed to fiber-optic, creature of the night, chewing at its fringes. Turn the page and once again, it all begins, in perpetuity.



"Back to Reality," detail from Calin Man, *The Golden Virus & Other Web Site Stories*, 1999, cd-rom / internet, Collection du Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou, Paris, © Calin Man. (Used with permission.)

References

1. Calin Man, *The Golden Virus & Other Web Site Stories*, 1999, accessed September 19, 2014, <http://revoltaire.net/golden-virus/pages/goldenvirus.htm>
2. Calin Man, Raluca Velisar, Adela Vaetisi, and George Sabau, *alteridem.exe_2* (Romanian Pavilion, Venice Biennial, 2003), 28.
3. Calin Man, Accessed September 19, 2014, <http://revoltaire.net/pages/3.htm>.
4. As Andrew Hugill has written: "To understand pataphysics is to fail to understand pataphysics. To define it is merely to indicate a possible meaning, which will always be the opposite of another equally possible meaning, which, when diurnally interpolated with the first meaning, will point toward a third meaning which will in turn elude definition because of the fourth element that is missing." Andrew Hugill, *'Pataphysics, A Useless Guide* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), 1.
5. Calin Man, accessed September 19, 2014, <http://revoltaire.net/pages/3.htm>
6. kinema ikon, *7010, experimental films, analogic & digital 1970-2010* (Arad: Museum Arad, 2010).
7. Calin Man, *Esoth Eric*, 2003, accessed September 19, 2014, <http://www.revoltaire.net/esoth-eric7/pages/xma.htm>
8. George Sabau, "A Contextual History of the kinema ikon Group," in *kinema ikon retrospective*, ed. kinema ikon (Arad: Carmel Print and Design, and Bucharest: National Museum of Contemporary Art, 2005), 4-67.
9. In a more recent piece, Man uses 16mm footage of Arad and its environs, made by Ioan Zsiga during the late sixties. Amongst other candidly documented events, we see mute recordings of a school trip that Man in fact participated in, now "rescued," and inserted into a larger filmic narrative with cinematographic aspirations – as indicated by the inclusion of an electronic sound mix by experimental musician Rodion GA, produced in the early eighties as soundtrack for a Romanian science-fiction movie that was never completed. See Calin Man, *5 ready media files by Vasile Cârlova*, 2012, accessed September 19, 2014, <http://revoltaire.net/carlova/index.htm>

Bio

Ileana L. Selejan is the Linda Wyatt Gruber '66 Curatorial Fellow in Photography, at The Davis Museum at Wellesley College. She received her PhD in Art History from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. Her work focuses on war and documentary practices, and the intersection of esthetics, ethics, and protest in photography and art; she was the recipient of the 2012–13 Joan and Stanford Alexander Award for her dissertation research in Nicaragua. She previously taught in the Photography and Imaging Department at Tisch School of the Arts, and in the Art History Department at New York University, at Parsons The New School For Design, and in the Fine Arts Department at West University, Timisoara, Romania. Ileana also writes independently, and is a contributing member of kinema ikon. <http://kinema-ikon.net/>