

# Formas de matar el mundo

## call for participants

*a popular archive for the decline of social networks* is an experimental archival initiative linked to the research project *How to Kill the World [Formas de matar el mundo]*. Its mission is to ease the transition to a world less dependent on technology for social interactions, addressing platform capitalism and its effects on how we organize human experience.

*a popular archive for the decline of social networks* is a forward-looking endeavor:

- It will remain **secret** until WhatsApp no longer dominates the management of intimate and text-based communication.
- It aims to **preserve our textual-affective heritage** by curating a brief collection of conversations that represent life between 2012 and 2024.
- It **seeks donations** but does not intend to make an active use of them. If any use is made, the credit will be determined at the donor's discretion.
- It seeks to understand and combat the **toxicity of digital environments**.
- It will not be **publicly accessible until the year 2150**, unless otherwise agreed with each donor in light of the eco-social decline of instant messaging.

The hypotheses surrounding the overt toxicity of social networks, and how this affects our relational capacities as a species, society and/or community are diverse. *a popular archive for the decline of social networks* does not aim to address the debate of whether the harm stems from technology itself or from the designs that exploit personal data and promote addictive consumption habits. Instead, it seeks to acknowledge the reality that, for over a decade, we have been immersed in reading and writing practices that we neither fully understand nor critically examine.

Allowing corporations to own and manage our text-based, emotional, and interactive energies condemns us to the loss of our heritage. Within corporate settings, conversations between lovers, friends, family, and others are reduced to data whose maintenance costs are set to be deleted once storing them stops being profitable. Is there an alternative to passively surrendering our social energies, verbal exchanges, and emotional heritage to digital platforms?

*a popular archive for the decline of social networks* envisions an alternative preservation of the 2012-2024 arc, one that —without guilt or vanity— examines our current reliance on social connectivity and instant messaging platforms. We propose to explore what comes after datification: what if we transform data into memory work? Eric Sadin has said that never before have people expressed such a craving for expression as in the digital era. Yet, we disagree—there has always been some artistic glitter in speech. And where there is not, there is history, and within history, there is artistic thought. In the 1930s, the Spiritualists' fanzines sought to establish

communication with Harvard University (then we interpret: here we had utopia, a will to live). So where is our imaginative desire today? What can be done?

Can we understand our era without reclaiming our stolen textual-affective energies? How can we push them beyond the status of mere data, devoid of agency or beauty? Companies in the digital world have made us sign terms of service that continuously assert ownership over all content generated within their interfaces. The data protection law tries to save us, but it has no historical consistency – it does not understand that our writing is our heritage (how many books, for example, have not been written because we are writing messages? but also, how to assess whether this matters or not?).

The new possibilities of digital textual affectivity create novel imaginaries and connections between people. For instance, hypermobility: I can live in the United States, converse daily with people in Spain, and yet have no face-to-face social ties in either place. Or cancellation: today, I can call out a drunk who harassed me years ago. Without examining our textual affective heritage—its vast scale, its potential for preservation or destruction, what it reveals about us, the love letters it contains, its influence on self-surveillance, its impact on our perception of time and space—we will not be able to fully understand our lives in a historical sense or make informed decisions about the future.

***a popular archive for the twilight of social networks* emerges in response to these issues within the broader context of the eco-social crisis. In its experimental phase, it focuses on WhatsApp, the simplest of all social platforms, and on its conversations (its simplest item), as a first step toward analyzing the reading and writing energies proper to the digital framework.**

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If any of these questions resonate with you,  
will you donate an item?

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## **FAQ – Questions & Donation Guidelines**

- 1. What kinds of items do we accept?** We are looking for WhatsApp conversations in .txt, .doc, .odt, .jpg, or .pdf formats. (*Note: We also accept audio or video files with language content if that's your preference.*)

We especially encourage submissions of complete, concluded conversations—those with a clear beginning and end. However, conversations still in progress are also welcome. If you choose to submit a shorter selection, this could be due to “natural” circumstances (e.g., death, loss of contact) or deliberate ones (e.g., choosing a specific date or timeframe for your donation). In relation to the conversational exchange, our recommendation is to tell the person that this donation is being made and (a) have their consent, or (b) if they do not agree, anonymize their parts or (c) ask us directly to anonymize them when sending the item (see question 3).

2. **How do I download a WhatsApp conversation?** Unlike platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, or X, which consider everything “data” and on the basis of GDPR select and reorder our digital experiential world to comply with the law but unwilling to give the materials as we live them, WhatsApp (at the moment) distinguishes between “user data” and chat activity. To download a full WhatsApp conversation:
  1. Open WhatsApp on your mobile or tablet.
  2. Open a conversation with a person or group.
  3. Tap the name of the person or group at the top of the screen.
  4. Scroll down to “Export Chat.”
  5. Choose whether to export with or without media (images, videos, etc.).
  6. The app will generate a zip file asking you where to send or where to open. At this point, each person can use their usual way of sending files between their device and their computer (airdrop, mail, a conversation with themselves on WhatsApp, etc.)
  
3. **Can I submit an anonymized conversation?** Yes. Whether you have the knowledge to anonymize documents/conversations or want to use artistic mechanisms of any kind to distort the conversation (without changing its fundamental content), feel free to submit it in that form. Remember that donated items will not be made public until 2150, and keeping them in a private archive with a public mission does not violate data protection laws.
  
4. **How do I define the “beginning” and “end” of a conversation?** You have several options: (1) submit the entire conversation as exported from WhatsApp, (2) choose a meaningful fragment that seems particularly meaningful to you, not so much from a personal criterion as from the understanding that it captures the spirit of the times, or (3) select a random fragment to donate.

**For donations and inquiries:** [paulaperezroda@anartist.org](mailto:paulaperezroda@anartist.org)

**Submission deadline:** Open until October 10, 2024.

*A Popular Archive for the Decline of Social Networks* is part of *Ways to Kill the World*, a project by Paula Pérez-Roda, recipient of the IX Grant for Artistic Research by the Fundació Banc Sabadell-Hangar

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