



David Horvitz
in conversation with Elisabetta Modena

lessons



David Horvitz is a Los Angeles-based visual artist who creates books, photographs, performances and mail art.

In 2009, Horvitz – who is particularly interested in the circulation of images on the internet and the distance and connections caused by the web and the digital devices – created one of his most famous projects, the *meme 241543903/Head-in-a-Freezer*. The artist spread some simple instructions by sending a hundred flyers to a friend in Brazil, who distributed them randomly. Through simple instructions, people were encouraged to put their heads in a freezer, take a picture and upload the image with the tag "241543903". The *meme* quickly gained popularity on Orkut, Google's social network in Brazil, and the photographs taken and shared by users on the web were turned into an exhibition and an artist's book.

For *Public Access* (2010-2011), the artist took a photo of himself facing the sea at various stops along the California coast. Horvitz then uploaded the images to the Wikipedia pages of the places where he stopped, provoking discussions among the Wikipedian community, whose members tried to understand his identity and the photos' purpose.

Wikipedia, from which he was banned following this second project, was again the focus of *Mood Disorder*, which was created to see how a single image spreads through the Internet. The project started in 2012 when the artist uploaded a copyright-free picture of himself, with his head in his hands, to the online encyclopaedia page on mood disorders. The photo began to circulate, appearing on over a hundred websites as a stock photo to illustrate articles on a wide range of mental health and wellness issues.

This conversation, a video recording of which is published here, took place on Thursday 16 September 2021 and concerned the *lessons* (2021) project.

Invited by the Nassauischer Kunstverein in Wiesbaden but unable to travel to Germany due to the Covid-19 pandemic that will break out worldwide in 2020, Horvitz developed an idea to enhance his role as an artist and a father teaching his 5-year-old daughter who was left at home after the schools closed. Together with her, he developed a series of small lessons and teaching units, which he then documented and sent to Wiesbaden, inviting people to do the lessons with their children and add their documentation, in any format, to the exhibition at the end of the project.

Horvitz is present in MoRE's archive with the project *Untitled* (2009-2019), which consists of a performative, poetic and surreal gesture of retrieving one of the tram cars once operating in Los Angeles from the ocean where they were dumped when this transportation system was decommissioned in the 1950s.

His works have been shown in numerous solo and group exhibitions around the world, including Musée d'Art Contemporain Avignon (2019), Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2017), Hangar Bicocca, Milan (2017) and the New Museum, New York (2014).

Elisabetta Modena

