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## RESEARCH

# *Peanuts minus Schulz*: Distributed Labor as a Compositional Practice

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This article reflects on the future of comics in an interconnected globalized world where, it is argued, digital technologies both accelerate change in partly-uncharted territories, and redefine the contemporary disenchantment with information flows. As a case study, the author uses their project *Peanuts minus Schulz* and discusses the ethos of post-digital conceptual comics and how distributed digital labor is used as an opaque, material and possibly disruptive compositional practice.

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**Keywords:** appropriation; artistic practice; comics industry; digital labor; *Peanuts*

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## Introduction

My earliest recollection as a child of an encounter with a counterfeit product, was when my father returning from a business trip to Vietnam, brought with him three large lacquer reproductions of Tintin book covers. These heavy boards were drawn, lettered and painted manually and their format was twice as big and much heavier than the book. Their price was closer to the price of a Casterman Tintin retail edition than to any original artwork.

Artistic practice as an embodied skill is intimately involved with conceptualization. This practice-based research paper takes as a starting point the concept of *distance*, described in the above example certainly as a formal one: Casterman Tintin covers, themselves distanced from the original Hergé artworks, are repeatedly doubled-over through largely manual, non-automated reproduction methods. This distance is also defined as geopolitical: miles away from the Franco-Belgian Moulinsart epicenter in Brussels, a class of networked, globalized and precarious art

workers operate and nurture a secondary, unregulated market of derivatives, that, suffice to say, naturally appeals to Western tourists. However, the distance I am more interested in, is epistemological and one that largely defines the specificity of the interdisciplinary practical turn in research.

The praxeology I am following deflects any disciplinary identity and establishes distance as a *sine qua non* condition for knowledge. According to Franco Moretti, distant reading (in contrast to the prevailing, text-centric literary analysis of close reading) establishes the text as a middle ground and focuses instead on the text's micro-level specifics (such as in the field of textual forensics) or macro-level ensembles (such as in the study of the book industry's distribution systems) (Moretti 2000). Distant reading evades a direct confrontation with the text and can materialize 'as a synthetic activity that takes as its raw material the "readings" of others' (Hayles 2012: 28).

It's the 'readings of others' that I am proposing to explore here, in regards to the book project *Peanuts minus Schulz*. *PmS*<sup>1</sup> is a doubling-over Charles Schulz's work. It is a massive appropriation of the *Peanuts* comics strip series, commissioned through digital labor services and outsourced to more than a thousand artists in twenty countries. Through a long, ongoing process, *PmS* is an experiment with the digital ramifications of distributed labor as a compositional practice. Moretti's textual tools and scope are materialized in this book through the manifold ways Schulz's work has been interpreted, annotated, performed, improvised and rearranged *ad libitum*, towards different or conflicting goals from those intended by its author. I will use *PmS* as a way to comment the expansion of the possible ways to produce content and organize labor in comics and will define what I understand as a post-digital and conceptual practice in the publishing industry of comics (**Figure 1**).

### **Comics Is a Networked Activity**

According to Michael Bhaskar, the understanding of publishing as abstracted from its technological affordance is a rhetorical, ahistorical simplification (Bhaskar 2013). Publishing can be described as a hybrid object-human networked activity that develops around compound technologies of inscription and activates an entanglement

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<sup>1</sup> *PmS* will come out in spring 2020 by the French publisher Jean Boîte.



**Figure 1:** T-shirt print of a drawing based on Charles Schulz's *Peanuts* made by an artist from Venezuela, Thursday, February 15th, 2017 (time of completion: 13m and 2s).

of legal, institutional, economic, political and personal bodies. Through a series of industrial innovations and various modes of production routine optimizations, that have also benefited other segments of the creative industry, the publishing world has always been in the vanguard of capitalism. Through the book market, it has contributed in the shaping of intellectual property regimes, helped foreshadow the significance of cognitive labor (and its demise) and has been an active and often disruptive force in regards to government censorship, labor and union organizations, as well as the copyright establishment and the application of copyright and patent laws (Vaidhyathan 2001). While pioneering markets and professions, from web retail to tracking, monitoring and archiving technologies, the publishing industry has been

able to reinvent itself by setting aside and overruling an array of professionals that once were key agents of the industry.

Much of today's comics criticism in relation to the digital presents the same malaise one experiences with early 'new media' writing: a sort of *passé* technopositivist innovation-ism, where the drawing desk, the offset print and the library space are seamlessly replaced with iPad apps, print-on-demand services and Kindle unlimited subscription plans. An uncritical shift to digital potentialities that does not take account the medium's industrial affordances and its precarious labor regimes is anachronistic: it sustains the myth of the solitary genius through the glorification of craftsmanship and fictions of artistic ethos and integrity. Furthermore, it perpetrates a vision of disembodied nature of the digital information within a largely unacknowledged military-industrial-entertainment, FAMGA-driven internet space.

"The most common response to what is called the digital revolution, might be the impulse to *not* change, no matter how 'different' the world out there seems to be", writes Marjorie Perloff in her study of modern, avant-garde poetry through the lenses and challenges of pop culture and advertisement (Perloff 1994: 3). Away from the ultimately conservative celebration of the advent of formal medium possibilities such as augmented storytelling and non-linear p2p narrative (think of how dated Scott McCloud's *Reinventing Comics* sounds already today), the point is to document how 'new communications technologies increasingly require subjectivities that are rich in knowledge' (Lazzarato 1996) and how specifically comics reflect the massive shifts that occur in the reconfiguration of labor for a globally, interconnected precariat of comics artists and readers alike. What are the soft forms of disruptive innovation that have shaped the comics industry?

Through the use of new interfaces of labor management, automation, machine learning, library digitization (such as scanlation and p2p), digital comics are shaking existing readerships, markets, and technologies. They ultimately contribute to the formation of a new reader's sensibility and (anti) authorial ethos. The reconfiguration of global production logistics related to printing, distribution and communication force a radical realignment for the practitioners' artistic ethos and whatever privileged terrain of craftsmanship and outdated notions of authorial genius and

artistic exception has been left intact. *PmS* explores a set of operations that do not conventionally account for the production of comic books such as web-scraping, indexation, scripting, database building, moderation and spam filtering. None of the aforementioned routines, had they had an equivalent before digitization, could be performed in sensible time spans. *PmS* acknowledges therefore the matter-of-factness of the available technological tools and certainly not in terms of a reified glorification based on questions of progress or innovation. Rather as an acceleration of the dissolution of industry's entrenched roles and their old-fashioned values of artistic integrity.

Obviously digital technologies will not destroy comics as we know them, but they may change their underlying decorum. In reality, these changes have continuously shaped the lives of the industry's amateurs and semi-professionals, who have to organize their time around a bricolage of fragmented schedules and poorly paid work (Woo 2015): from daily feeding a Patreon account while filling a scanlation request, to selling a print in Deviantart while reviewing the latest Doujinshi on a not-so-free-of-ads-blog are some of the patchwork tasks of the comics networked precariat in the age of semio-capitalism.

Comics, for the most part, is an industrial form of art that counts on the orchestrated work of different professionals hired on a freelance basis. Its manufacturing processes depend on divisions of labor, where fragmentation, repeatability, homogeneity, and domination are essential features of any sequential industrial process. The production belt of mainstream comics often involves dozens of people handling specialized roles, making the comic book business 'a shoddy, ephemeral diversion, a form of anonymous, relatively diluted, and industrialised pabulum' (Hatfield 2005): pencillers, inkers, colorists, letterers, editors but also printers, binders, advertisers and marketing specialists, all the way to distribution services, newsstand vendors, retailers, journalists, etc. R.C. Harvey, states that *Garfield* creator, Jim Davis, employed a staff of forty to produce the strip and merchandise the character (mercilessly- through some four hundred licensees that produce the paunchy feline's face and form on everything from lunchboxes to Christmas tree ornaments) (Harvey 1994).

The sites of the comics industry have been variably labeled 'shops' (Harvey 1994), 'sweatshops' (Goulart 2003: 71–81) or whose studio system is 'nearly an *assembly line* affair' (Hatfield 2005: 9). The workflow, designed to improve economic efficiency and labor productivity is generally based on rationality, effectiveness and elimination of waste. The large scale of these operations accounts for a market that is structured by a standardization of best practices for the transformation of craft production into mass production. Comics, therefore, are by default a multimodal text construction, that does not fit the narrow auteurist vision of humanities and literary scholarship (Brienza 2013). Their distributed labor, under these criteria, makes the valorization of work highly problematic (Gray & Wilkins 2016). Comics production is riddled with the formal subjectivities and the conflicting personal interests and ambitions of several operators distributed throughout the chain of signification-production.

Additionally, the comics industry depends on a variety of social formats of engagement, most of which are hardly recognized as labor. Through readers' columns, corporate-led fan-clubs, alternative conventions, mimeographed zines, specialized fora, price guides and academic conferences, readers and fans have occupied a constitutive part of the comics industry. To some considerable degree, their activities opened doorways for the market favoring the emergence of new forms of content. How should one account for the labor and the precarious underemployment that has expanded beyond the formal loci and the traditional time schedules (Woo 2015), to encompass other forms of *self-exploited* labor, a mixture of market-driven incentives and gift economy elements? How has the Internet, as a site of disintermediation, contributed in not only reducing the distance between producers and consumers but also provided the backdrop for a flexible, collective intelligence to organize these new forms of *playbor* (the portmanteau term coined by Scholz (Scholz 2013) to designate activities that fit neither traditional definitions of work nor play)?

Readers and fans have used the Internet as a technology, 'enabling average consumers to archive, appropriate, annotate and recirculate media content' (Jenkins 2006ii: 1). The Internet has contributed to the incentivization of the individuals that take an active role in discussing and distributing alternative, transformational or derivative works, based on root-texts. These secondary works largely depend for the

valorization on the power/knowledge nexus put forward by the mainstream comics publishers. They can be understood in what Geoff Stahl (1999) calls the *winning space*: 'a negotiated version of the dominant culture's values that the working-class has appropriated as an alternate moral system permitting legitimization of their means of expression' (Stahl 1999). More interestingly, comics fandom reveals the potential of an art form, whose language-like *modus operandi*, dismisses claims of clear-cut roles in the production chain. Fan fiction and all the related productions passionately argue for the importance of an idiosyncratic 'reader's space', and the fictions associated<sup>2</sup> beyond imposed meanings coming from the author or the prevailing readings of certain works.

A variety of appropriation practices has structured the winning space. Take, for example, 'intentional communication' (Hebdige 1979), defined as an ironic gesture that operates through obviously fabricated 'complex articulations of specific codes and practices' that reveal dominant culture's normative forms of display. Or 'bricolage' (Levi-Strauss 1966: 21), a term borrowed from Claude Levi-Strauss to describe the skills of using whatever is at hand and recombining it to create something new. Lately, however, 'détournement', a concept coming from the Situationists, has been particularly helpful to understand appropriation practices in comics. It describes the process of repurposing works through the reuse of preexisting artistic elements in a new ensemble in order to subvert the conventional discourses produced with, and around, these works. Comics history is replete with cases instantiating the reader's space, where fans reclaim storylines and characters by retaliating upon the exact same format; the most banal slash fiction reveals the nature of the text in its instability, situates the artifact in the midst of seemingly horizontal forces, dependent on multiple productive and generative contexts, always in flux. These works highlight the insufficiency of the entrenched roles of production, claiming instead for an expanded agency: the collapsing of the reader, the writer, the critic, the historian, the distributor and the archivist.

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<sup>2</sup> Roland Barthes describes the reader as a historical body, individualised from complex processes of biographical, historical, sociological and neurotic elements and responding individually to hallucinated forms of text. The author sketches a typology of fictional responses to the pleasures of reading and further fragmentises, beyond any sociological or demographical considerations, the reader's space (Barthes 1975).



## Comics in the Age of *Playbor*

A few prominent net evangelists such as Yochai Benkler or Clay Shirky will argue that the game changer of digital and internet-enabled technologies is that they allow people to connect and collaborate in novel ways by fostering projects of unprecedented collaborative production that favors regimes of increased worker autonomy and individual expression. A major shift in the reconfiguration of labor towards a gig economy and the expenditure of cognitive surplus comes within digital labor markets and specifically from what is called 'artificial artificial intelligence' (Barr & Cabrera 2006: 24–29).

Amazon Mechanical Turk (AMT) is a digital labor market conceptualized and designed by Amazon in 2007. It responded to the need to expand computing infrastructure services in order to overcome the 'insurmountable' (Harinarayan et al. 2007, cited in Irani 2013) technical drawbacks related to the task of merging duplicate product listings on the retail website. Since its inception, an array of different micro-tasking platforms and online labor markets burgeoned, providing the 'leverage of the abilities of an unprecedented number of people via the web to perform complex computation' (Law 2011). These services allow users to search, select and complete a variety of human intelligence tasks (HITs) designed by third party contractors looking for a freelance, flexible and often unskilled labor force. The labor activity for online workers (called *turks*) can be fulfilled at home without any direct management. These tasks can be developing databases, filtering images, subscribing to YouTube channels or writing 'honest' reviews for Aliexpress.

Instead of receiving a salary, or an hourly wage and the benefits and protections their work entails, turks are paid for every small, atomized task they complete. In exchange, companies (but also individual researchers, universities and institutes) enjoy, through platform mediation, absolute circumvention of applicable minimum wage laws; they benefit of all the perks for an unregulated assembly line of cognitive workers with minimal transactional frictions. According to a survey, the main selection criteria for turks in picking HITs is the task's complexity, the maximal duration of completion, the remuneration and, according to some self-reports, how fun these tasks can be (Irani, Silberman, Zaldivar, Tomlinson 2010). If such self-reports should

be nuanced in a general background of precariousness and hyper-exploitation, they nevertheless suggest that workers do not merely seek monetary rewards (Paolacci & Chandler 2014: 184–188).

The fragmentation of professional activities is also increasingly the status quo for persons in the cultural industries and the arts (Sholette 2010). Most of these individuals engage in a patchwork of different forms of immaterial labor defined as the activity that produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity (Lazzarato 1996). In regards to the cultural economy in advanced capitalist societies, it is exactly the excessive deployment of the activities of an overqualified, underpaid cognitive workforce that makes, from the perspective of any digital contractor 'the Internet a thriving and hyperactive medium' (Terranova 2004). The precariat, or, better, the information economy version of an insecure, underpaid, self-employed and zero-hour contract mobile workforce, the *unnecessariat* (Amnesia 2016), is construed here, from the perspective of the venture capitalist as a potentially large-scale, connected, computing infrastructure waiting for its networked value to be extracted. The flip side of Jeff Bezos's human-as-service ethos<sup>3</sup> is the reality of the human-as-wasted-resource: a sense of unfulfilled potential with the pathos of an empty apartment in an overcrowded city, or a set of golf-clubs gathering dust in the closet.

The notion of free labor, and its uneasy *declination of playbor*, is based on the gradual dissolving of modalities that have conventionally defined most of the professional activities, and separated them from the rest: the slippages between conception and execution, between labor and creativity, between work and free time, and between author and audience have been, according to Lazzarato, 'simultaneously transcended within the 'labor process' and reimposed as political command within the process of valorization'. Not only labor activity is increasingly harder to define, consequently protect and valorize (Ross 2009). The very same spaces that have generally contained and supplied labor have radically changed and for some, they have dematerialized: from the office desk to the cubicle, and from the decentralized

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<sup>3</sup> 'You've heard of software-as-a-service; well, this is human-as-a-service.' Jeff Bezos announcing Amazon Mechanical Turk in 2006 during an MIT lecture.

workspace and the coffee shop table to the apartment couch (Saval 2014), work for 'creatives' is *always* and *everywhere*.

Abusive and (not always so) immaterial labor formulae have been around in the creative industries for quite a while (Ross 2013). However, technology magnifies power configurations with 'deep changes in the composition, management and regulation of the workforce' (Lazzarato 1996). Free labor occupies a central position in the digital economies and the digital labor market can now be in antagonistic relationship with the comics industry's various reading communities, small businesses and publishers. What are the challenges for the increasingly networked comics industry in times where cognitive labor deploys in postindustrial regimes of work management and, more importantly, how artists and readers can still defend fixed subject positions in a constantly shifting world that increasingly questions the validity of such conventions and practices?

### **Conceptual Comics**

These questions have tilted my understanding of comics towards the medium's industrial affordances and have radically shaped my own artistic practice. As an artist and a researcher, I am interested in the unexpected ways the comics industry's generative forces inherent to distributed and specialized working routines are being reshaped in the age of digital networking. What happens to the comics industry in the advent of media convergence and its auxiliary operations of rapid digitization, immediacy of consumption and broadband distribution? How the diversification of access to content contributes to 'ever more complex relations between top-down corporate media and bottom-up participatory culture' (Jenkins 2006i: 243)? And finally, how artistic practices and discourses, as well as the historically contingent roles that constitute the publishing world, position themselves vis-a-vis these powerful new environments?

I came up with the term *conceptual comics* (CoCo)<sup>4</sup> to point to the works that thematize the industrial aspects of their medium. They often embrace 'the messy

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<sup>4</sup> Conceptual Comics and its playful acronym (CoCo) originate from the librarian collection I initiated at the art archive Ubuweb and the shadow library Monoskop. [https://monoskop.org/Conceptual\\_comics](https://monoskop.org/Conceptual_comics).

state of media after the disruption occurred through the digitization of their production, distribution and communication channels' (Cramer 2014) and they can be thought as post-digital declinations of older industrial forms of production. Their form and modes of engagements are complex and polyvalent. CoCos distance themselves from works that celebrate artistic expression or champion unique artistic and storytelling skills. They are equally critical of the various deployments of craftsmanship in their fabrication, from the fashionable risograph to the fetishized woodblock printing. Far from being ordinary acts, CoCos are immersed in (and survive from) information-intensive contexts. They are always constituted as subsequent acts of inflection, inversion and dissension. Their singularity is an access to otherness and their endurance originates from the way they are persistently unraveling and reshaped. Semantically elastic, stretched by a growing web of cross-references, often to the point of unrecognizability, a CoCo work cannot and will not remain forever the same object. CoCos are even less focused in the formal technological innovations of the narrative medium. They focus instead on the new patterns and modalities of the comics industry in the age of the disenchantment and the given-ness of electronic and networked affordances.

In 2017, I outsourced the commission of a book to the resources of an online labor market. In *Harvested*, a selected group of microworkers was asked to filter a huge database of JPG screenshots of adult films according to a consciously vague instruction: whether or not they displayed contemporary art. As read in the press release, the goal of the book was to underline the importance for a contextual, industry-specific art history, while by the same token playfully highlight the need to activate peripheral vision in regard to scopophilic practices. While IKEA paintings were pervasively dominant, *Harvested* burgeons with works from modern masters such as a rip-off from Fernand Léger, an unknown Joan Miró, *Castle and Sun* from Paul Klee but also contemporary works such as *Quote, 1964*, a print from Robert Rauschenberg, a series of paintings from Mark Rothko, *School of Fontainebleau* from Cy Twombly and even some mass market replicas from Frank Stella and Lucio Fontana (Manouach 2017).

### ***Peanuts***

From 2016, I have been working on *PmS* involving the re-make of *Peanuts*, possibly the most popular and influential comic strip of all times. Published on an almost daily basis from 1950 to 2000, Charles Schulz produced a total of 17,897 *Peanuts* comic strips which, at their peak of popularity, were translated into 21 languages, syndicated to 2,600 newspapers and reached an audience of 355 million readers in 75 countries. Through its ubiquitous popularity and continuous run, the longest in the history of dailies, *Peanuts* outdid any business considerations that were the given industrial standards. While *Peanuts* was not the first strip that was heavily marketed, pervasive licensing and blank corporate marketing that quickly mushroomed around Schulz's work forced comics into capitalist media expansion and market saturation (Beaty 2012: 93).

Led into uncharted territory, Schulz reinvented his craft and profession. He released the pressure of the punchline, dug deeper and expanded his storytelling palette. He increasingly dealt with existential themes and moods such as inactivity, lethargy, emptiness and vanity. They were eloquently materialized through the storyline's suspended actions, empty spaces, minute changes and unavoidable recurrences. Apart from the *wu-wei*, the principle of inaction, *Peanuts* has a zen-like quality that is characterized by its *less-is-more* aesthetics. The series consistently explores themes such as the appreciation of time passing, the felicity in the discovery of wisdom, the manifestation of concrete *suchness* of everyday life and nature's and compassion's mishaps, among others. But most of all, *Peanuts* deals with the conundrum of transcending ego-consciousness in an experiential dimension, exemplified through the presence of one of the main characters, Snoopy. The dog, a favorite animal in various zen koans, constitutes the series' displaced center and personifies its opaque nothingness: a meditational state in which the no-ego is posited as the passive agent in constituting things of experience.

*Peanuts* is certainly a masterpiece of style in its ability to engage and sustain its readership. Its readers experience and embody fictional events and create emotional ties by sharing the human condition with the story's characters. Through the multiple forms that move beyond the pages of the newspaper and the book, *Peanuts*

characters are immaterial energy storehouses built on an ever-growing capital of emotional and affective investment. Just think of Snoopy and the pervasive instantiations in retail merchandising such as T-shirts, stickers, coffee-mugs, but also video games, themed music albums, TV shows, theatrical productions, amusement parks and other market derivatives. *Peanuts* is an industry on its own, where publishers and licensing specialists compete across the entire spectrum of media production. In an interview, Charles Schulz is at pains to stress and defend the role of craftsmanship in the corporate empire built around Snoopy and emphasizes the predominance of the comics strip over all auxiliary products, activities and satellite businesses blossoming 'outside' his own work. He says,

'We have covered the world with licensed products – everything from sweat-shirts to lunchboxes to toothbrushes – and have been criticized many times for this, although for reasons that I cannot accept. My best answer to such critics is always that the feature itself has not suffered because of our extracurricular activities. I have drawn every one of the 10,000 strips that have appeared and I have thought of every idea. Not once did I ever let our other activities interfere with our main product – the comic strip' (Schulz 1975: 181).

Is the comics strip really the main product and all the rest 'extracurricular activities'? And what is the value of a statement that buys into the fiction of the economically disinterested artist stuck to his drawing table, unfettered by mercantile calculations?

### ***Peanuts Minus Schulz***

*PmS* is a conceptual comic book project that consists in the reproduction of Schulz's work by commissioned artists, using digital tools and mediated by a digital labor management platform.<sup>5</sup> The percolation of the comic strip units through the reader

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<sup>5</sup> The scarcity of information related to the fabrication of the book is not only symptomatic of platform mediation. Certainly, a digital labor platform operates like a black box, in many respects. The choice to preserve the project's procedural opacity comes as a conscious decision for the non-disclosure of sensitive information that might collide with some academic standards.

swarm of the digital factory calls into question the primacy of storytelling and drawing as *the* defining factors of the image-text medium. Indeed, *PmS* labors silently through the products of an extremely deskilled workforce. The deployment of home-brewed versions of Schulz's work, and their response to the different instructions is both intentional and unpredictable. There is an obstructive contextual materiality, for instance in Anika's translation in Benghali (**Figure 2**) or in Vidjay's playful insertion of autobiographical narrative (**Figure 3**) that bypasses the series' narrow authorial status. *PmS* embraces the industrial aspects of the brand name and without sacrificing semantic complexity and reader engagement, puts the emphasis of com-



**Figure 2:** T-shirt print of a drawing based on Charles Schulz's *Peanuts* made by Anika from Bangladesh, Thursday, February 1st, 2017 (time of completion: 5m and 19s).



**Figure 3:** T-shirt print of a drawing based on Charles Schulz's *Peanuts* made by Vidjay from Indonesia, Monday, February 12th, 2017 (time of completion: 24m and 48s).

ics, in its (digitally) distributed labor. By foregrounding the uneasy interdependence of work and leisure, of artistic craftsmanship and deskilled manpower, *PmS* displaces the integrity of the comic strip as a full-fledged entity, albeit a corporate copyright property, to an ongoing score: Schulz's 50-years work becomes a durational performance that reenacts and retaliates upon the reader space which begs for new subjectivities.

At best, *PmS* buys into the fashionable paradigm of artist-as-entrepreneur and artistic work-as-content management. At worst, it highlights the historically industrial properties of the medium. Microworking as a compositional practice highlights disconcerting aspects of the publishing industry and conjures images of sweatshop production chain, industrial automation, unskilled labor and regimes of just-in-time production modes. Nonetheless, a closer look reveals just the opposite: a queering of the industry's prototypical standardized practices (**Figure 4** presents a rather unconventional and opaque narrative device where the image is broadly occupied by its description). The digital, aggregated micro-actions such as the poorly filtered spam, the algorithmic bot non-sense or





**Figure 4:** T-shirt print of a drawing based on Charles Schulz's *Peanuts* made by an artist from Macedonia, Friday, March 30th 2017 (time of completion: 7m and 17s).

the responses to the variously misread instructions that I had to moderate and filter throughout this process, resist the smooth integration and style uniformization conventionally required in the industry of comics: the collected material constantly fails to fulfill the seamless, unbroken metabolization that leads to a totalizing system. The selection process doesn't have the goal to level or neutralize the differences in the work provided by amateurs, fans or non-artists, neither to enforce any *apprenticeship model* nor exclude unqualified, or marginalize temperamental and idiosyncratic approaches to the interpretation of Schulz's work. Rather the opposite: these submissions radically reconfigure the assumptions made about the individual role different agents can have in a production chain. They underline the very nature of comics as an eternal score subjected to vagaries and contextual instantiations.

*PmS* cannot remain solely a book project. Instead it needs to reflect on the different modes of spatialization (through exhibition formats) or temporalization (through reading performances) of the comics medium, in order to fulfill its industrial ordeal. Printing and framing hundreds of collected submissions would be equal to folding back the project's concept on the content predominance. Instead, a direct confrontation with Schulz's statement about the high-ground of the comics strip in the comics industry and the glorification of the artist's creative genius invites me to invest a larger spectrum of the brand name through the various Snoopy derivatives and merchandising. What would be the effect of a multitude of subjectivities, styles and expertise investing a series of merchandising-only shows made and designed in the digital factory such as t-shirts, hoodies, hats, lunchboxes, figurines, etc. (**Figures 5 and 6**)? These various unsolicited and unauthorized declinations of corporate products make comics' dynamics between art and industry painfully(?) transparent.



**Figure 5:** T-shirt print of a drawing based on Charles Schulz's *Peanuts* made by Tracey from China, Friday, March 12th 2017 (time of completion: 4m and 25s).



**Figure 6:** Coffee cup with a drawing based on Charles Schulz's *Peanuts* made by Anika from Bangladesh, Thursday, April 4th, 2017 (time of completion: 12m and 34s).

### Editor Note

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### Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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