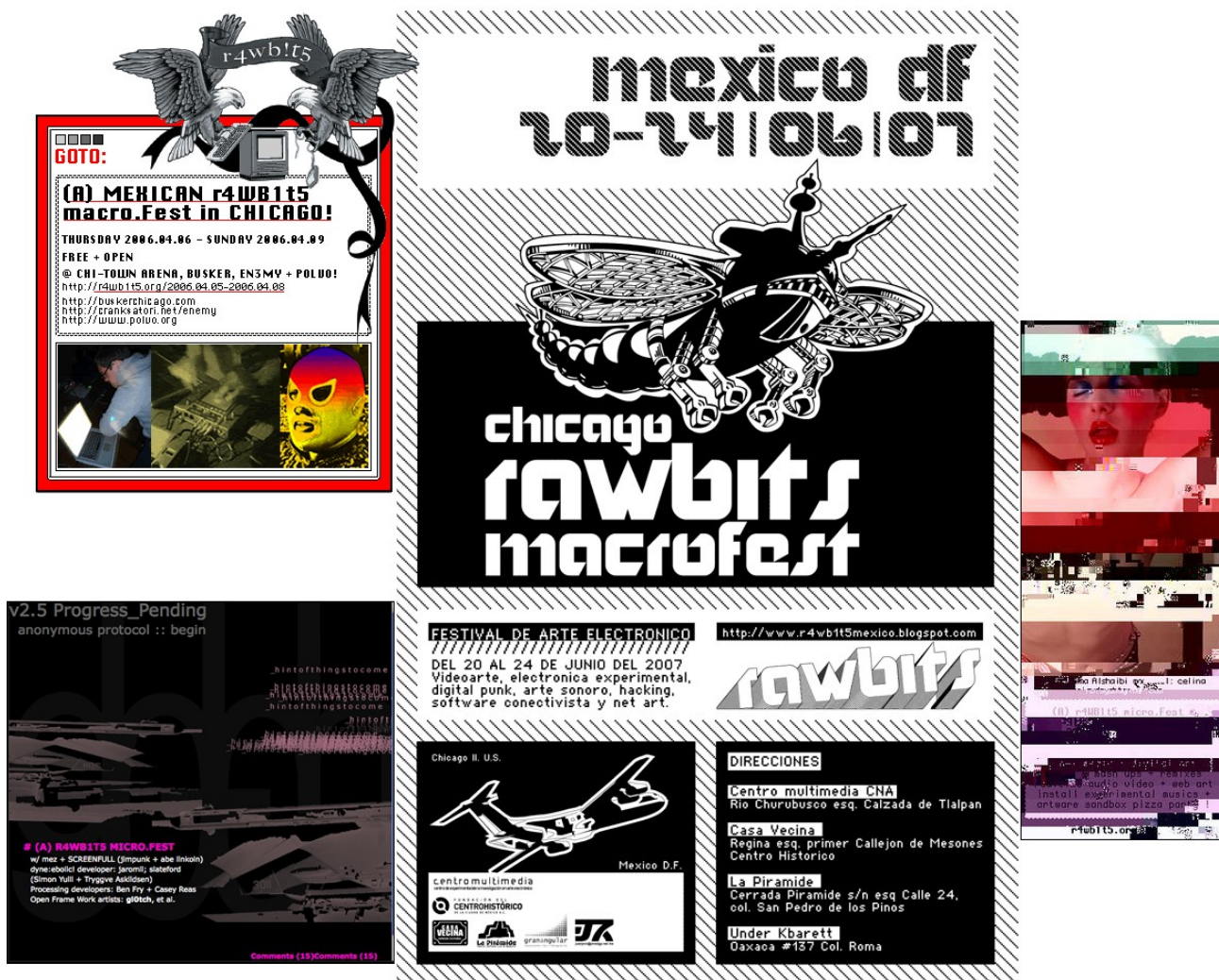


## r4WB1t5 micro.Festival



fliers from various r4WB1t5 micro.Festival events online and in Chicago and Mexico City

“Nerds are cool, haven't you heard? They can also be stunningly artistic. Check out this technologically advanced art exhibit featuring a mix of digital media – samplers, computers and more – that would make any A/V club president proud. I Love Presets, Total Gym! and The Faultless are among those showing work.” - Chicago Tribune, Arts and Entertainment Section, 2005.05.25

“Memo to DJs: Other artists can use computers, too, and they're taking back the CPU for a bounteous display of bit-related bedlam with the (A) r4WB1t5 Festival. Check out audio and visual works involving computers, samplers and other digital media in this art-meets-technology geekfest (no offense). Featuring I Love Presets, Total Gym!, The Faultless and more.” - Metromix Chicago, 2005.05.25

"ART H4X0R5: (A) r4WB1t5 micro.fest (in English, the Rawbits Microfest) showcases what happens when coders turn their Red Bull-damaged attention from programming to aesthetic concerns. In addition to digital art and video presentations, the event includes live music by Teleseen, Chris Bravo and more." - Chicago Reader, Critics Choice, 2005.08.26

"In a very hot, very darkened apartment on Washtenaw, kids are crushed shoulder to shoulder in a narrow hallway, dripping sweat and trying not to move. At least not too much, having picked a vantage from which to peer between heads at the brightly projected image manipulation happening on the wall. It's an art performance, bitmapped scenes flying past at the speed of a VJ flipping dials. On a table across from the entrance, a full stack of pro-grade editing components sit stacked next to a young man hunched over his laptop. In a side room, a video projector mounted on a plastic pedestal beams images transmitted rapid-fire from an Xbox onto a spot in the middle of a picture frame hung on the wall. A boom box on a shelf across the room plays a soundtrack of similarly cut-and-pasted audio files. "Bits" from each converge in a cinematic "mash-up" of visual and audio files, both compiled from works sent in by a total of nearly 100 artists, each frame shown according to an arbitrary duration that's divided by the number of artists. In the middle of it all, a bearded twentysomething wanders through, chugging a tallboy. It's an apartment art show. It's a geeky tech showoff party.

It's the R4wb1t5 (codespeak for "rawbits") microfest, which you can check out online at <http://R4wb1t5.org/2005.08.27>. Organized by partners Jon Cates and John Satrom, the R4wb1t5 microfest first hit the scene on May 25 at hipster dive hangout the Mutiny, and has since branched out to include tonight's event, held in an abandoned apartment that the organizers are squatting. That free-form approach is an important element of the show, something Cates hopes that he can offer as "a microfest framework that we want to encourage others to use when staging these festivals themselves." So far, they've had interest from a gallery in Knoxville, Tennessee called, appropriately enough, The Gallery of Knoxville, and are fielding invitations from curators as far away as Strasbourg, France and Brazil. "We just started the project and it's important to keep it small-scale and manageable," explains Cates, "so it can be fast and happen in such a way that it can be realized easily and simply." Why so? "That ethic is central to, or at least embedded in new media, digital art and a kind of hacker ethic; this idea of transparency, and the ability to realize things on your own--all that's important. We decided to do the first one at the Mutiny, for instance, because they've had this 'bands wanted' sign in the window for years."

And the R4wb1t5 microfest--much like the currently inchoate technology-based art culture it's meant to evoke--certainly screams DIY. That approach, however, may limit the scope of the audience whom they can expose and educate about new media. Problem is, new media's often so new, and some of its conventions so unfamiliar, that when first confronted with it, most have no idea what they're looking at. When Cates first posted an announcement for the R4wb1t5 fest on a popular local visual-art listserv, for instance, the announcement was so riddled with codespeak, a text difficult

to read at first glance as graffiti lettering, that he was mistaken for a hacker and banned from the list. On the flipside, that approach has also helped them establish criteria for staging the fest elsewhere: an artist in Strasbourg interested in putting on the show asked if there was any funding available, a question that led to a conversation about how there's a general lack of arts funding in the U.S. That conversation, in turn, helped them explain that the proper way to stage the show was to seek out a basement or an abandoned apartment, print up some flyers and then, explains Cates, to consider how to book the show, "based on a network or digital culture: how do you shift and adapt? How do you work in these different systems? What does that allow you to do in terms of the commentary you want to make on the socio-political culture you're working in? Asking those kind of questions are what's really at the heart of our efforts."

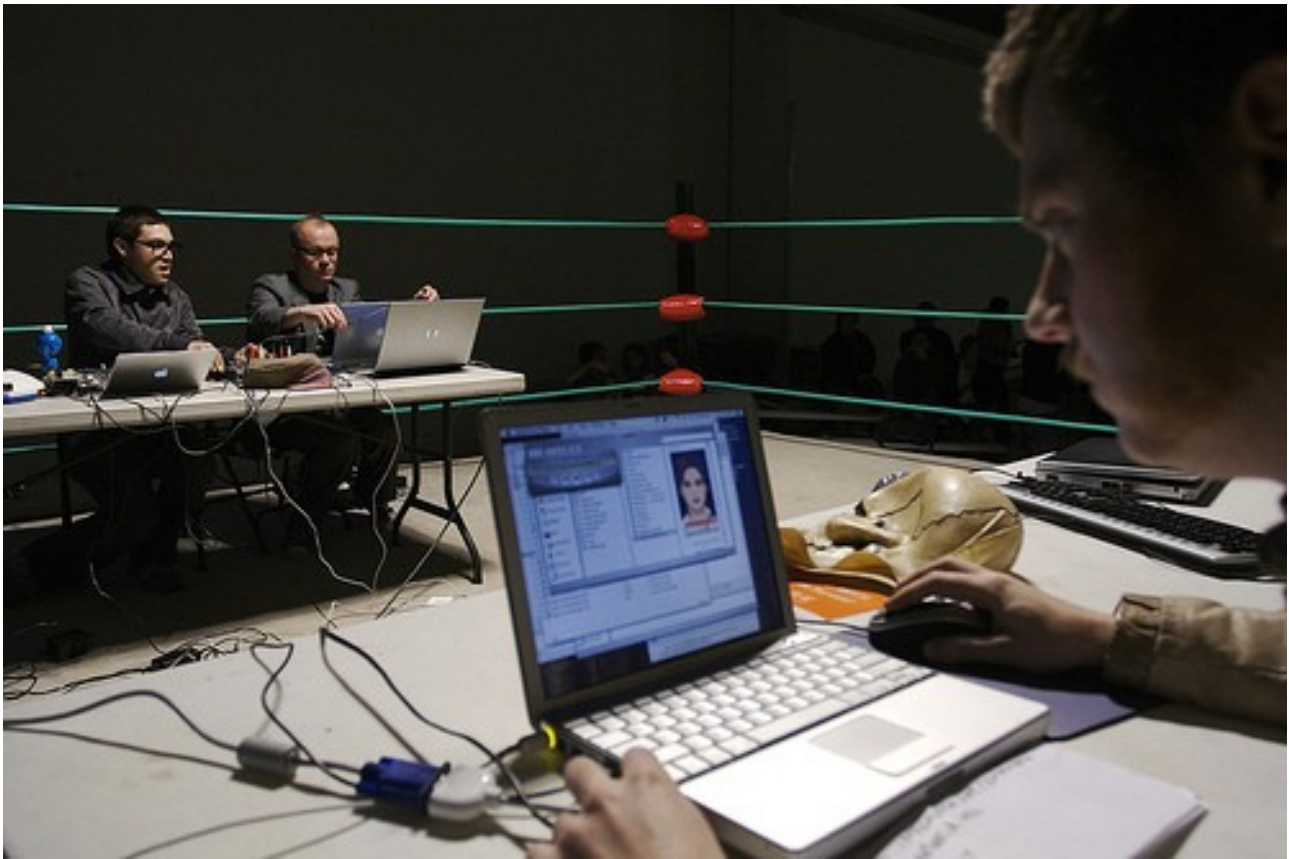
Their socio-political approach clearly has implications for visual art as well. By seeding their approach in a digital punk culture, they're making a commentary on the kind of cleanliness inherent to digital work. "That's another critique I hope we're mobilizing, that there can be a kind of rawness to the work," says Cates. And it's difficult to disagree. As one girl in a sticky T-shirt raises her arms above her head and sways her hips in a dance to what's essentially a silent room, it suddenly becomes hard to imagine new media going very far without it." - Michael Workman, T3ch S44vvy, 2005.08.30, NewCity Chicago, Art / Eye Exam Section

"Memo to DJs: Other artists can use computers, too, and they're taking back the CPU for a bounteous display of bit-related bedlam with the (A) r4WB1t5 Festival. Check out audio and visual works involving computers, samplers and other digital media in this art-meets-technology geekfest (no offense)." - Metromix on (A) r4WB1t5 Festival, 2005

"Randomness rules at Wicker Park's Enemy gallery courtesy of R4wb1t5, the byte-sized techno-geek organization with the funny name, as they host another experimental audio-video-digital noise fest." Flavorpill on (A) r4WB1t5 Festival, 2006

"Across the spectrum to contemporary art, we have the r4WB1t5 mAcro.Fest, a tech-art event organized by Amanda Gutierrez, Jon Cates and Jonathan Satrom, this time focusing specifically on work by Mexican artists. Writing about this group, it's necessary to explain every time that the odd letter-character/number spelling combination is an example of "leet speak," with the word "leet" derived from the word "elite," originally a way of using ciphered spelling to recognize those "in the know," mostly in the gaming and online worlds. This special r4WB1t5 festival's focus has attracted the attention of Mexican art boosters across the city and netted sponsorships from the likes of Mexican government organizations such as the Consulado General de Mexico, the Secretaria de Relaciones and under-recognized tech-art consortium Centromultimedia. The Art Institute has also thrown in its support with the involvement of Internet radio station Free Radio SAIC. Running from Thursday through Sunday, this installment takes place at four different locations, starting with Pilsen's

Chi-Town Futbol Arena, where artist-programmer Arcangel Constantinni will curate "a live Net Art wrestling match." Constantinni will also present his Infomera VS CH1C4G0.COM project, and "the Mexico City based dønut project will go head to head against PIRANACON.EXE in an experimental electronic music battle." In the days that follow, the r4WB1t5 festival kids will take their show to three additional locations: the Busker space (<http://buskerchicago.com>) at 1087 North Hermitage on Friday, EN3EMY (<http://cranksatori.net/enemy>) at 1550 North Milwaukee on Saturday and back to Pilsen and the Polvo gallery ([www.polvo.org](http://www.polvo.org)) at 1458 West 18th Street on Sunday. A full schedule of festival events is available--where else?--online at <http://r4wb1t5.org/2006.04.05-2006.04.08> (note to the organizers: try making your web addresses a little less bulky next time, please?). Try to make at least one night of this fest, since this art's very young and still forming, offering a rare chance to view a new art form in its infancy." - Michael Workman, Past, Present and Future, 2006-04-04, NEWCITY CHICAGO Eye Exam



Mario DeVega, Arcangel Constantinni, Jon Satrom, Jake Elliott, jonCates and Ben Syverson  
in a live Net Art wrestling match during (A) Mexican r4WB1t5 macro.Fest in Chicago