An online artistic game : the 12 Labors of the Internet User

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1. NAME OF THE WORK

"The 12 labors of the internet user" (2008)
URL : http://www.the12labors.com/
Screen captures :   http://www.utc.fr/~bouchard/12-labors/images/

2. AUTHORS

- An original idea by Serge Bouchardon.
- Conception and development : Serge Bouchardon, Aymeric Brisse, Mathieu Brigolle, Christopher Espargeliere, Mikael Labrut, Jérémie Lequeux, Adrien Pegaz-Blanc.

3. BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Serge Bouchardon worked as a project manager in the educational software industry for six years. He is currently associate professor at the University of Technology of Compiegne (France).
Among his research fields : interactive narrative, electronic literature.

4. THE ORIGINAL IDEA

One day, on the internet, I was bombarded with pop-ups. As soon as I closed one, two opened in its place. I felt like Hercules facing the Lernaean Hydra : when he smashes one head, two more burst forth in its place. This gave me the idea to write a scenario of the 12 labors of Hercules for the internet user. We indeed all have the impression to suffer on the internet : blocking popups, getting rid of spam, retrieving a page no longer accessible… The Internet is sometimes Greek to us.
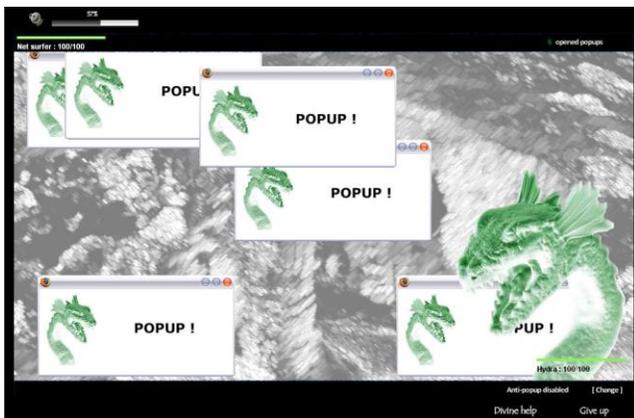

Figure 1. The Lernaean Hydra.

5. ARTIST STATEMENT

In this online artistic game, the internet user is regarded as the Hercules of the Internet. Often, he has indeed the impression to have to achieve Herculean labours. It can be a question of blocking popups which keep coming when one would like to see them disappear (the Lernean Hydra), cleaning the inbox of its spam (the Augean Stables), driving away the advertising banners (the Stymphalian Birds) or retrieving specific information (the Belt of the Queen of the Amazons)...

Hercules, in a fit of madness, had killed his wife and their children. Jealous of the power of Hercules, his cousin Eurystheus had imposed on him twelve labours considered as unfeasible. The internet user wonders what he did wrong to have brought upon himself so many obstacles. It is only by being persevering that the internet user can reach his aims. Does that make him a demigod ?

This work draws upon the mythology of everyday life. It does not consist in showing the tragedy of existence, but in transforming our daily activities into a myth. It is consequently a question of experiencing technology in an epic - but also humoristic - mode…

Figure 2. The Erymanthean Boar.

6. THE 12 LABORS

The internet user has to :
- log onto the Internet (NEMEAN LION)
- close all the popups (LERNAEAN HYDRA)
- be the most skillful in an online game (CERYNEIAN DEER)
- browse through a hypertextual maze (ERYMANTHEAN BOAR)
- clean the spam (AUGEAN STABLES)
- drive away the advertising banners (STYMPHALIAN BIRDS)
- eradicate a virus (CRETAN BULL)
- neutralize cookies (HORSES OF DIOMEDES)
- find specific information on the Internet (BELT OF HIPPOLYTE)
- neutralize someone who harasses him under three different profiles on a social networking website (CATTLE OF GERYON)
- participate in wikipedia and provide the fruits of knowledge (APPLES OF THE HESPERIDES)
- bring back web pages which are no longer accessible (CERBERUS)

7. TECHNICAL ASPECTS

Flash, php, MySQL.

8. OFFICIAL SELECTIONS

- DIMEA 2008 (*Digital Interactive Media in Entertainment and Arts*, September 2008, Athens, Greece) :
http://www.dimea2008.org/ (*Accepted Submissions*).
- *Electronic Literature in Europe* (September 2008, Bergen, Norway) :
http://elitineurope.net/node/4
- *Electronic Literature Organization* Media Arts Show (May-June 2008, Vancouver, USA) :
http://www.vancouver.wsu.edu/programs/dtc/elo08/media.html
- *E-poetry* Festival (May 2007, Paris, France) :
http://www.epoetry2007.net/french/totos.html