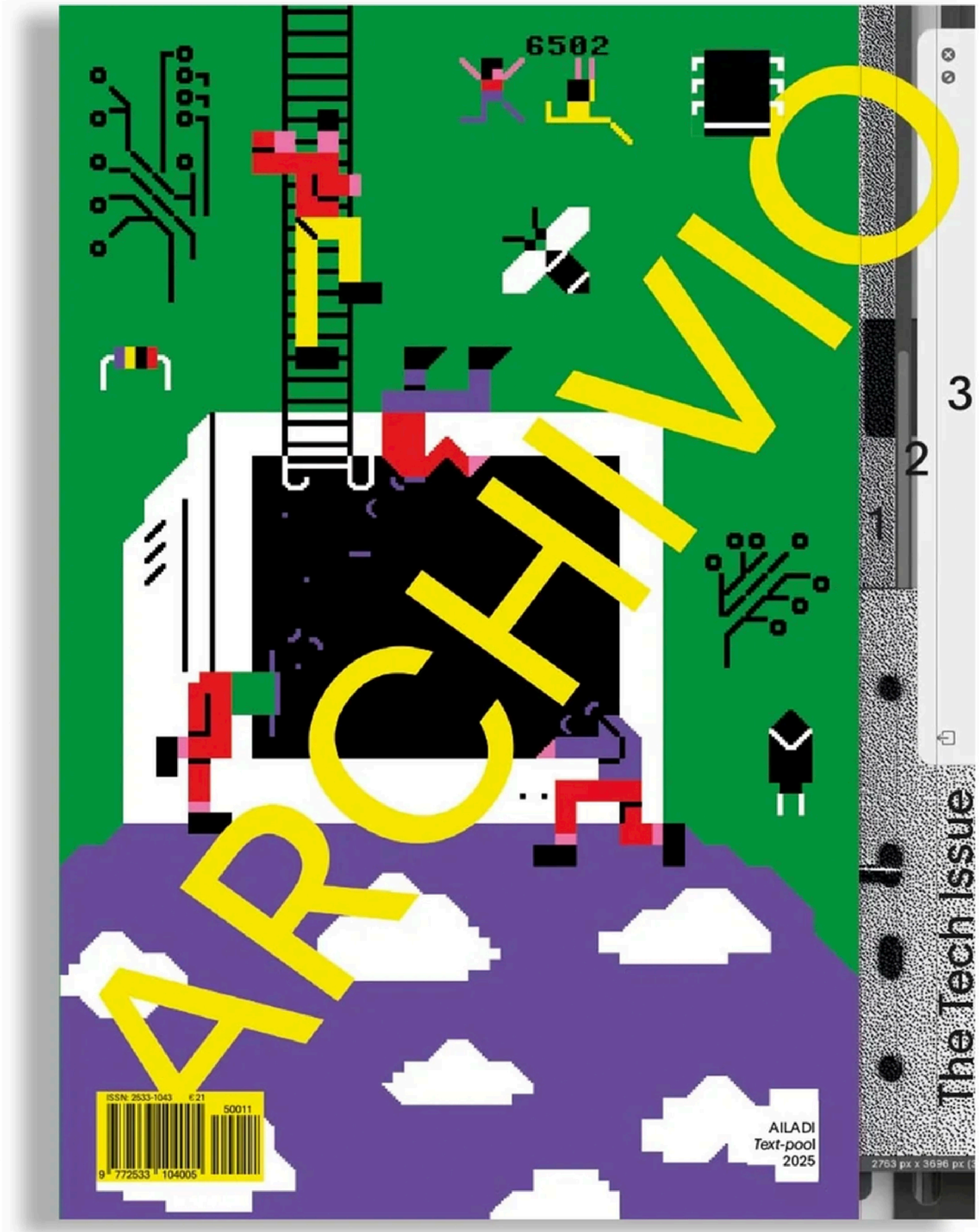


ARCHIVIO opens its third editorial cycle: four thematic issues, each curated by a Guest Editor with deep expertise, offering access to worlds where past, present, and future converge.

The third issue, ARCHIVIO N°11, focuses on technology and is curated by Massimo Banzi, co-founder of Arduino, together with Cecilia Botta, technology historian and Head of Memories at Promemoria Group, the magazine's publisher. Daniela Hamaui oversees editorial direction, while Alessandro Gori shapes the art direction.

The cover, designed by artist Ailadi, pays tribute to the early aesthetics of the digital age. Created using PETSCII, the character set of Commodore 8-bit computers, it evokes the visual language of technology in its formative years.

ARCHIVIO N°11 maps the international landscape of technology archives, tracing the roots of the digital revolution and exploring the places where our technological past is preserved, along with the collectors and institutions that recognized its cultural value.

The issue is structured in three sections – *Stories*, *Institutions*, *Collectors & Collectives* – and includes a special poster: an (in)complete mapping of Italy's technology archives, researched by Promemoria Group and visually interpreted by Accurat.

A Meme Manifesto Project

By
Clusterduck

How to archive something that thrives on constant mutation and delights in its own vastness?

From Borges to Baudrillard, this question has sparkled many experiments, often suspended between surrealist jokes and philosophical musings. In recent years, it has gained a new urgency and scale, as the AI dataset metaphor is violently imposing itself on culture. Increasingly, we encounter clickbait headlines such as: "In 2023, generative Artificial Intelligence has generated 15 billion images—something human photographers took 150 years to do." Instead of helping us grasp a process that is, by its nature, impossible to reduce to mere statistics and labels, such statements leave us exhausted, lost and vaguely anxious. Worse, they deprive us of agency, depicting human and technological phenomena as a cosmic, elemental force that we can't grasp, let alone archive.

However, archiving the impossible was exactly what we decided to do when we started our activity as a post-internet research collective. Back in 2016, AI wasn't the thing yet, but it was already clear that, if datasets were to be built, internet memes and digital art would become a goldmine. Nonetheless, our interest for internet memes was motivated by something else entirely. We loved that world full of neon lights, fluffy clouds, cute animals and countless pop-cultural references which, combined with short text elements, became powerful, unconditionally relatable signifiers. Memes were everywhere in our threads.

Facebook groups, Tumblr pages, subreddits—they were everything and nothing at the same time. On one hand, a few pixels were enough to make us feel part of a movement, an aesthetic, an important moment in internet history. On the other, outsiders often dismissed that world, our world, as nothing more than a silly joke—or, in most cases, total crap, aka 'shitposting'. Something you would enjoy in your free time, basically wasting it.
And yet, patterns began to emerge. People analyzed memes in comment sections. Groups popped up to discuss styles. Then came the big shift: Memes started to be weaponized. It's hard to describe, looking back, what it meant in that moment to become aware that: yes—memes were being used to influence political elections, support teams or sell brands. And yes—the language we knew so well did have value, and we had a responsibility:
to reveal its power to everyone we could.
'Language' is a heavy keyword here. It's not every day you witness a new global language emerge in real time. Of course, we had already started archiving memes before we even knew what we were doing. Not only because, for us and our peers, they were the natural language we used to communicate in the digital space—meaning that it was wise to keep a few folders full of them, waiting for the perfect moment to drop them—but also because we knew that, sooner or later, what matters in the digital dimension impacts the physical world.

In the midst of the Cambridge Analytica scandal, Clusterduck was born with the aim to break through bubbles and echo-chambers. We could see already that the internet wasn't becoming the friendly, quirky global village we were promised. Instead, it was evolving into a complex mess of extractivist platforms and surveillance systems. Still, we weren't ready to let go. Even our name, originally a phone-autocorrected joke on 'clusterf*ck', and our logo—a nod to a beloved meme—are an attempt to resist the loss of meaning and human cooperation. We do so with laughter and kinship, as these are the weapons the system has left us.

And this is how *Meme Manifesto* came to life. A desperately ambitious transmedia work, not devoid of a certain idealistic, naive enthusiasm, comprising every sort of practice and medium we had at our disposal: an art book, an interactive website, a physical installation, a series of Telegram research chats, a bridge bot archive and many, many participative workshops, happening all around the world, online and offline. Slowly, over the course of months and then years, all these elements started manifesting themselves in the real world through the large scale modular installation *The Detective Wall*.

The Wall began with ten panels, each an anti-archive in itself. Rather than cataloging memes in a traditional sense, one of our aims was to recreate the ephemeral context in which memes are born through a collection of social and visual clusters, printed out and turned into a shared experience. Our goal was to make sense of the clusterf*ck: not just trace and collect memes, but to question what 'archiving' even means in a space where everything constantly changes.
That's when we stumbled upon Aby Warburg's Bilderatlas Mnemosyne, and his theoretical approach to archiving and juxtaposition.

In many workshops and museums, from the French Riviera to foggy Lombardy, from rainy Berlin to chilly Copenhagen, *The Detective Wall* evolved: pieces were lost and added, new memes introduced, connections redrawn. The first ten panels appeared at Ars Electronica during COVID. Then expansions kept growing around them, culminating in the winter of 2024 at KW Institute of Contemporary Art in Berlin, back where it all began, thanks to Nadim Samman's invitation to the collective exhibition *Poetics of Encryption*.

Memetics had grown, becoming ever more complex—and so had we. We had now reached the point where we could stand in front

How We Grew Up While Mapping the Memesphere

THE MEME IS ALWAYS PLURAL, NEVER SINGULAR.

IT IS PERCEIVED IN A CONTEXT.



IT IS ENJOYED IN CLUSTERS.



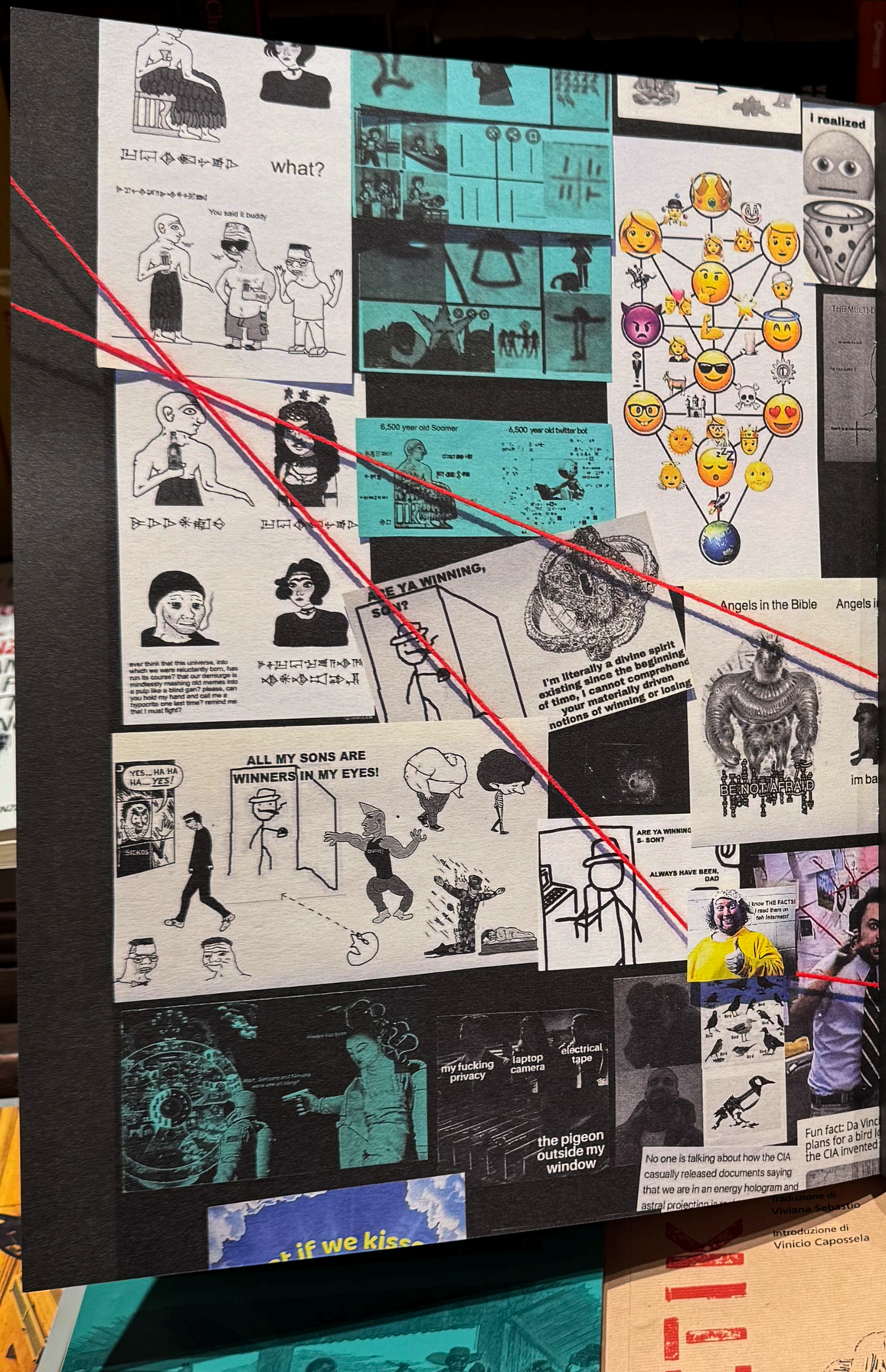




Clusterduck, Meme Manifesto exhibition, Villa Arson, 2022







of the Wall for hours, explaining to some poor, unaware visitor the story behind each of those yellowed paper images, rambling about how each image connects to the others—how it all tells the story of the past decade of our lives.

The threads traced at the beginning were now taking unforeseeable paths, as in the case of the first ironic Doge, who had evolved into a metamemetic flow-chart on the different levels of irony, then into a mascot for the war in Ukraine, but also into a cryptocurrency, eventually becoming the namesake of Elon Musk's infamous Department for Government Efficiency. While the most absurd, weird things kept happening to the world and to meme culture, we started fearing that, rather than some kind of post-digital Aby Warburg, we were increasingly resembling the crazy meme detective: frantically pointing at our conspiracy wall, convinced that we've figured it all out.

An archive is, by definition, something that is accessible in a fixed space and time, and that preserves the artifacts and outputs that it aims to archive. But what happens when you add artistic expression and visual research to this equation?

Warburg's panels weren't just archives, they were maps, inviting the viewer to sense hidden affinities and emotional undercurrents across centuries. This method illuminated what he called Pathosformel, formulas of pathos, i.e. shared representations of emotions like grief, ecstasy, or rage, persisting from classical antiquity into the Renaissance and beyond. In memetics, we would call that "the feels". Memes, too, rely on reconfiguring familiar images in new contexts, carrying forward gestures, facial expressions, or archetypes charged with emotion. By braiding classical art and modern vernacular imagery, Warburg's work offered us a way to let the memesphere exist in space and hopefully, in time.

So, getting back to the beginning, how to archive something that cannot be archived?

We don't have a straight answer. But one thing feels certain: the key is participation. That is why, while the online version of the archive, mememanifesto.space, made the archiving activity accessible in a digital space, the real archiving platform consisted of the countless exchanges we had with meme students, artists, memers and online communities, as we were building the project.

As we state in Meme Manifesto's website—"The Meme is always plural, never singular. It is experienced in a context, it is enjoyed in clusters."

And if our cluster is what keeps us going, hopefully it can pass a bit of its spark on to you, too. A

Clusterduck is an interdisciplinary collective working in the fields of new media studies, design, and transmedia, investigating the processes and actors behind the creation of Internet-based content.

A Meme Manifesto Project: How We Grew Up While Mapping the Memesphere

Clusterduck, Poetics of Encryption, installation views, Galerie Rudolfinum, 2025