Julia Weist with Nestor Siré
17.(SEPT) [By WeistSiréPC™]

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Julia Weist (b. 1984, New York, NY) holds a BFA from the Cooper Union School of Art and a MLIS from Pratt Institute. She is the recipient of the 2016 Net Based Audience Prize from Haus Der Elektronischen Künste, Basel, and the 2015 Media Plan Award from the Outdoor Advertising Association of America. She has recently exhibited at The Luminary, St. Louis (2016), Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam (2015), and 83 Pitt Street, New York City (2016) for her solo exhibition, Parbunkells. Weist currently lives and works in New York.

Nestor Siré (b. 1988, Camagüey, Cuba) participated in the Havana Biennial (2015), the Festival of New Latin American Cinema in Cuba (2013), the Asunción International Biennale, Paraguay (2015), and the Oberhausen International Festival of Short Film, Germany (2016). In 2016, Siré won the “Visa for Creation” from l’Institut Français. His exhibition has been presented at venues including the National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana; Hong-Gah Museum, Taipei; UNAM Museum of Contemporary Art, México City; and Museum of Contemporary Art, Santa Fe. Siré currently lives and works in Havana.

17.(SEPT) [By WeistSiréPC™], a project by American artist Julia Weist in collaboration with Cuban artist Nestor Siré, explores creative social strategies surrounding media circulation in Cuba, where a majority of the population has little to no internet access. The project highlights the most significant of these phenomena, El Paquete Semanal or “the weekly package,” a one-terabyte digital media collection, aggregated weekly and circulated via in-person file sharing. The distribution of this offline content—largely entertainment material, strictly excluding pornography and politics—has developed into a full-blown industry that reaches nearly every Cuban national.

In 2016, Siré invited Weist to participate in his folder !!!Sección A R T E or “Art Section,” featured monthly in the Paquete. Weist, trained in information science with special interests in systems of knowledge and circulation, proposed the conceptual insertion of an original video work documenting quotidian internet browsing behavior. Featuring popular actor Mark Ruffalo, the video is permissible in the Paquete due to his celebrity status, despite its political implications.

The centerpiece of 17.(SEPT) [By WeistSiréPC™] is a 64 terabyte server containing 52 weeks of El Paquete Semanal from August 2016 to August 2017—the only formalized archive of this ephemeral system. Its construction and deployment was designed around the legal restrictions of US-Cuba relations as they changed over the last year. Where possible, the artists have secured the rights to distribute the contents from the week of August 8, 2016 to Queens Museum visitors free of charge.

El Paquete Semanal is also the main platform for advertising in Cuba. For 17.(SEPT) [By WeistSiréPC™] the artists worked with ETRES, Cuba’s first ad agency since 1959. (Before the Cuban government legalized regulated private business in 2010, advertisements were not necessary because the state managed all goods and services.) Promo Manual (2016-2017) is a graphic identity with a variety of manifestations inspired by the aesthetics of the studios that download and organize the Paquete, exemplifying how Siré and Weist’s research and interventions form a feedback loop through U.S. and Cuba’s contrasting political, geographic, economic, technological, and cultural circuits, and highlight the forces that shape our contemporary perspectives.