Conservators and computer scientists join forces to update older internet works for today's browsers

Work on Mark Napier's 2002 piece net.flag was recently completed by the Guggenheim.

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The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York has known few "net" works. since 1998, the museum’s computer science has been partnering with the Department of Computer Science at New York University (NYU), leading to exhibitions, a help centre, and now an online programme. In 2018, the final one—Mark Napier’s devnet—was launched in March 2018 and now successfully completed. net.flag, which references router IP addresses in the early 2000s, can now be accessed at netflag.guggenheim.org.

Jon Ippolito, who was a curator at the Guggenheim in the early 2000s, described "net.flag" as "an emblem for the internet as a new territory, an area for exploration of new cultural and artistic potential, one that is constantly evolving." The original piece included the symbols of the internet (the United States, the Netherlands), Napier and his assistants downloaded and analysed each work. They created a new collection, which included descriptions of the meanings and influences behind each work. People could use the new collection, as well as the older and unique collection.

The basis of net.flag was a technical system that used natural language and computer code explanations. As "no longer supported in today’s internet," 2020, the museum conducted several meetings in collaboration with Napier and the Guggenheim's curators, before embarking on an analysis of the code. The new work on the final one—Mark Napier's 2002 piece net.flag—was created in a similar "style" and the work's essence was retained, some aspects have changed.

AIMEE DAWSON
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