

## Narcissus search engine

### Background

For a while now, I have been trying to think about an issue related yet somehow different to the Shadow Search conundrum. I was thinking about what happens when we look at the dark and shaded corners, the previously dismissed, the socially and culturally renegade and rendered "invisible".

The obvious yet interesting thing, in my view, is that once we do look at such dark corners, by the very act of taking a look, we shine a light, and that very act creates both other dark areas and "new" possible territories for capital to concur. This works very well for the commercial art world that has to continuously bring to light artists, works, and concepts it has previously shunned, in order that "new value" will be created. In other words, new territories are being "found" for the art world by bringing artists out of the shadows, and by the very act, it creates artists in the shade, that could be illuminated in the next fad.

Such thoughts made me consider possible modes that might possibly question the cyclic process of looking into shadows while creating new ones. The opportunity to work with Stephen Write's shadow conundrum, seemed interesting from the perspective of both allowing the general thoughts have a more specific instance, and that they seem to offer a certain solution in this very context.

I am not entirely convinced it is the kind of solution that is sought after, however, I do think it is a possible solution that might at least provide some perceptual thoughts for the conundrum.

### About the Narcissus search engine

The request in the Shadow Search call was for a natural language search engine, however, Narcissus does not provide a sophisticated algorithm to pin point projects that are in the shadows. It is using other mechanisms which should be explained.

The working of Narcissus supposes that it is a search engine on a web site which specifically asks its users to submit links for shadow sites in various areas.

In the specific case of Stephen Write's shadow search, these might be sites of projects and or information that relate to the ideas in shadow search. The pre-supposition is that users will submit possibly relevant sites, which Narcissus then harvests providing that indeed the sites do not contain or relate to "art". This is done by simply weeding out the string "art" in harvested sites, and sites they might be linked to – as well as telling users who might use a string containing "art", that Narcissus does not do art.

One of the Narcissus myth "warnings" is that of not recognising one's own reflection. The Narcissus search is thus made with keeping users' reflections well away. This is done by moving the most popular search results deeper into the shadows, while keeping the less popular in either "lighter shades", or "un shaded". By this spiralic algorithm, there is an ongoing process of placing information that gets more attention, the more it becomes like looking at the self's reflection – hence it goes ever deeper in the shadows. The more attention a certain information gets, the deeper in the shadows it gets, hence placing the information that culturally in the shadows, the less attention drawing information, in "lighter shades".

To achieve the above, Narcissus is based on an imagined maths. It supposes that just as square root of -1 is  $i$ , the  $i$  sq root is  $-i$ , and  $-i$  sq root brings us back to 1. Therefore Narcissus imagines the states of -1,  $i$ , and  $-i$  as shades, and does calculations to keep information in these shade. The more a certain information is called for and used, the darker shade of shadow it gets, the harder it is for it to come into states where it might be viewed.

Narcissus also has the possibility to be distributed, in a sense have conflicting shadows where various installations of the search engine provide various focuses that provide information excluded by the other. For example, in one installation the focus might be the string "art", in another it might be "oil". This distributed element supposes that the code is freely available..