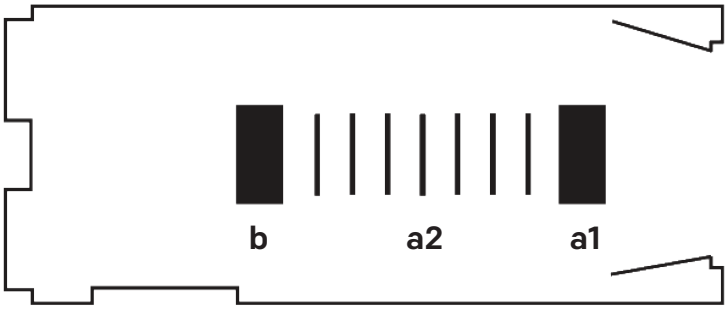
CHINESE GOLD

UBERMORGEN
September 27
- November 8, 2017
@LIMA



a.Chinese Gold, 2006-2015

In China there are over 2000 Online-Gaming Workshops that hire people (over 500.000) to play online games such as World of Warcraft (WoW) day and night. The gaming workers produce in-game currency, equipments, and whole characters that are sold to American and European Gamers via Ebay. These people are called ''Chinese Gold Farmers'' and their practice is building up credits and online value through the monotonous repetition of basic tasks in online games such as World of Warcraft. The trade in virtual assets is very real, and outside the control of the games' makers. Millions of gamers around the world are prepared to pay real money for such online credits, which they can use to progress in the online games. China is the factory of virtual goods. The computers are never turned off. The future is now!

In Warcraft, it's the currency itself that's being overproduced, not just any product. That means it'll take more units of that currency to exchange for any product. Inflation. The price of everything goes up. Everything you worked so hard to save up suddenly becomes worth so much less. The Warcraft economy appears to be on the lip of this plunge and administrators are taking steps to curb inflation. When they find a career farmer, they ban the character. Now the farming company has to re-buy the game and set up a new account. This makes the process of creating these goods overseas more expensive, and functions similar to a tariff (which is a protective tax). There is a balance, which in the real world, the Treasury, and the Federal Reserve, and International Organizations try to maintain. And by maintain, I mean getting as much cheap shit for themselves as possible without throwing the system completely out of whack. (In the finance industry, human rights is a footnote, if anything.) What lies ahead for the Warcraft economy? Let's keep watching it in the future, let's keep watching chinese prisons, let's keep watching the structurally weak areas of the USA.

http://www.ubermorgen.com/2007/projects/Chinese_Gold/

a1.Chinese Gold (Boom), 2015

''it represents the gold mining in its purest and most primitive form...'' -Ubermorgen

https://vimeo.com/141693496

a2.Chinese Gold, Untitled 1 - 7, 2006

Photographs in one of the hundreds of workshops where young chinese play World of Warcraft in China.

http://www.hansbernhard.com/X/pages/photo/pages/chinese_gold_workshop.html

b.Chinese Coin (Red Blood), 2015

Chinese Coin mining has recently made the People's Republic of China the world's largest Bitcoin producer. Mining requires exertion and it slowly makes new currency available at a rate that resembles the rate at which commodities like gold, copper, diamonds, nickel, rare earth, silver, uranium and zinc are mined from the ground. One of the reasons for the fast growth is the buildout of hydropower in the west of the country. The first petahash mining farms were built in Shanxi and Inner Mongolia where coal was cheap and plentiful, but cheap coal can't compete with free water and now the farms are migrating en masse towards the west.

One of the multi-petahash bitcoin mines is nestled in the Tibetan mountains. The mining-farm operates over 10,000 Antminer S5 units. In comparison about 100 million new red blood cells are being formed in a human body every minute! Bitcoin Mining is an arms race where it comes down to who can produce the fastest, most energy-efficient chips for the least amount of money and deploy them the quickest, very similar to the red blood cells production in the human body. Mining hardware consist of chips (cells) that have a profitable life-span of about 4 months. Both use vast amounts of energy and as a result create life in its various forms. More than 50 percent of the Bitcoin network's collective processing power - or 'hashing power' - lies with a group of Chinese mining pools: AntPool, F2Pool (BTC: 90.0 Phash/s on 10/7/15), BTCChina, BW Mining, and Huobi. The red blood video stems from a single Chinese Bitcoin mine, spanning six sites, which held down roughly three percent of the network's total hashing power on its own when the video was shot in 2014. Bitcoin is famously volatile but that is perhaps one of the reasons many people love it so mucWWh – its unpredictability its hardcore subversive power.

https://vimeo.com/145141943

All works courtesy of the Artist, Carroll / Fletcher Gallery, London, LIMA

Interview with UBERMORGEN

Julie Boschat Thorez: When and why did you start researching gold mining?

UBERMORGEN: It was early 2004 when we read about something called gold mining in China. The combination of this classical term with MMORPGs* was super stimulating. We knew about outsourcing call-centers to India in the early 1980s so we could very well imagine the consequences of the Internet on the global job market. But it is one thing to imagine it and know about it and another one to witness it. The research turned out to be a demonstration of these developments, which were totally logical and subsequent to earlier processes and developments. It was amazing to actually watch them happening in real life. When we ran into the Gold Farming documentary of Ge Jin, the time was right and ripe to exploit the current demand on the digital art market for game related artworks, so we decided to do a quick and dirty project. We used samples from Ge Jin's movie (video-stills inked in blue) and found footage of Gold Farmers killing a dragon over and over again from YouTube and released the first batch of works within a couple of weeks.

JBT: The first time I saw the work, was online. I watched the video Chinese Gold (Boom) on Vimeo. Alongside it, you provided a link to the project page from which I navigated between the works, video excerpts, articles and external links. At some point I found it hard to establish a clear distinction between your production and other sources. Can you tell more about the relationship between collecting information and creating the works?

UM: The Boom Video is a re-edit of the original found footage from 2005, it is even more abstract but with the same soundtrack. Once the information is collected you can use it or not, you can edit it or not. For us there is no difference between intermediate goods from our own production or from any other source (found footage, other artists work, etc.). The sources are completely irrelevant to our working process and we consider this to be a legal stand-point as well. In reverse, we have no issue at all if our finished work or any data of ours is being used with or without credit and with or without manipulation. What we mainly do is to contextualize - which means to spin the narrative and to add references and concerted confusion - and to manipulate the material so it will be identifiable as, and branded by, UBERMORGEN, hence be aesthetically and logically integrated into the release-history of UBERMORGEN. In general, the collection of information and materials can be either very systematic (but rather not) or very fluid and dynamic. We may read something in the news, find out about something through mailing lists or social networks, engage in discussions. When Hans was in Belgrad for a show in 2006, a friend took him for a visit to an Arcade game center where he met and documented European World of Warcraft players, which became another series. Sometimes we do share and discuss findings between the two of us, sometimes we don't. Our positions can be controversial or oppositional and the sources are pure working-material, they have no rights, they have no special position, as they would in a fact-based scientific environment. They are just little pieces of one big image that could be called a project, an assemblage of different media and stories into one product. The actual process of creation is very vague, sometimes it will be just a few manipulations - taking just a few days - such as in Chinese Gold, or it can be a medium sized project such as Chinese Coin (Red Blood). Chinese Coin is based on a film documenting Bitcoin Mines in China and extensively uses samples from the Japanese Movie Tetsuo The Iron Man from 1989, where a businessman accidentally kills The Metal Fetishist who then gets his revenge by slowly turning the man into a grotesque hybrid of flesh and rusty metal. This project became more complex due to our long-distance collaboration with Mike Huntemann, a fantastic artist who created the soundtrack and edited the video. Lizvlx was in charge of the art direction and Hans contextualized and wrote the story of the Bitcoin mines moving towards the center and then the mountains of China due to cheaper electricity. Sometimes we have really long-term, action-based projects that can run between 3-12 months, or research-based projects spanning over 1-3 years. We have no clear process and rules regulating the different phases. We believe this is one of the strengths - and maybe one of our weaknesses. We have a major aversion against repetition and due process, and against authority as a consequence.

JBT: With Chinese Gold you have explored the World of Warcraft economy. As I understood, to be successful in the game, players need to buy equipment with in-game currency, which is accumulated through in-game auctions or work. Players pay for a monthly subscription to have access to the game and sometimes they want to shortcut their path to success. So they buy in-game currency with real money. As a consequence, generating in-game currency for trade has become the huge business you describe, leading to in-game inflation. It is clear that the World of Warcraft economy and the global economy influence each other. How would you describe their relationship?

UM: It is one and the same, or one is part of the other and maybe the other way around. If we look at what you describe, there are different parts, there are in/out-game production processes, transactions and financial markets, but also out-of-game financial and production aspects (Blizzard Entertainment is a subsidiary of Activision Blizzard NASDAQ: ATVI). We have developed a strong aversion against the 'virtual' (fake) separation of the digital (online, cyber, etc.) and the physical. This story does not and has never made any sense! It was simply a ruse and utopian hard-core propaganda by both Silicon Valley hippies (creators and followers of the California Ideology) and neo-liberal and neo-reactionary (NRx) entities. Their intention was to push their ideology and control the mindset of the user. And they intended to push through specific global corporate agendas before international laws could be defined, implemented and established. We live in a

both fully physical and a fully cognitive environment, we can't think the universe other than physical and we can hardly grasp that 'we' are purely cognitive machines using sensory tools that translate matter into electricity. So, back to your concrete question, again, there is no difference between 'in the game' (World of Warcraft economy) and 'in the world' (global economy), it is not even clear whether the world is in the game or the game in the world or the world is the world or the world is the game or the game is the world, it is both and or nothing, never always.

JBT: How do the phenomena of Gold mining and Bitcoin mining relate?

UM: Both are sweatshops, as in both of them humans have become pure operators of machines. Bitcoin mines need one or two operators to run more than 10,000 machines, in gold mining the ratio is closer to 1:1, 1:3 maximum. Bitcoin mining is currently considered to be super cool, high-tech, seriously political and forward-thinking, while gold mining has a much trashier image. Gamers felt cheated. There was never any respect for gold miners, in or outside of World of Warcraft. In general, users seem to prefer the «Eureka-It-Works!»-Alchemy over Turning-Nothing-Into-Gold. Gold mining is frowned upon because it is cheap Chinese Labor and not USA-based White-Tech-Supremacy hidden behind an absurd Japanese pseudonym.**

JBT: Have you witnessed any evolution in this virtual/real economy paradigm that stroke you within the last 10 years?

UM: We haven't monitored this economic paradigm very closely. Over the last 10 years there were a few waves of artworks dealing with certain trendy aspects of economical paradigms (i.e. Amazon Mechanical Turk) and there is quite a lot of sci-fi literature that touches on sweatshops, unionizing of remote workers and the development and growth of the maker culture. Cory Doctorow is one of the most prolific and peculiar writers in the field. Maybe one of the most striking evolutions is the way China has developed their own Internet corporations. Aliexpress is one of the most amazing developments we have seen, they serve as interface between the fabrication economy and the end-user/consumer. This is new! The sheer size of it, the IT that does not break on a day when 16 Billion Euros in sales are realized over this website, this is pure technical and economical beauty. The functionality, the stability, the security, the logistics, the management, the integration of over 100,000 of manufacturers directly speaking to the consumer... This is beautiful and this does create a completely new paradigm of business. As mentioned earlier, there isn't and has never has been a virtual and real economy, so we don't think in these terms, what we like and can see is if either speed or size increases or decreases, if technology creates jumps that were unthinkable 10-20 years ago. Imagine in 1995 thinking about a company that can market, target, sell and ship goods worth 16 billion Euros within 24 hours via a web-browser and distributed data-centers over fibre-optic cables on the bottom of the global oceans. But we are going on a excitement rant here...

JBT: Do you think there is something special about Chinese culture's take on virtual currencies?

UM: The Chinese seem to not give a fuck on certain levels of action, they seem to be able to adapt, copy, distribute, scale, act and react the quickest. On an individual and business level they seem to be non-ideological and very practical. Now this statement is solely based on what we can see from the distance. There seem to be no cultural and economic obstructions by society, a very smart set of rules and regulations and a flexible strategy developed by the government which allows people on the go to express themselves through commercial ventures, which does include new currency systems. Also, it seems to take the Chinese a very limited time to come up with a copy of something existing. I believe that this used to be one of their major strengths, but since a decade or so, basic research that leads to real innovation has been promoted as the next desired level. Last but not least, it might well be the sheer size of it all, just the amount of people, engineers, start-ups, business ventures and domestic demand that creates such an enormous knock-on effect. So, we don't know, all we can say is that Bitcoin has become increasingly popular and important in China and that as of September 2017 the federal government seems to be wanting to try to limit and control an element of their national economy that has grown into a serious threat.

JBT: With your works, you show that when virtual currencies are generated the most tedious tasks are still accomplished by humans and that it requires an enormous amount of resources. Is the future retrograde?

UM: Yes and no, both concepts are not satisfying at all. Playing the same moves over a 12-hour shift is factory-style work and not necessary, by cutting out the sweat-shop middle man, the corporation (Blizzard) could directly sell in-game currencies (gold) or higher levels to players willing to pay. On the other hand, in 2005 it was expected that about 400,000 people - plus their families and relatives - were living off this repetitive work. Bitcoin is stupid on a totally different level. The resources in hardware, electricity and time (management, service, repairs) are astronomical and do not relate to the value of the currency, to me it seems a bit like nuclear power, if you subtract the effective cost it can be 'sold' as super innovative and relatively safe, but similar to nuclear power Bitcoin uses wonderful technology (blockchain) but is extremely dangerous and might one day pose a threat to future generations similar to nuclear waste. It is simply not sustainable at all as a model, so no wonder that this currency has been embraced by some of the most stupid and egocentric people on the planet, a potage made out of libertarians, neo-Nazis, hard-core scalpers and the odd Asperger/autism-spectrum nerd. Inventions like this are very charming and sexy because they are powerful and dangerous, in a Dr. Strangelove-style. Bitcoin is a Disaster waiting to happen. Decentralized Proof Of Stake. Now is a good time to check up on your ability to detect scam opportunities.

** Massively multiplayer online role-playing game*

*** Satoshi Nakamoto is the name used by the unknown person or persons who designed bitcoin and created its original reference implementation.*

1.

Ozkurl 4 years ago
And here in the comments..the nice customers.
Reply •

V
vankilsing 4 years ago
is there a job like this i can play during winter break? need money
Reply •

S
skiewthax 4 years ago
yellow fuckers...
Reply •

RORY B 4 years ago
Job Bonus: Blindness.
Reply •

ToXicGaM3 4 years ago
MAPLESTORY! :D
Reply •

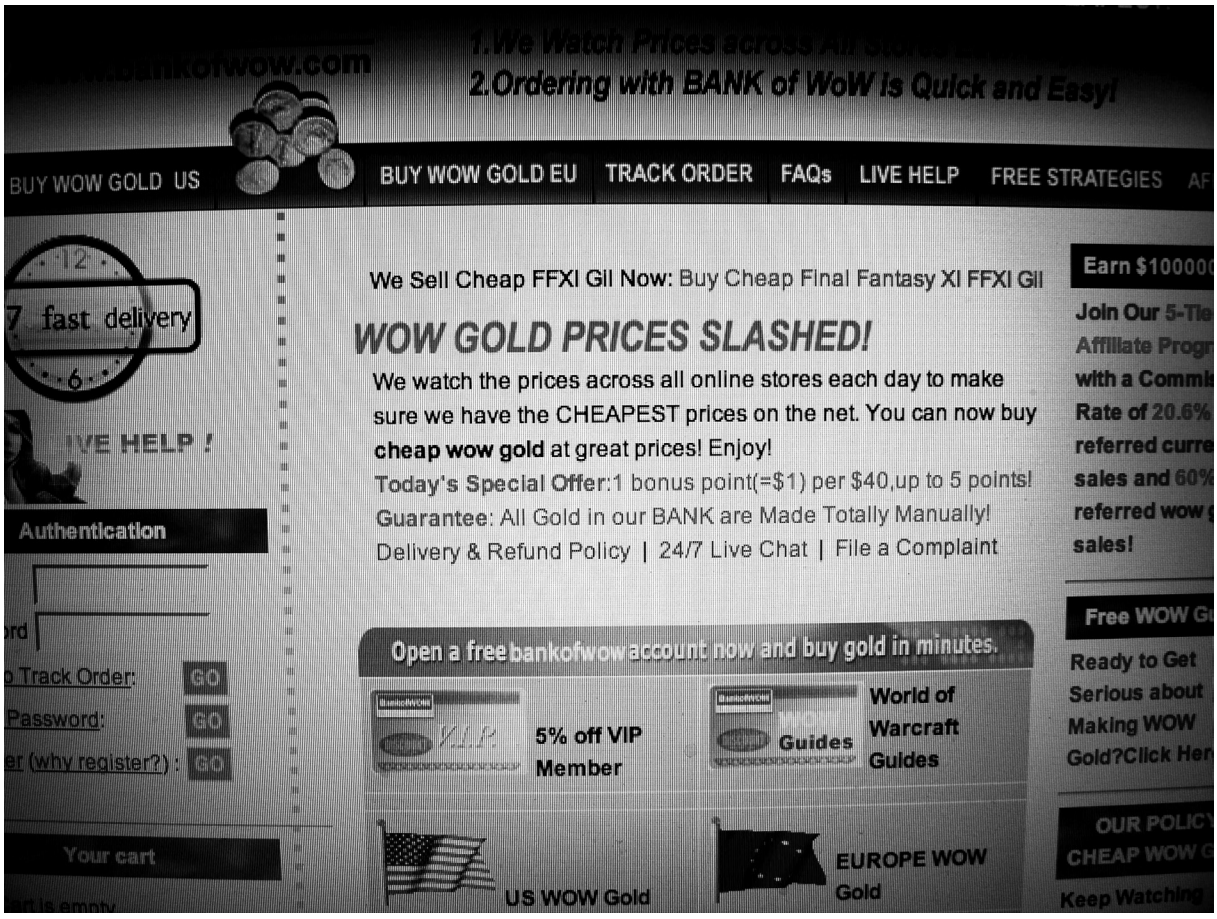
F
FenolNTLNSoldier 4 years ago
that is so fucking sad and great mean while you know what i mean ^_^
Reply •

D
DonDark 4 years ago
the player knows it illegal .. the player Supports this buisnes .. if you stop buying they wont do it . And how on earth do they steal your account .. that has to be your stupidity beliveing they need your account info to provide this service .. You cant blame the world for your own stupidity
Reply •

2.

www.all-about-feng-shui.co.uk

3.


2.Ordering with BANK of WoW is Quick and Easy!
BUY WOW GOLD US
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FAQs
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FREE STRATEGIES
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We Sell Cheap FFXI Gil Now: Buy Cheap Final Fantasy XI FFXI Gil
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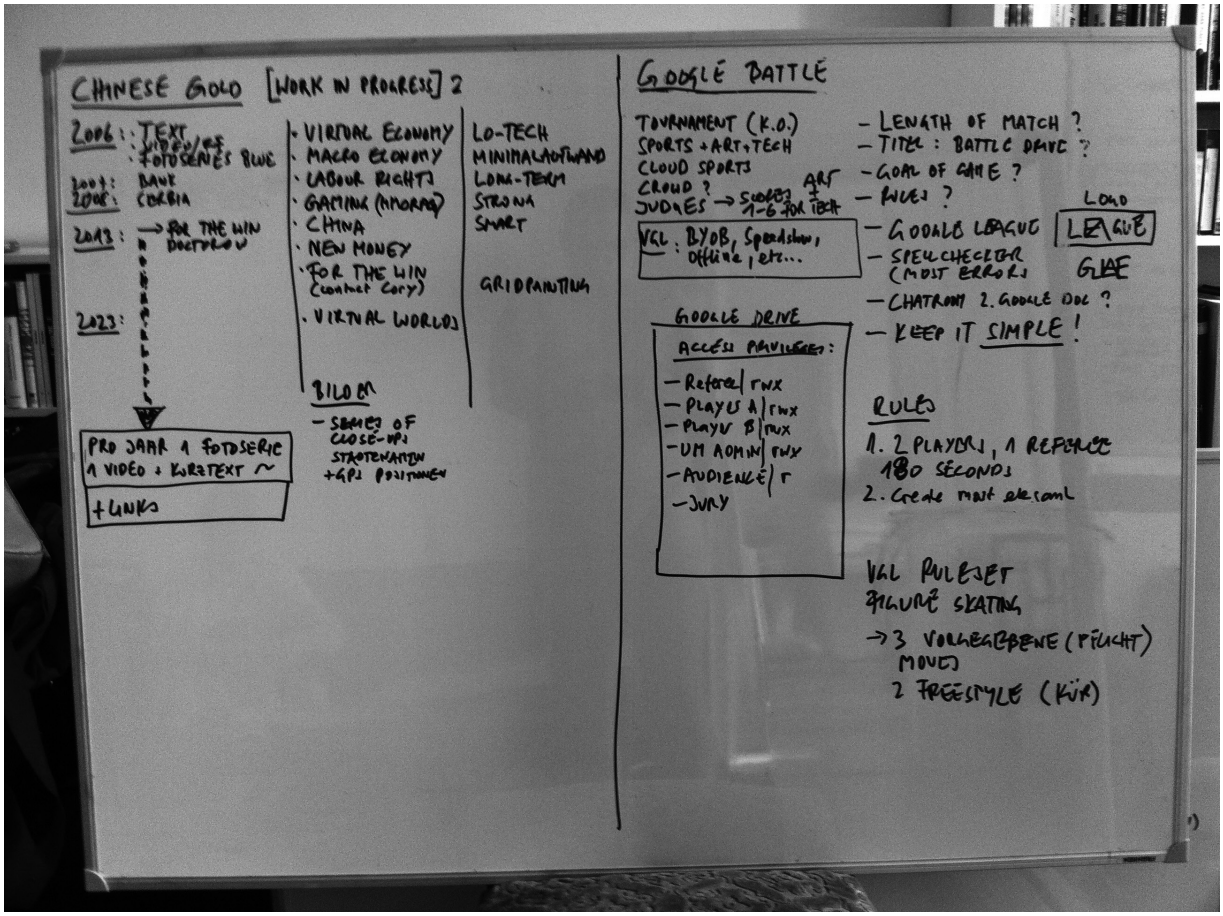
Today's Special Offer:1 bonus point(=$1) per $40,up to 5 points!
Guarantee: All Gold in our BANK are Made Totally Manually!
Delivery & Refund Policy | 24/7 Live Chat | File a Complaint
Authentication
Track Order:
Password:
(why register?) :
GO
Your cart
Open a free bankofwow account now and buy gold in minutes.
5% off VIP Member
World of Warcraft Guides
US WOW Gold
EUROPE WOW Gold
Earn $10000
Join Our 5-Tie
Affiliate Progr
with a Commi
Rate of 20.6%
referred curre
sales and 60%
referred wow
sales!
Free WOW G
Ready to Get
Serious about
Making WOW
Gold?Click Her
OUR POLICY
CHEAP WOW G
Keep Watching

4.


CHINESE GOLD [WORK IN PROGRESS] 2
2006: TEXT
FOTOSERIES BLUE
2007: BANK
2008: SERBIA
2013: → FOR THE WIN DOCTOROW
2023:
PRO JAAR 1 FOTOSERIE
1 VIDEO + KURZTEXT ~
+LINKS
VIRTUAL ECONOMY
MACRO ECONOMY
LABOUR RIGHTS
GAMING (MMORPG)
CHINA
NEW MONEY
FOR THE WIN (contact Cory)
VIRTUAL WORLDS
BILDER
- SERIES OF CLOSE-UPS STRATEGIEN +GPS POSITIONEN
LO-TECH
MINIMALAUFWAND
LONG-TERM
STRONG
SMART
GRIDPAINTING
GOOGLE BATTLE
TOURNAMENT (K.O.)
SPORTS + ART + TECH
CLOUD SPORTS
CROWD ?
JUDGES → SCORES 1-6 FOR TECH
ART + TECH
VGL: BYOB, Speedshow, Offline, etc...
GOOGLE DRIVE
ACCESS PRIVILEGES:
- Referee | rwx
- PLAYER A | rwx
- PLAYER B | rwx
- UM ADMIN | rwx
- AUDIENCE | r
- JURY
- LENGTH OF MATCH ?
- TITEL: BATTLE DRIVE ?
- GOAL OF GAME ?
- RULES ?
- GOOGLE LEAGUE
- SPELLCHECKER (MOST ERRORS)
- CHATROOM 2. GOOGLE DOC ?
- KEEP IT SIMPLE !
LOGO
LEAGUE
GAME
RULES
1. 2 PLAYERS, 1 REFEREE
180 SECONDS
2. Create most elements
VGL RULESET
FIGURE SKATING
→ 3 VORGEGEBENE (PFLICHT) MOVES
2 FREESTYLE (KÜR)

5.

6.

theguardian

China used prisoners in lucrative internet gaming work

Labour camp detainees endure hard labour by day, online 'gold farming' by night

Danny Vincent in Beijing
The Guardian, Wednesday 25 May 2011 19.49 BST

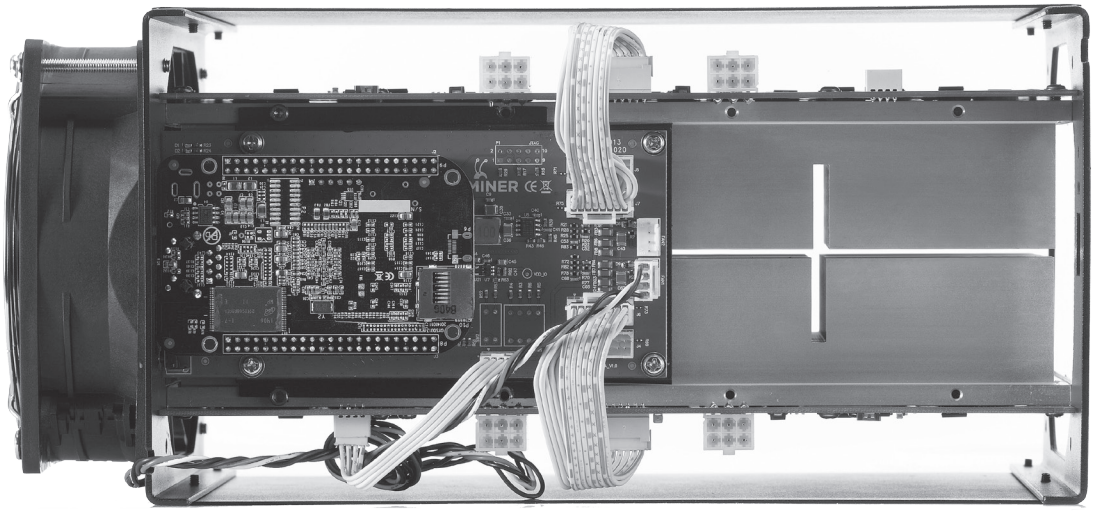
Chinese prisoners were forced into 'gold farming' – building up credits on online games such as World of Warcraft.

As a prisoner at the Jixi labour camp, Liu Dali would slog through tough days breaking rocks and digging trenches in the open cast coalmines of north-east China. By night, he would slay demons, battle goblins and cast spells.

Liu says he was one of scores of prisoners forced to play online games to build up credits that prison guards would then trade for real money. The 54-year-old, a former prison guard who was jailed for three years in 2004 for "illegally petitioning" the central government about corruption in his hometown, reckons the operation was even more lucrative than the physical labour that prisoners were also forced to do.

"Prison bosses made more money forcing inmates to play games than they do forcing

7.



8.

1.IMG_1831.JPG
12/5/13 2:49 PM
WoW Gold farmers working in a sweatshop in Singapore
Picture by Ubermorgen

2. Screen Shot 2013-08-13 at 17.42.16.png
20/08/13 05:42 PM
Comment section for the Chinese Gold Farmers Preview documentary by Ge Jin Published on 8 Mar 2006

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ho5Yxe6UVv4

3. gold_ingot.jpg
01/06/06 2:55 PM
A sycee was a type of silver or goldingot currency used in imperial China from its founding under the Qin dynasty until the fall of the Qing in the 20th century. Sycee were not made by a central bank or mint but by individual silversmiths for local exchange; consequently, the shape and amount of extra detail on each ingot were highly variable. Square and oval shapes were common, but boat, flower, tortoise and others are known. Their value—like the value of the various silver coins and little pieces of silver in circulation at the end of the Qing dynasty—was determined by experienced moneyhandlers (shroffs), who estimated the appropriate discount based on the purity of the silver and evaluated the weight in taels and the progressive decimal subdivisions of the tael (mace, candareen, and cash).

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sycee

4.P1102743.jpg
10/12/06 7:19 PM
picture of the WoW gold trading website taken by Ubermorgen

http://www.bankofwow.com/index.php

5. CHINESE_GOLD_AND_GOOGLE_BATTLE_WHITEBOARDS.JPG
26/7/13 9:18 AM
Research board
Picture by Ubermorgen

6. Three months living in a multi-petahash BTC mine in Kangding, Sichuan, China.pdf
"Three months living in a multi-petahash BTC mine in Kangding, Sichuan, China"
7/07/17 10:23 PM
Thread opened on May 28, 2015, 01:44:39 AM by user Eric Mu at Bitcoin forum

https://bitcointalk.org/index.php?topic=1072474.0

7. China_Prisoners_Slaves_Guardian.pdf
22/07/13 04:03 PM
"China used prisoners in lucrative internet gaming work"
Wednesday 25 May 2011 by Danny Vincent

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/may/25/china-prisoners-internet-gaming-scam

8. Antminer_S5.jpg
9/10/15 07:16 PM
The Antminer S5 is a 3rd generation Bitcoin mining ASIC. An application-specific integrated circuit, or ASIC, is a microchip designed and manufactured for a very specific purpose. ASICs designed for Bitcoin mining were first released in 2013.
For the amount of power they consume, they are vastly faster than all previous technologies and already have made GPU mining financially unwise in some countries and setups.

https://en.bitcoin.it/wiki/Mining

All the documents have been extracted from Ubermorgen's. research archive.

Cultural Matter is a series of exhibitions and events that provides a platform for the international discussion of digital art and aims to develop new strategies for the presentation and preservation of these artworks.
For more information:
http://li-ma.nl/site/cm

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