



Artwork based on Facebook profiles by Paolo Cirio (below), one of the speakers at FutureEverything

# Hack attacker in Manchester

**The artist who hacked the paywalls of the world's top financial newspapers comes to Manchester this month.**

Paolo Cirio, known for his controversial hacking performances, will speak at this year's FutureEverything.

Addressing audiences at the culture and technology festival next week, the Italian artist will present the results of his provocative *Daily Paywall*.

The project saw Cirio hack into the *Wall Street Journal*, *Financial Times* and *The Economist*, then re-publish 60,000 paywalled stories for free. Readers could choose to pay the journalist who wrote the article or support the project through a crowdfunding model.

The *Daily Paywall* website attracted a huge amount of attention but was shut down after five days following complaints.

## Networked society

"My artistic motivation was to reconfigure how information is distributed, especially today in our networked society where there is a huge amount of information, and both an easy way to access the information and an easy way to control that access," said Cirio.

At FutureEverything, Cirio will also discuss his recent

project *Loophole 4 All*, for which he hacked into the servers of the Cayman Islands, making public all the companies registered there. He then encouraged the public to "buy" the companies – for just 99 cents.

"It was a simple web hack, rather than cracking inside the IT system," he said. "It's more like going to the library and making photocopies."

## Big companies

"I got 200,000 names and tax numbers. To expose them and engage the public, I wanted to sell the identities of those companies that are mainly anonymous – because that's what the Cayman Islands sell: anonymity and secrecy. This project was really about transparency and how we can actually be engaged in the social accountability of big companies."

Cirio's contentious and sometimes illegal hacking art is driven by an interest in how technology is changing society and our daily lives.

He said: "Technology has caused really fast change, but people still make distinctions between the virtual world and our real lives – I think they're totally the same thing today. Technology has changed many



fields, meaning there are quite a lot of contradictions.

"I play with grey areas like transparency and privacy but I also try to define and provide an understanding; it's not just a provocative joke."

## Twentieth edition

These are the kind of broader social issues that FutureEverything, now in its twentieth edition, will be exploring this month. The festival and conference, in Manchester on 25-28 February, will question what the future holds for digital technology.

The art and film line-up features Icelandic musician Olafur Arnalds and Blast Theory's *Too Much Information* – an interactive audio walk around the streets of Manchester, set to music by Martyn Ware of Human League fame.

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