As a part of the Tesla Netzkultur dialogue series that take place in Podewil, Berlin, hosted by Andreas Broeckmann (Transmediale), I discussed Iraqi blogs and related sites with curator Catherine David, who is, like me, a 2005-2006 fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg. After showing the usual sites such as Streamtime, Iraq Blog Count and Salam Pax. We quickly moved on to more controversial sites such as Al Basrah and Jihad Unspun. An older man in the audience, who turned out to be from Iraq, quickly condemned Catherine David of being one-sided by only showing sites that were "sponsored by the Ba'ath party." David denied this, saying that not all resistence is organized by the old regime. The discussion then moved on to the status of Abu Ghraib images (the salon.com repository) and the circulating picture of the fights in Falludjah. How can we distinguish between true accounts of violence (of all sides), and the real existing propaganda war? Info warfare, secret service manipulations and bigger interests in the background (Iran, Israel, Syria etc.) are all too real. In such climate of suspicion and paranoia, how can Internet users build up a relation of trust with website, presumed that they have already given up to believe mainstream media such as CNN, Le Monde, etc.? Catherine David suggested, for example, to read Uruknet or Dahr Jamail's Iraq Dispatches and go from there. Over the 2 1/2 hours, Jan operated a second laptop and beamer on which we could follow him playing with whois, traceroute, Google Earth in order to find out more about the (location of the) owners of the visited sites. In particular his finding about the persons behind Jihad Unspun were interesting. All in all a slightly tense, informative evening about disturbing, but also very personal sites.

See also the report on Gerd Stodiek's blog (in German).