

Reflections of contemporary society in media art: The visitor as a leading actor in artworks

Prof. Dr. Penesta DIKA



UBT - University for Business and Technology in Prishtina (Kosovo)

penesta.dika@ubt-uni.net; penesta@gmx.net

INTRODUCTION

Paintings by the 19th-century German artist Caspar David Friedrich once 'invited' the visitor to be part of artwork through its 'Rückenfigur' - depersonalised figures seen from behind, in whose position the viewers are encouraged to place themselves. In interactive media art, visitors can become the main protagonists of artworks as soon as they stand in front of an artwork. Already in my book "Interactive Digital Art. Visual Motifs and their Meaning" (2017) I created categories how the portrait as motif appear in interactive media art. Thus categories such as interactive video-portrait, interactive physical bust, author-visitor-portrait, visitors'-portrait, and interactive self-portrait were build. Within this paper will be examined more detailed the visitor's portrait. For this, we can use already-established art historic methods, visual perception theory from psychology, and also cultural history to decode the specific usage of motifs through the histories of different cultures.

VISITORS' PORTRAIT IN INTERACTIVE DIGITAL ART

Selfies through Flies



- Flies create live virtually portraits of visitors
- making selfies in a museum
- preliminary artistic definition of the portrait style
- reduced facial features through permanently changing lines
- lines created via realistic designed domestic flies
- movement of the visitor causes movement of the flies
- flies rebuild the position of the face

Fig. 1. Portrait on the Fly, interactive digital installation, 2014/2015. © Christa Sommerer and Laurent Mignonneau.

Multi dimensional Reality



- with gestures and movements observer causes a distortion in the mirror-image
- delaying time during displaying the observer, or
- speeding up time, while other parts of the displayed person are frozen
- continuously divided surface comparable with analytic cubism
- representation from different sides comparable with cubist style
- the observer becomes a tool for manipulating reality

Fig. 4. Rigid Waves (Narcissus and Echo), interactive digital installation, 1993. © Monika Fleischmann and Wolfgang Strauss.

Visitors from everywhere "dreaming" at the same Bed

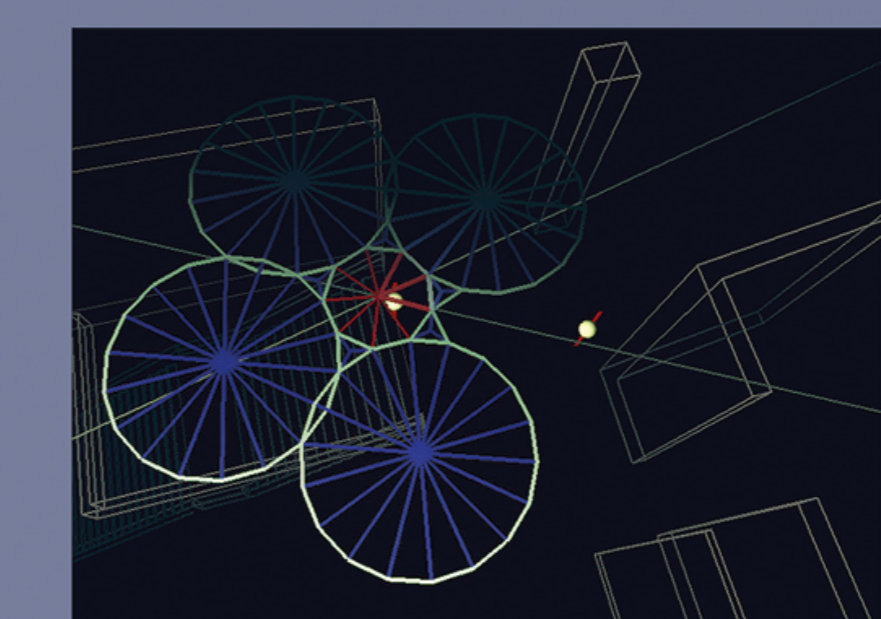


- visitors from different places appear as laying on a same bed
- one in a virtual and the other in the real space (=AR)
- people from different countries communicating with each other
- lost of the meaning of the geographic distance
- compare to "Satellite Arts Project" of 1977 (Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz): Sermon used visual digital-effects to make people feel as if they were "dreaming together"

Fig. 7. Telematic Dreaming, interactive digital installation, 1992. © Paul Sermon. (Photo: Extimacy : Art, intimacy and technology)

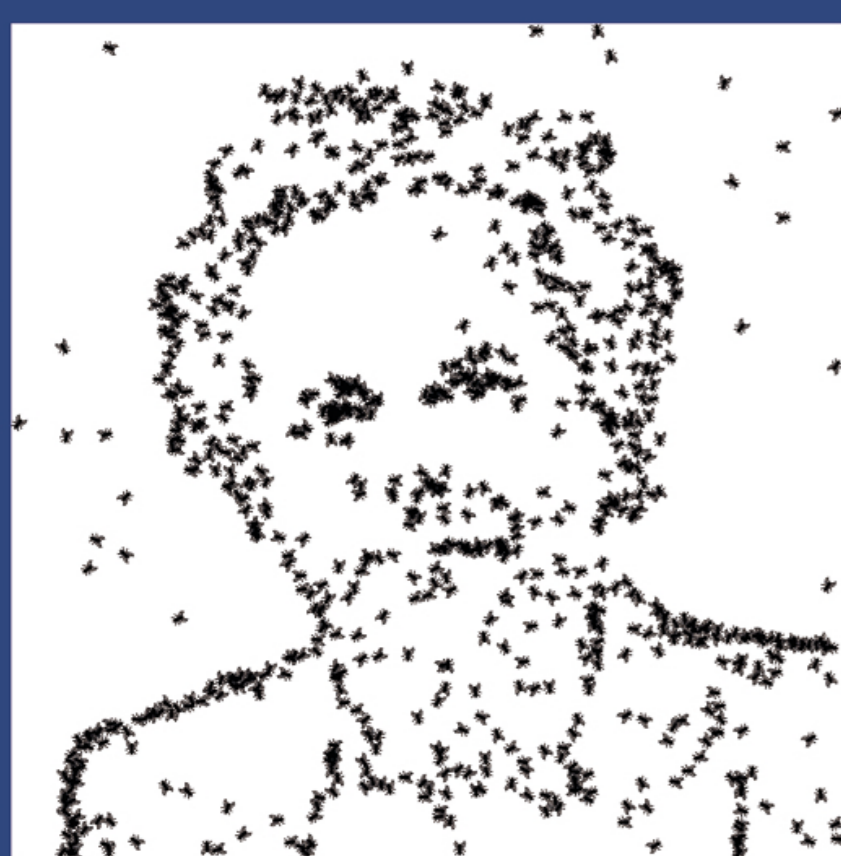
DEPERSONALISED PORTRAITS

The Whereabouts of the Visitors form Geometric Patterns



- another form of the visitors presence: a camera records the visitors to this place
- if the tracked subjects linger at the same place, then different variants of polygon-agglomerations are triggered
- the visitor, who is displayed as a circle, can consider himself inside this pattern
- here not the facial feature of the visitors are presented, but his position, the length of lingering, and the distance to the other visitors

Fig. 8. Trace Pattern I, interactive digital installation, 1997. © Ursula Damm.



- visitors make a photo of their face under the conditions prepared by the artists
- printing selfies made in a museum instead of forbidding them
- this reflects a visitors' wish
- main idea linked to the different apps and tools created for mobile devices
- linked also to the contemporary used social media

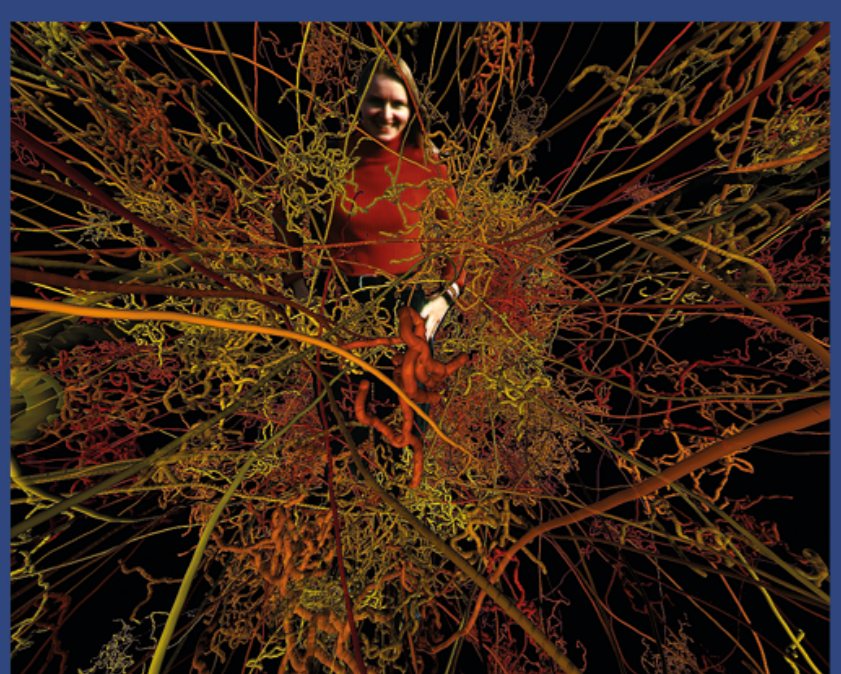
Fig. 2. Portrait on the Fly, Portrait of Oliver Grau, plotter drawing, 2015. © Christa Sommerer and Laurent Mignonneau.



- camera takes photos of the observer/user and projects them wavy on a surface
- images remind of the old Myth of Narcissus and Echo
- compare to the "Rigid Waves": difference between a haptic and an intuitive interface
- in the sense of a mirrored image, the "Rigid Waves" goes further with the abstraction, while "Liquid Views" stays more near to the mirror image in the sense of Narcissus Myth

Fig. 5. Liquid Views (Narcissus and Echo), interactive digital installation, 1993. © Monika Fleischmann & Wolfgang Strauss.

Realistic Portraits in a self-created Virtual World



- different to "Portrait on the Fly", visitors' portraits are integrated in a virtual space
- visitors act as creators of their environment
- the visitors' portrait is integrated unprocessed, realistic
- construction and destruction of the world is linked to the visitors' movements/desicions
- visitor creates and destroys his own surrounding

Fig. 3. Intro Act, interactive digital installation, 1995-97. © Christa Sommerer & Laurent Mignonneau.

Identity change: the Observer becomes the observed



- a monitor with touch screen, a video camera and a computer are mounted on a platform
- transformation from a self-portrait of the author to a self-portrait of the visitor
- visitor touching the screen is unconsciously becoming the leading actor of the work
- collage aesthetics
- main theme: identity change through the usage of contemporary technologies

Fig. 6. Touch me, interactive digital installation, 1995. © Alba D'Urbano.

Passers-by as Energy Source for VR



- projection of a generative video on the front wall of an underground station
- the concept of "Trace Pattern I" has been developed further so that other parameters are added
- the impact of pedestrians to the whole process is being live visually analysed
- specific designed geometric patterns appear
- input of pedestrians is used in form of a energy to create "living" virtual architecture

Fig. 9. Turnstile, U-Bahnhof Schadowstrasse, interactive digital installation, 2016. © Ursula Damm. (Photo: Thomas Mayer)

CONCLUSION

- self-images are modified in a planned way, but the end-results are always different
- the visitor has been present in artworks also before in form of mirror images, or other forms of art that involved the visitor (fluxus, happening, etc)
- being responsible for creating and changing the self-image, its position and style, or creating and changing the environments, or changing identities live, and even communicating with other people from the distance within the exhibition space displaying this distance-communication live are characteristics that can be offered only in this kind of art

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Coded Identity



- another form of depersonalizing is present in the media art
- reduced information of a self-portrait until a basic digital level (0 and 1)
- "translation" of a self-portrait into the digital world
- the identity of the artist has been coded
- visitors, standing in front of it, can imagine this artwork as their own self-portrait
- a hint to the relation between the virtual and real identities

Fig. 10. Self-portrait 2, digital picture processing, 2017. © Alessio Chierico.