
Comments on "Digitization as Transformation: Some Implications for the Arts"

Author(s): V. Bonacic

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Comments on "Magic Wall: A Multimonitor, Computer-Controlled Installation"

At last, video is made suitable for presentation on a large physical scale by means of the 'Video Wall'. The use of a large number of screens constituting one plane of mosaic image is already seen in the non-artistic world. For example, in Paris, France, I have seen multi-screens used in a warehouse to offer information to customers about events in several stores. The work of art *Magic Wall* (*Leonardo* 17, 87 (1984)) attracts special attention for several reasons:

1. A multitude of possibilities exists for combinations and variations for the collaboration of artists.

2. The structuring of the presentation by switching combinations of images and their rate of presentation can be of aesthetic importance and is an extension of the use of the dimension of time in traditional film art.

3. The system of 'repetition', 'simultaneity', 'series' and 'gradual changes' is used to emphasize the images and their realistic meaning as well as to have an effect of alienation, both of which lead to heightened consciousness and intensive receptivity-factors [1].

4. The relative situation of the viewer is changed compared to a single television (TV) screen; here a large audience can be present, in contrast to the more limited audience at a single video screen.

5. This video wall is not suitable (or intended) for the home TV/video, but for presentation in museums as an expansion toward monumental scale and 'expanded cinema'. A special installation for the broadcasting of music has to be available, as is already the case at the Museum of Modern Art, New York [2].

6. The use of the computer and electronics expands the possibilities of expression and promotes the blurring of the boundaries between the arts, so there is talk of a certain 'Gesamkunstwerk' or a 'Video-Opera'.

7. There remains the problem, however, to find a sufficiently interesting content, which shows more than technical inventions. A more narrative and complex structure will perhaps offer new developments [3].

References /Notes

- (a) Compare the series of images in paintings of A. Warhol and the nearly static images of his films.
(b) D. Gigliotti, "Observations on the Scope of Multi-Channel Videowork", in I. Schneider and B. Korot, eds., *Video Art, an Anthology* (New York, London: 1976) p.214, "Multi-channel work demands a different kind of attention. As our perceptual focus widens, we begin to ask ourselves: How is this work to be viewed? Do these channels all carry information of the same value?"

- (c) M. Hoare, "Psychophysics of Time", *Leonardo* 7 (1974) pp. 43, 45.
- (a) At the Documenta VI, Kassel, Germany, 1977, one could see multi-channel video installations, which followed a special scheme of timely changes, for example, by B. Korot, V. Export and N. J. Paik.
(b) U. Krempel, "Video als Kunst, Kunst im Video", *Kunst und Medien, Tendenzen* 52 e Jrg, No. 145 (Jan/March 1984) pp.16, 17.
(c) See M. Hartney, "At Thirty Frames a Second", *Studio International* 196, No. 1000 (July 1983) pp. 16, 17 regarding the "Roy and Niuta Titus Theatre 2" in the Museum of Modern Art, New York.
- G. Lascault, "La tres sage neuvieme biennale de Paris", *revue d'Esthetique* 1 (1976) p. 371, "In video art many of the artists are fascinated too long by their own ideas, and they mistrust the narrative."

W.M. Kaiser
Looydijk 149
3731 VA De Bilt
The Netherlands

Comments: Museum Design

I must congratulate you on the strikingly juxtaposed interviews with Drs Oppenheimer and Wilson (*Leonardo* 17, 75 (1984)). Both are telling demonstrations of the vital roles that clients can and should play in the total design process. Of course, in these cases, each was an unusually well-informed and *concerned* client, and though each went a separate way—reflecting his own personality—the resulting environments are in turn exceptional. The 'aesthetic' input of Dr Oppenheimer emphasizes exploration and experience; Dr Wilson's emphasizes harmony and beauty. This diversity is healthy today.

Nothing is worse for a museum in the making than a disinterested client. Nothing is more important than healthy architect-client dialogue. If each principal knows his business and there is disagreement, they should also know when to compromise and when to stand firm.

A good art museum is the result of experiments by experts, displaying experiments by artists, and is itself a successful experiment. Each must be different, because each tries to resolve different problems. If, following Dr Oppenheimer's fantasy, the members of our Congress were to come to the National Gallery of Art and look around awhile and contemplate the experiments, surely they could learn something. Perhaps not answers, but better questions. That much we all can learn, and continue to learn, even as adults.

David W. Scott
Planning Director—National Gallery of Art

(recently retired)
3016 Cortland Place, NW
Washington, DC 20008
U.S.A.

Comments on "Digitization as Transformation: Some Implications for the Arts"

I found the article "Digitization as Transformation: Some Implications for the Arts" (*Leonardo* 17 No.3 (1984)) very informative. In the article the author L. Means holds the view that "... it seems likely that with the help of digitization and transformation of information, the concept of art, its creation and transmission will change radically..." A generally accepted definition of art is nonexistent today. Therefore the question of whether translation or transformation of "... complex played music into a form of human language—poetry..." is possible can only be answered in terms of personal conviction.

One could decide to accept the less practical approach to art, for example, as did the Italian philosopher and humanist Benedetto Croce (1866–1952) for whom "... the work of art exists only in the mind of the artist, and the physical artifact then counts as an effect of the work of art..." As a consequence the artist is desperately trying to find an appropriate language suitable to different physical media to express a concept. The more sophisticated the artist, the more he or she relies on a complex language of his own and the different media available. Very often one medium is not enough to communicate a work of art to others.

But if one decides to translate a complex language one should be aware that even between the languages of communities whose cultures are fairly closely allied, there is by no means a one-to-one relation of exact lexical equivalence between the items of vocabularies. The more the poet relies on language form, the more embedded his verses are in that particular language and the harder they are to translate adequately.

As an artist, I am very optimistic about computers in art (in fact *transputers* in art—due to their sophistication and human friendliness). I see computers/transputers in art as the way towards the common language for human and artificial systems. In this way visual art, music, poetry, extrasensory communication... do not limit each other through translation, and the common language is opening a door to new forms of expression. For example, it opens the possibility to communicate "... the work of art which exists only in the mind of the artist..."

V. Bonacic
Postfach 240152
5300 Bonn 24
Federal Republic of Germany