This LEA publication has a simple goal: surveying the current trends in augmented reality artistic interventions. There is no other substantive academic collection currently available, and it is with a certain pride that LEA presents this volume which provides a snapshot of current trends as well as a moment of reflection on the future of AR interventions.
The Leonardo Electronic Almanac acknowledges the kind support for this issue of LEONARDO ELECTRONICAL ALMANAC.

Every published volume has a reason, a history, a conceptual underpinning as well as an aim that ultimately the editor or editors wish to achieve. There is also something else in the creation of a volume; that is the larger goal shared by the community of authors, artists and critics that take part in it.

This volume of LEA titled *Not Here, Not There* had a simple goal: surveying the current trends in augmented reality artistic interventions. There is no other substantive academic collection currently available, and it is with a certain pride that both, Richard Rinehart and myself, look at this endeavor. Collecting papers and images, answers to interviews as well as images and artists’ statements and putting it all together is perhaps a small milestone; nevertheless I believe that this will be a seminal collection which will showcase the trends and dangers that augmented reality as an art form faces in the second decade of the XXIst century.

As editor, I did not want to shy away from more critical essays and opinion pieces, in order to create a documentation that reflects the status of the current thinking. That these different tendencies may or may not be proved right in the future is not the reason for the collection, instead what I believe is important and relevant is to create a historical snapshot by focusing on the artists and authors developing artistic practices and writing on augmented reality. For this reason, Richard and I posed to the contributors a series of questions that in the variegated responses of the artists and authors will evidence and stress similarities and differences, contradictions and behavioral approaches. The interviews add a further layer of documentation which, linked to the artists’ statements, provides an overall understanding of the hopes for this new artistic playground or new media extension. What I personally wanted to give relevance to in this volume is the artistic creative process. I also wanted to evidence the challenges faced by the artists in creating artworks and attempting to develop new thinking and innovative aesthetic approaches.

The whole volume started from a conversation that I had with Tamiko Thiel – that was recorded in Istanbul at Kasa Gallery and that lead to a curatorial collaboration with Richard. The first exhibition *Not Here* at the Samek Art Gallery, curated by Richard Reinhart, was juxtaposed to a response from Kasa Gallery with the exhibition *Not There*, in Istanbul. The conversations between Richard and myself produced this final volume – *Not Here, Not There* – which we both envisaged as a collection of authored papers, artists’ statements, artworks, documentation and answers to some of the questions that we had as curators. This is the reason why we kept the same questions for all of the interviews – in order to create the basis for a comparative analysis of different aesthetics, approaches and processes of the artists that work in augmented reality.

When creating the conceptual structures for this collection my main personal goal was to develop a link – or better to create the basis for a link – between ear-
These are four elements that characterize the work of some contemporary artists that use augmented reality as a medium. Here, is not perhaps the place to focus on the role of ‘publicity’ in art history and artistic practices, but a few words have to be spent in order to explain that publicity for artworks is not solely a way for the artist to gain notoriety, but an integral part of the artwork, which in order to come into existence and generate interactions and engagements with the public has to be communicated to the largest possible audience.

"By then, Kusama was widely assumed to be a publicity hound, who used performance mainly as a way of gaining media exposure." The publicity obsession, or the accusation of being a ‘publicity hound’ could be easily moved to the contemporary group of artists that use augmented reality. Their invasions of spaces, juxtapositions, infringements could be defined as nothing more than publicity stunts that have little to do with art. These accusations would not be just irrelevant but biased – as in the case of Sander Veenhof’s analysis in this collection – the linkage between the existence of the artwork as an invisible presence and its physical manifestation and engagement with the audience can only happen through knowledge, through the audience’s awareness of the existence of the art piece itself that in order to achieve its impact as an artwork necessities to be publicized.

Even if, I do not necessarily agree with the idea of a ‘necessary manifestation’ and audience’s knowledge of the artwork – I believe that an artistic practice that is arrived from institutional art forms, as well as galleries and museums that have celebrated publicity as an element of the performative character of both artists and artworks and an essential element instrumental to the institutions’ very survival.

The publicity stunts of the augmented reality interventions today are nothing more than an acquired methodology borrowed from the second half of the XXth century. This is a stable methodology that has already been widely implemented by public and private art institutions in order to promote themselves and their artists.

Publicity and community building have become an artistic methodology that AR artists are playing with in order to gather audiences to make the artworks come alive is perhaps a shortsighted approach that does not take into consideration the audience’s necessity of knowing that interaction is possible in order for that interaction to take place.

What perhaps should be analyzed in different terms is the evolution of art in the second part of the XXth century, as an activity that is no longer and can no longer be resided from publicity, since audience engagement requires audience attendance and attendance can be obtained only through communication / publicity. The existence of the artwork – in particular of the successful air artwork – is strictly measured in numbers: numbers of visitors, numbers of interviews, numbers of news items, numbers of talks, numbers of interactions, numbers of clicks, and, perhaps in a not too distant future, numbers of coins gained. The issue of being a ‘publicity hound’ is not a problem that applies to artists alone, from Andy Warhol to Damien Hirst from Banksy to Maurizio Cattelan, it is also a method of evaluation that affects art institutions and museums alike. The accusation moved to AR artists of being media whores – is perhaps contradictory when arriving from institutional art forms, as well as galleries and museums that have celebrated publicity as an element of the performative character of both artists and artworks and an essential element instrumental to the institutions’ very survival.

The ability to use – in Marshall McLuhan’s terms – the medium as a message in order to impose content by-passing institutional control is the most exciting element of these artworks. It is certainly a victory that a group of artists – by using alternative methodological approaches to what are the structures of the capitalist system, is able to enter into that very capitalistic system in order to become institutionalized and perhaps – in the near future – be able to make money in order to make art.

Much could be said about the artist’s need of fitting within a capitalist system or the artist’s moral obligation to reject the basic necessities to ensure an operational professional existence within contemporary capitalist structures. This becomes, in my opinion, a question of personal ethics, artistic choices and existential social dramas. Let’s not forget that the vast majority of artists – and AR artists in particular – do not have large sums and do not impinge upon national budgets as much as banks, financial institutions, military and corrupt politicians. They work for years making use of their better knowledge of the AR media. Nevertheless, this is knowledge born out of necessity and scarcity of means, and at times appears to be more effective than the institutional messages arriving from well-established art organizations. I should also add that publicity is functional in AR interventions to the construction of a community – a community of aficionados, similar to the community of ‘nudists’ that follows Spencer Tunick for his art events / human installation.

I think what is important to remember in the analysis of the effectiveness both in aesthetic and participatory terms of augmented reality artworks – is not their publicity element, not even their sheer numbers (which, by the way, are what has made these artworks successful) but their quality of disruption.
with small salaries, holding multiple jobs and making personal sacrifices; and the vast majority of them does not end up with golden parachutes or golden handshakes upon retirement nor causes billions of damage to society.

The current success of augmented reality interventions is due in small part to the nature of the medium. Museums and galleries are always on the lookout for ‘cheap’ and efficient systems that deliver art engagement, numbers to satisfy the donors and the national institutions that support them, artworks that deliver visibility for the gallery and the museum, all of it without requiring large production budgets. Forgetting that art is also about business, that curating is also about managing money, it means to gloss over an important element – if not the major element – that an artist has to face in order to deliver a vision.

Augmented reality artworks bypass these financial challenges, like daguerreotypes did by delivering a cheaper form of portraiture than oil painting in the first part of the XIXth century, or like video did in the 1960’s until now, offering cheaper systems to display moving as well as static images. A pile of rocks in a gallery contains messages from viewers in skywriting smoke when viewed through an AR-enabled Smartphone.

These are the reasons why I believe that this collection of essays will prove to be a piece, perhaps a small piece, of future art history, and why in the end it was worth the effort.

Lanfranco Aceti
Editor in Chief, Leonardo Electronic Almanac
Director, Kasa Gallery

Site, Non-site, and Website

In the 1960’s, artist Robert Smithson articulated the strategy of representation summarized by “site vs. non-site” whereby certain artworks were simultaneously abstract and representational and could be site-specific without being sited. A pile of rocks in a gallery is an “abstract” way to represent their site of origin. In the 1990’s net.art re-materialized the art object and found new ways to suspend the artwork online between website and non-site. In the 21st century, new technologies suggest a reconsideration of the relationship between the virtual and the real. “Hardlinks” such as air codes attempt to bind a virtual link to our physical environment.

Throughout the 1970’s, institutional critique brought political awareness and social intervention to the site of the museum. In the 1980’s and 90’s, street artists such as Banksy went in the opposite direction, critiquing the museum by siting their art beyond its walls. Sited art and intervention art meet in the art of the trespass. What is our current relationship to the sites we live in? What representational strategies are contemporary artists using to engage sites? How are sites politically activated? And how are new media framing our consideration of these questions? The contemporary art collective ManifestAR offers one answer:

“Whereas the public square was once the quintessential place to air grievances, display solidarity, express difference, celebrate similarity, remember, mourn, and reinforce shared values of right and wrong, it is no longer the only anchor for interactions in the public realm. That geography has been relocated to a novel terrain, one that encourages exploration of mobile location based monuments, and virtual memorials. Moreover, public space is now truly open, as artworks can be placed anywhere in the world, without prior permission from government or private authorities – with profound implications for art in the public sphere and the discourse that surrounds it.”

ManifestAR develops projects using Augmented Reality (AR), a new technology that – like photography before it – allows artists to consider questions like those above in new ways. Unlike Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality is the art of overlaying virtual content on top of physical reality. Using AR apps on smart phones, iPads, and other devices, viewers look at the real world around them through their phone’s camera lens, while the app inserts additional images or objects into the scene. For instance, in the work Signs over Semi-conductors by Will Pappenheimer, a blue sky above a Silicon Valley company that is “in reality” empty contains messages from viewers in skywriting smoke when viewed through an AR-enabled Smartphone.

Air is being used to activate sites ranging from Occupy Wall Street to the art exhibition ManifestAR @ ZERO1 Biennial 2012 – presented by the Samek Art Gallery simultaneously at Bucknell University in Lewisburg, PA and at Silicon Valley in San Jose, CA. From these contemporary non-sites, and through the papers included in this special issue of Leonardo, artists ask you to reconsider the implications of the simple question why (where are you now?)

Richard Rinehart
Director, Samek Art Gallery, Bucknell University

Problems though remain for the continued success of augmented reality interventions. Future challenges are in the materialization of the artworks for sale, to name an important one. Unfortunately, unless the relationship between collectors and the ‘object’ collected changes in favor of immaterial objects, the problem to overcome for artists that use augmented reality intervention is how and in what modalities to link the AR installations with the process of production of an object to be sold.

Personally I believe that there are enough precedents that AR artists could refer to, from Christo to Marina Abramovich, in order develop methods and frameworks to present AR artworks as collectable and sellable material objects. The artists’ ability to do so, to move beyond the fractures and barriers of institutional vs. revolutionary, retaining the edge of their aesthetics and artworks, is what will determine their future success.

In the 1990’s, net.art re-materialized the art object and found new ways to suspend the artwork online between website and non-site. In the 21st century, new technologies suggest a reconsideration of the relationship between the virtual and the real. “Hardlinks” such as air codes attempt to bind a virtual link to our physical environment.

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Leonardo Electronic Almanac
Volume 19 Issue 2

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Mechanics of Place: Textures of Tophane

by
HANA IVERSON & SARAH DRURY

Place is always encountered as a flux of temporal and spatial transitions, framed by the past places we have just been and the future places we are moving towards. Augmented Reality through the smartphone constitutes a dual experience where participants can either submit or retrieve site-specific information. These projects can foreground the social, cultural, historical and geographic qualities of the physical location where they are embedded. As such, they suggest a desire to engage the ‘placeness’ of place – the investment of personal associations with history as a means of layering situated meaning that is designed to enrich, amplify or contradict the experience of the location. Using an array of categories as a conceptual structure, Mechanics of Place engages the specific relational dynamics of a particular neighborhood, bringing to the fore the contradictions and conflicts inherent in the mixing of the cultural conditions that are present in a given urban location. Within this relational and multicultural space, situated augmented reality artworks provide a new way to enact a hybrid relation to place.

Mechanics of Place is a curated mobile Augmented Reality framework designed by Hana Iverson and Sarah Drury with technologist Craig Kapp, where artists are invited to create situated works for the smartphone. The media produced by the participants is experienced on designated streets in cities where the project is installed. Viewers/users who experience the project on the street follow multiple paths through an archive of digital data that are made up of audio, text, and/or collaged pictorial forms.

Mobile Augmented Reality functions by geolocating or tagging media to place. “By privileging of the experience of ‘here,’ it becomes a potent and authentic embodiment of [visual and aural experience] that suggests a unique presence akin to what Walter Benjamin’s theorized as the notion of the aura of the original work of art. The ‘aura’ in situated locative media, is the authentic place of a geolocated experience of history or histories.” Building and sharing place-worlds via supporting technological platforms is not only a means of reviving former times, but of revising them. As Jussi Parikka argues:

The idea of media as a contraction and folding of time and space underlines the insight that time and space are not just solid and stable backgrounds for action or communication. They are themselves in continuous movement and mutation and are attached to the relations in which they are formed. Nature and media are subsequently to be understood not as distinct ontological regimes but both are to be seen in terms of processuality and becoming in the manner that the recent Deleuzian wave of theory has suggested.

In framing the artistic parameters of Mechanics of Place, we ask artist-participants to engage the boundary where the imaginary meets local reality, exploring...
the array of cultural projections onto place. Participants in the project are guided to interrogate the issues of community, tourism, urban development and erasure, uncovering ideological differences and personal imaginaries. Once created, the mobile technologies provide the opportunity for Mechanics of Place authors and community dwellers to engage with each other via the embedded narratives of the project. The potency of this engagement lies in the ability for the project to support and reflect disagreement across polarized views, which is and has historically been a defining factor in the evolution of community narratives and shared, even if diverging, histories. The ability of these technological platforms and tools to rewrite, subvert and reroute official borders and boundaries by countering officially and at times constraining narratives creates an opportunity for social activism in micro-uses that express or speak to individual experiences.

For Mechanics of Place: Istanbul, we focused specifically on a single street in the historic center of the city, Bogazkesen, as a site where traditional culture and more recent gentrifying dynamics converge. Relying in advance upon Turkish friends in the United States for their knowledge and lived experience, we chose Bogazkesen as a site rich in both traditional culture and disjunctive new gentrification.

Istanbul’s population explosion has caused a cultural debate, or identity crisis, concerning the word ‘Istanbul’. Beyoğlu is the historic heart of Istanbul, a site where traditional culture and more recent gentrifying dynamics converge. Relying in advance upon Turkish friends in the United States for their knowledge and lived experience, we chose Bogazkesen as a site rich in both traditional culture and disjunctive new gentrification.

Beyoğlu at the same time is a densely populated residential area, including a range of economic levels and cultural strata, from traditional culture to youth/student culture, and gentrifying classes. The street is long, narrow and winding, stretching from the museum district on the waterfront up a steep hillside to Galatasaray and the hilltop thoroughfare of İstiklal Street. Bogazkesen has also been in the media spotlight due to a violent attack on galleries during an opening in September 2010. These tensions were not evident during the duration of the project, but the number of political demonstrations on İstiklal Street pointed to the dissent and disturbance that is never far from the surface of everyday life. Bogazkesen Street provided a ‘situated context where the history, culture and physical geography of the location provided the constraints that affected the choice of actions and interactions’ of experiencing the project. Although the site of conflicts stemming from the dynamics of gentrification, Bogazkesen also offered a surprisingly welcoming person-to-person experience, creating an identifiable feedback that helped refine the conceptual and technological design of the project. During the week the project was installed, we met some of the local inhabitants of Bogazkesen’s small historic houses and apartment buildings. They included a diverse range of people, such as: traditional Muslim families with women in ‘chadors’, small business owners living above and behind their stores, foreign-born local artists and filmmakers, gallery owners and others.

Our workshop participants were local artists and students who brought their own practices to the project. In some cases, these included critical positions that grew specifically from the contradictions and conflicts of life in Istanbul. One artist, Petek Kızılelma created an AR graffiti work, addressing the Turkish government’s censorship of the internet, including the banning of 138 words considered obscene or suggestive of pornographic content. These words in translation include: skirt, sister-in-law, gay and animal. Petek’s project for Mechanics of Place countered the act of censorship by placing the banned language, via the AR platform, on the walls of the city, as painted/stenciled graffiti. The hybrid arena of wireless technology provided the opportunity to circumvent the censorship of web or physically materialized ideas and language. Kerem Özcân, an industrial designer and academic from Istanbul, constructed fictional characters, “born in a parallel universe” during the timeline of “a series of population exchanges and pogroms in Istanbul against the non-Muslim communities in the first decades of the newly founded Turkish republic.” These pogroms were most acute during the 1920s and 1950s. According to Kerem:

“Due to the post-WWII population exchanges in the early 1920s and pogroms in the 50s, minorities in Turkey were forcefully removed from their residences in Turkey. Many intellectuals, craftsmen and artists who were once part of the colorful scene of Istanbul were expelled from their homes, which has led to a serious irreversible cultural impoverishment for Turkey. The Tophane neighborhood in Istanbul, one of the locations where “Mechanics of Place” takes place, was one of those districts [with a large minority population]. This set of works asks ‘What if’ the minorities were never forced out. The suggested answer is a set of fictional biographies of people who could have been born in Istanbul,... and had their footsteps on earth enrich [Istanbul culture] by their multicultural background”

Kerem created a fictitious Armenian archaeologist, Dr. Hayk Avakian and constructed images and biographical information as well as documentation of Dr. Avakian’s contributions to the field of Turkish archaeology. This pseudo-historical data appears through the Mechanics of Place interface, tagged to locations on Bogazkesen Street. Kerem’s vision was to “position the buildings as the places [where his fictional characters] were born and raised.” Kerem’s works were intended to reflect on the waves of reactionary violence that have punctuated Istanbul’s long history as a site of geographic, political and cultural conflicts, and to mourn the city’s lost opportunities for ethnic diversity and intercultural dwelling.

Another Mechanics of Place participant, Teoman Madra, a conceptual artist with an extensive background in digital imagery and algorithmic effects, pursued his practice of spontaneous assemblage as a counter statement to the commodity valuation of the art world. His work, dense clusters of multiple images became more potent when situated near or on the galleries located on the street, a few blocks away from the Istanbul Modern museum. Since the Modern museum was hosting the Istanbul Biennial, any Augmented Reality work could be read as a critical statement directed toward the international art market. Rather than addressing cultural contradictions internal to Turkish society, Madra’s practice resists characterization as traditionally or non-traditionally Turkish, which
These architectures were so various and shared the experience of the street, but, in fact, thia's work, the technologies did not feel like they sat in themselves a reflection of the way in which globalization informs and shapes art and media art practices.

American media artist Cynthia Beth Rubin, another workshop participant has a long history in the development of various digital tools. Cynthia used the architecture of Bogazkesen to engage with layers of history, media and cultural associations. Her work began with a photograph of the one remaining wooden house on the street. Virtually all Ottoman-era houses built in Istanbul were made of wood; until the 20th century Constantinople were still predominantly a “wooden city.” The wooden house on Bogazkesen Street was not one of the grander Ottoman-era structures. It was a simple structure, in contrast to the other houses in the neighborhood that reflected a European character. These architectures were so various and shared the contrasting cultures of the life we experienced in the neighborhood.

Rubin’s work, by engaging site-specifically with the locale, created a visceral shift of perception. In Cynthia’s work, the technologies did not feel like they sat on top of the experience of the street, but, in fact, blended with the architecture, augmenting the place with an imaginary reality, like but not like, the real. In Cynthia’s work, the meaning of place itself becomes re-inscribed through the spatial interventions of the technology, where place is amplified, experienced in its duality and fictionalized in its interpretation. This mini-fiction, retained its relationship to the real through the deconstruction and reconstruction of identifying elements. The spatial component of this multi-layered continuum of experience attempted to convey “a sense of being there.” In Cynthia’s case, it was a means to create a sense of ‘being here’ as she was as new to the environment as we were. Cynthia’s project is an example of what could be referred to as “embedded cinema.” This “collect and reflect approach” is part of what we envisioned “in the evolving collection of media sequences that could be created by a diverse set of makers over time, resulting in a truly layered window into place.” This vision supported the idea of a situated context, where the cities involved in the project would also reveal their unique character and become part of a dialog between places.

Siegfried Zielinski, in his essay “Backwards to the Future,” speculates that “the cinema of the future will be a time machine in a much more radical and comprehensive sense than all these mediav levels: a machine namely that not only enables us to travel through time using our imagination but also using our bodies.” If cinema in any sense is media of illusion, these small-screen works combine with place to create time shifts, space shifts and meaning shifts by gathering small bits of information that can have an evocative sensory quality. Yet, in a project like Mechanics of Place, there are multiple narrative and visual concepts at play, bumping into each other and overlapping. At a given marker, what is revealed is the media that are connected with the conceptual structure of the system—the database of associative terms—that the participants choose as tags when entering the development platform of the project. The shaping of an internal semantic framework to structure the media creates collisions and disjunctions, interruptions and intrusions. For the conceptual structure of some of these projects to be fully read and understood, they may function better as individual projects. As a collection of works within one framework, they form a secondary experience, inverted mechanics, creating a sense of no-place. In trying to organize a thematic structure, we created an overlaying system of “flows” akin to those referred to by Deleuze and Guattari. “They articulate a space of electric flows that function in an amorphous continuum, where the ‘flow enters into a relationship with another flow, such that the first defines a content and the second, an expression. The deterritorialized flow of content and expression are in a state of conjunction or reciprocal precondition that constitutes figures as the ultimate units of both content and expression.” In the environment of mobile augmented reality, these flows enable the recombinat ing of language within what Bill Seaman refers to, in his essay, “Interactive Text and Recombinant Poetics,” as a “mutable context of neighboring media elements, media-processes, physical environments and operative code functionalities.” Yet, despite all the potential poetics within the technological system, the cultural experience of place—its social and political histories and context—is what informs our perception and experience of the media or cinematic space.

As the Mechanics of Place project grows and the collection of media becomes fuller and richer, created in multiple cities, the project can convey events and experience that are tied to location and at the same time reference faraway locations simultaneously. These experiences will divide into intervals, and divide cultural representations into micro-elements that can be mixed with real place. Locative technologies are part of the “new quality of time machines” that are building a future of “expanded reality.”


REFERENCES AND NOTES


5. Kerem Özcan, e-mail message to authors, Feb 11, 2012.


HANA IVERSON & SARAH DRURY

Is there an ‘outside’ of the Art World from which to launch critiques and interventions? If so, what is the border that defines outside from inside? If it is not possible to define a border, then what constitutes an intervention and is it possible to be and act as an outsider of the art world? Or are there only different positions within the Art World and a series of positions to take that fulfill ideological parameters and promotional marketing and branding techniques to access the fine art world from an oppositional, and at times confrontational, standpoint?

The idea of an “art world” as separate from the world reinforces the notion that the art market in concert with galleries and cultural institutions and their associated curatorial pedagogy form a cluster that defines who is included and who is excluded from discussion and participation. The complexity of many socially engaged practices, cultural, art and otherwise, often stands apart from the consumerism of culture. Is “art world” not a marketing phrase intended to create a sense of belonging by which to encourage a kind of buy-in to a system of values supporting consumerism? Socially engaged art, which in many cases falls in the domain of the public, contains histories of performance, pedagogy, sociolinguistics, ethnography, linguistics, community and public practices. Rather than propose a system (an art world), there are temporalities and situations that are necessary to make participation in these events/movements possible and resonant. The various practices of participatory art have served in different ways to enlarge the consideration of art and aesthetics for the past 30+ years. Geotagged media experience circumscribes physical and social borders; yet this does not make it the first “interventionist” practice, and so it should be looked at in the context of interventionist practices and situations and conditions which they subvert.

Even the terms inside and outside are conditioned by these systems of valuation, as we are all in a state of becoming-insiders and becoming-outsiders all the time – questioning the idea of fixed spaces – physical or mental – that serve to define a “world.” Such definitions imply a consensus. Distributed and collectively authored media have pointed to the fissures in the construction of consensus. These works are both inside the network that allows them to be distributed to the smartphone and outside the boundaries of human movement as well as social and political systems – they can be located where people cannot go, they can contain ideas and inhabit spaces (mental and physical) that would be censored or limited in the physical world.

“In The Truth in Painting, Derrida describes the parergon (par-, around; ergon, the work), the boundaries or limits of a work of art. Philosophers from Plato to Hegel, Kant, Husserl, and Heidegger debated the limits of the intrinsic and extrinsic, the inside and outside of the art object.” (Anne Friedberg, The Virtual Window: From Alberti to Microsoft (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 13.) Where then is the inside and outside of the virtual artwork? Is the artist’s ‘hand’ still inside the artistic process in the production of virtual art or has it become an irrelevan concept abandoned outside the creative process of virtual artworks?

Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin in their book, Remediation: Understanding New Media discuss the idea of...
“Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and ‘hand,’” but in a contemporary understanding, craft is what is referred to by “the artist’s innermost reality is not the whole but on the contrary, a fissure, a crack” (Deleuze, G. 1989). These same ideas are referenced with the notion of his “torn exteriors.” Matta-Clark’s rips and tears “sensitize the viewer to the world around them, to the structural and social glue that holds disparate elements together” (ourtoussafi, N. in The New Times 3/3/2007) In the same way, the works of Mobile AR have the same value – they work on the dematerialization of the art object – and they function as site-specific in a way that can dramatize the instability of place – the slippages of time, and the shifts of commonsalities or shared identities.

Another major influence has been the work of Krzysztof Wodiczko with his reference to critical vehicles. The smartphone can be a way to frame, on a small scale, the types of large scale architectural projections that he created throughout Europe. The idea of a critical vehicle, such as his Alien Staff, was a way to broadcast the doubled self, to create visibility for the invisible. These same ideas are referenced with the relationship to invisibility and visibility by means of a portable device, with the use of architectures as a canvas for reinterpreting the social and personal values of place. Mobile AR provides a means to build upon these ideas and the physical landscape with added collective meaning. We have also been inspired by the work of the Judson Theater of the 1960s, where accepted distinctions between object and event – between sculpture, musical instrument, music and theatrical performance – were dissolved as a new form of art and performance emerged, fueled by the creative energies of David Gordon and Yvonne Rainier. These performances reinvented the relationship between the body of the performer and the eye of the viewer in ways that are brought once again into focus in the embodied experience of mobile media.

In the representation and presentation of your artworks as being ‘outside of’ and ‘extrinsic to’ contemporary aesthetics why is it important that your projects are identified as art?

This again relates to the idea of art as a series of processes and social interactions, and a process of transformation. The idea of art as related to fabricating objects or referencing established aesthetics is in contradiction to the realm of possibility for media art. In any case, a more contemporary understanding of art is considered as process, a refractive prism of transformations of meaning/physical conventions even momentarily. It is therefore important that our mobile augmented reality artworks in Mechanics of Place, individually and as a collection, inscribe unconventional, disjointive, otherwise-invisible meanings on a given location. They function as art by their freedom to be a refractive prism and by engaging with the landscape to produce new meanings. The potential of the emerging field of mobile art is that it can refigure objects, subjects, spaces and times. We hope to suggest that our project functions in a continuum of mobile media art, which is one of the key arenas in which emergent interactions with sensory dimensions of place, and mediated presence, are being explored. Art can challenge and equip us to activate new social practices and performances via “hybrid spaces” that blur the distinction between physical and digital, bodily and virtual, artwork and everyday space, creator and audience.

What has most surprised you about your recent artworks? What has occurred in your work that was outside of your intent, yet has since become an intrinsic part of the work?

The recent shift in art practice that has been explored by both of us, is to become artist-curators. Who are not only creating works, but creating platforms for participation and dissemination of ideas. This activity has become a central part of the Mechanics of Place project, where we invite artists to create works that become part of a database of media that are loosely tied to location and appear in unexpected ways and contexts. We have facilitated a platform for collective participation, and the project is a complete collection of surprises. Such as where the works appear, the relationship of one work to another, the relationship of the works to the locations and the relationships developed in the face to face encounters with the artists, and the surprises of the landscape itself.

Mechanics of Place (MoP) has functioned as a platform for poetic and critical participation of artists in a particular place, inviting them to “annotate” the places they inhabit. The artists’ works for Mechanics of Place inform us of the nuances of places that we, as artist/curators, are only passing through. The thematic database structure of MoP creates a virtual framework for the artworks, where the works created and associated with a specific city finds associations with those of another city where the project has been co-created. We have been delighted both by the way in which the particularity of the work gain resonance in a given city, and by the disjunctions and dissonances with other works created in other cities in the project.
As an artist with more than twelve years of experience focusing on interactive projects in the public domain,

I am engaged with emergent technologies that integrate networks, mobile media, and interactive installation. New technologies enabled by mobile media in conjunction with global positioning systems (GPS) and the open platforms of web 2.0 provide new means of bringing together concerns with lived space, shrinking distances, transnational alliances, and growing inequalities. They also have the potential to create unexpected relationships and a framework for new modes of embodied engagement.

My early work was based in photography and video, using the body as a nexus of meaning and perception through which I explored the psychological boundaries between the internal and the external: the cognitive, emotional and physical exchange between the human body and the material world. The issues of gender, race and community which were embedded in these early works led to the development of the public installation View From The Balcony, where these concerns found physical form in the architecture of place and the social body of location. Through this experience my work made a substantial move into the arena where art builds its meaning upon and with a community or public space.

My work has transferred to location-based media as a platform for collaborative practice – engaging other artists or communities into a shared framework, incorporating their contribution into the whole. Working in a new hybrid space of amplified reality provides a new mode of open engagement with embodied experience and public space. Recent projects, such as Mechanics of Place, explores small-screen hybrid cinema. Past projects have engaged situated narrative as a means to create multi-layered portraits of small-scale neighborhoods. These mobile works require a kinesthetic sense of bodily motion as the means to perceive the elasticity of temporality, and reflect upon movement-space-media as it is co-created.

HANA IVERSON

statement & artwork


My work of the past 10 years has explored the subject as a dynamic, fragmentary, emergent instance of mediated presence. My installation and performance projects have used sensing and tracking technologies to translate input from voice and movement into cinematic interactions, sequenced audio and live generated animation, accompanying the performative body. Some of these projects have pointedly questioned: What is the self? How is the self formed as a social reflection? What is the self as a mediated phenomenon, existing in and around representation?

I am excited to bring this exploration of the dynamic self into the real space of mobile augmented reality. In the paradigm of mobile augmented reality, the viewer catches a glimpse of an emergent image continually re-drawn against a moving landscape. Mechanics of Place, a current project collaboratively designed with Hana Iverson, carries this exploration of embodiment into a participatory structure that offers access to a hybrid mobile experience as both creator and viewer. Like Buckminster Fuller’s statement, “I seem to be a verb,” this notion of the self implies an idea of embodiment that is both material and immaterial, enacted as a transit across physical, technological, social and esoteric planes.

SARAH DRURY

statement & artwork

My work of the past 10 years has explored the subject as a dynamic, fragmentary, emergent instance of mediated presence.

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