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Etherscapes: Massless, Elastic, Technology and Control

By

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Summary

Abstract

This thesis is an exploration into the ether of the digital aesthetic. It attempts to capture a segment of the continually morphing space then deconstruct and analyse it through electronic and new media art. Herein you will find a questioning of technology and control within electronic and new media art as an investigation into better understanding the current media image and visual culture that so powerfully influences the modern social construct. By nature this argument has existed for some years but only now with advancements in technology and more affordable realisation of ideas by media artists, the topic of the digital aesthetic, technology and control has become relevant or popular debate. As war lingers in our minds, terrorism hits headlines, and experiments in cloning human DNA take place, the technology that society demands can only necessarily be seen as a major contributing factor to today's strange times. However, strange or not, the questions I wish to discuss; Does technology determine contemporary society or do we determine technology? Where does the control exist?

Brief Description of Studio Work

Etherscapes is a body of work exploring interactive media through new and emerging technologies. It consists of three phases that are separate artworks. The first, piece, "Synaesthesia 1" is a sound based CDROM utilising the keyboard as user input to trigger sound. This piece was exhibited as a performance/installation in my studio in August 2003. The second phase, "Video Stereo" is a 1200 Technics turntable in a modified 1960s stereo unit with a computer and analogue to digital vinyl system (or Interdimensional Wreaked System with Maxi-Patch) called "Ms Pinky." Playing on the vinyl are several micro narrative videos based around the urban environment, city lifestyle and perception using video and animation. The piece allowed the audience*

* Interdimensional Wreaked System or IWS is a term created by Ms Pinky for the hardware/software interface created for the MAX/MSP vinyl video and MP3 system. It refers to the vinyl plater specially designed for the system that utilises a unique sound signature every 25th of a millisecond to pin point the needle's location on the record. This idea was initially created by Mr X who now works for the IBM Corporation and was further developed by the Ms Pinky team for use in the MAX/MSP environment. MAX/MSP is a visual programming environment created by Cycling74 (www.cycling74.com) for MIDI (Music Instrument Data Interface) development and experimentation. For more information visit www.mspinky.com.

to approach the turntable and literally 'scratch' the video. The aim of this piece was to control and manipulate the sound and the visual Image with your hands and consider controlling the Image as non-linear narrative. The third and last phase of my work, 'Tracer' involves a web cam that tracks audience movement and uses this as input to trigger digital video stored in a database. The viewer's position in the room determines what video is being played and their movement in the space creates an audio and visual narrative. Each of these works focus on interactive media and non-linear narrative where the audience can control the direction of the piece in a way creating the work while shifting power or decentralising the control.