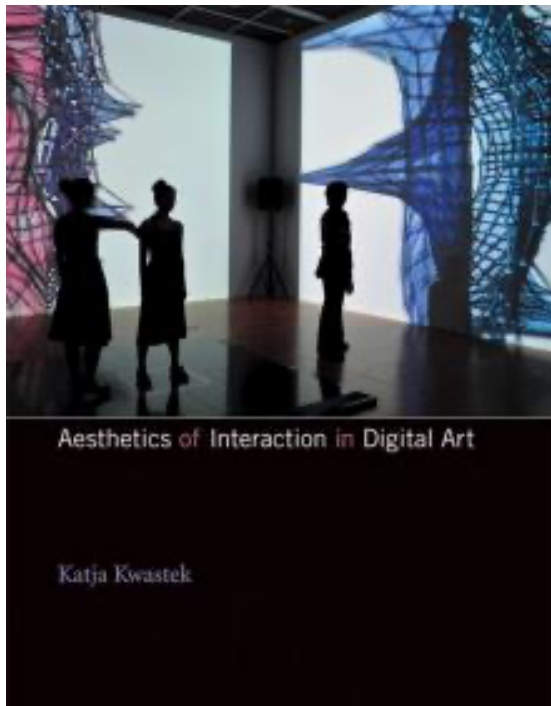


## Aesthetics of Interaction in Digital Art

by Katja Kwastek. MIT Press, October 2013. 357 p. ill. ISBN 9780262019323 (cl.), \$35.00

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In her book, *Aesthetics of the Interaction of Digital Art*, Katja Kwastek dedicates rigorous and concrete analysis of digital artwork from a specific research perspective that interrogates the interactions intended by the artist with the interactions that actually take place within the artwork's environment. Taking an art historical approach for analysis, Kwastek dissects the aesthetics as an art historian would an object with a framework that can be used to evaluate media derived art. She considers the artist(s), the recipient, the technology or "technical system," the space, and configuration of the interactive space. Then, she layers the practical factors of her framework with other conceptual elements that identify the interactive components of the digital art aesthetic. One element has to do with the realization of the space or manifestation of the spatiality, another with the interrelation between the physical space and the digital data

space. Presence of the work must be considered, which may be human or non-human, the object or technical system, as well as the interrelating of non-linear temporality. The framework is elaborate and allows for deeper analysis of time, which includes narrative, structure, rhythm, and liveness. Further consideration is given to interactivity and instrumentation, "constitutive and operational rules," the phenomenology of interaction via modes of experience, interface and hardware, embodied interaction, and so on. The framework is a useful tool for analyzing and understanding interactive media art "whose epistemic potential must be sought in the process of interaction."

A growing amount of literature is available on the topic of digital art theory and history, digital visual culture, and digital art and meaning. Christiane Paul suggested in the Fotofest 2002

catalog that “the question of how exactly digital or new media art can be defined is still being debated.” Twelve years later, Kwastek’s book offers a means for answering that question, although it is highly academic, scholarly, and theoretical in its presentation. Accompanying the chapters are extensive notes and a robust bibliography. Following the comprehensive discussion of Kwastek’s framework is a section of case studies, which puts to use and validates her evaluative apparatus. There are few illustrations and those included are in black and white. This portion of the book would do well with a different sort of narrative and color images to allow for easier absorption of her dense but well-considered theoretical tool.