Guest Editorial Preface

Special Issue on Digital Media Artefacts-Hybrid Praxis

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"The most human thing about us is our technology." – McLuhan et al. (1987)

THE HYBRID PRAXIS IN DIGITAL MEDIA ARTS

The special issue on Digital Media Artefacts, "Hybrid Praxis", is a post-congress collective reflection about technology, science, and art. The invited authors participated in ARTeFACTo 2020 or ARTECH 2021, two key congresses exploring state-of-the-art digital media arts. These encounters gather experiences from the academic world, practitioner world, and *hybrid praxis* in between, with art-practice-based research as the common thread.

If we reflect on contemporary technology, science, and art, we can see that *technology* is pushing more profound changes in sciences and arts than the other way around. Just take your eyes off the screen, look around you, and compare your daily life to what it was twenty or even ten years ago. Digital technology has profoundly changed your everyday life, relationships, possibilities, and how you express, explore, research, share, and do. We could therefore look exclusively into the digital domain to frame the relationship between the elements of this triad as it now stands.

However, the digital domain has peculiar variables shaping discourse and thought. If we look for answers within that framework, we risk being bounded by a limited self-reflected reality. Instead, if we keep one foot on the digital domain, and step aside with the other onto different methods, supports, techniques, technologies, and methodologies, we will likely find a broader spectrum of possibilities for understanding our reality.

Despite how digital technology disrupted our creative processes, many methods remained within known mental procedures. The unknown territory moved to "how to operate" new computer tools to accomplish those same procedures. However, after a while, digital methods led to new ways of creation as a vehicle for different creativity where both support and tool are strong conditioning constraints for implementing and spreading the method.

These hybrid practices bring together digital methods, traditions and material expressions, revealing both new ways of creating and new forms of fruition of that which is created. Through them, digital and physical become complementary domains; it becomes pointless to see one as having ascendency over the other, much less replacing it. Instead, each medium has its range and uses. Both have points of connectivity at which each enhances the other's capabilities of delivering the intended message. In talking about graphics systems, D. A. Schön (1983) writes in *The Reflective Practitioner* that an artist "has a repertoire of media which enables him to choose the graphic system best suited

to the exploration of particular phenomena". The same could be said more generally in our case regarding hybrid methods.

There is a danger that in exploring new technologies, one forgets that they are means of conveying messages, and one falls into the trap of realising that they are not art but mere tech demos. Hybrid methods and practices may keep one grounded in this respect and centre our view on the artistic purpose rather than becoming bound to expressing not what was intended but whatever the newest toy allows one to express in its natural language.

The authors and works in this volume exemplify this search for methods that put technology at the service of reasoning and thinking, using the technique to express this thought and to communicate a message rather than serving themselves as a mere vehicle to express the technical potentialities of a machine. In *Art Practice as Research*, G. Sullivan (2006) writes regarding the Visual Arts that "there is a need to locate artistic research within the theories and practices surrounding art making". The works presented here are part of that attempt.

PAPERS IN THIS ISSUE

In "The Wizard Without Shadow: Staging and Evolution of a Performance Involving Motion Capture", Anastasiia Ternova and Georges Gagneré share their experience of making a creation-as-research, The Wizard Without Shadow, to bring to light the different steps of their staging process. They aimed better to understand the pipeline of theatrical staging with motion capture and explore the nature, limits, and potential of a pre-recorded, live-controlled virtual performance.

"Digital Media-Art, Street Art, and Intersectional Feminism: Case Report on the Cyberperformative Artefact Make Me Up!" by Juliana Wexel presents a demonstration of artivist aesthetic discourses that have been produced in converging relations between urban space, street art, intersectional feminism (gender, class, ethnicity) and digital technologies in a post-pandemic context, which resulted in digital media art artefact and curatorship of a video-installation, among others.

"Should We Become Emotional With AI? Performative Engagements With an Affective Algorithm" by Avital Meshi embraces a study based on four art performances using an affective algorithm designed to infer emotions based on facial expressions aiming at better understanding how affective computing impacts our society. These performances propose alternative scenarios which imagine possible entanglements with this technology while encouraging a critical discussion regarding the possible futures of our engagement with affective algorithms.

"Patient Zer0: Creating Online Generative Art During the COVID-19 Pandemic" by Pedro Alves da Veiga presents an interactive generative artwork designed around the poem "In Memory of Anyone Unknown to Me" by Elizabeth Jennings and created during the first confinements imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. While it has been showcased in several online exhibitions, this article details and analyses, for the first time, the artwork's algorithmic approach, aesthetics, the different media components, and the artist's intentions behind their inclusion and combination.

In "Assum Livre: A Live Environment for Cyberperformance", Rosimária Sapucaia, José Bidarra and Ângela Saldanha present a cyberspace event integrating a sequence of artefacts named "Assum Livre". It consists of an artistic proposal that seeks to reflect on freedom and imprisonment, evoking a metaphor that recreates the experience of the lockdown in 2020–2021. The performance is based on streaming a video recorded with the author and singer performing part of Teixeira's and Gonzaga's song, "Assum Preto," simultaneously with the live performance of the other stanzas of the song. These alternate with the lyrics' presentation and the performer's materialisation.

"Venice Original: Spherical Illustration of an Imaginary Environment for an Immersive E-Commerce Showcase" by Chiara Masiero Sgrinzatto introduces a hand-drawn 360° illustration designed for commercial purposes in the framework of the project titled Venice Original. It focuses on different aspects of the creation of the artwork: the commissioning, the drawing technique, the connection to the e-commerce platform, and the several modalities of interaction. Subsequently, it

gives an overview of the reception of the 360º interactive illustration on the e-commerce platform by different audiences, thanks to web statistics and user comments on social networks.

In "The Video Installation Rejeitorio: Inspirations, Work, Exhibitions, and Public Reception", Inês Regina Barbosa de Argôlo, Bruno Mendes da Silva and Gabriela Borges present Rejeitorio, an interactive video installation mediated by digital technology that points to the urgency of preserving the São Francisco River, especially after the dam collapse in the city of Brumadinho (Brazil), which resulted in the contamination of one of its tributaries with toxic tailings. The video installation features 2D animations that alternate according to the presence or absence of the public within the demarcated space.

"Designing Audience Participation and Gamification in Intermedia Performance: Conceptual Framework and Theoretical Implications Post COVID-19" by Cecilia Suhr presents a participatory survival game/audiovisual performance work depicting the dystopian state's transformation of humanity to utopianism in both the visual and sonic realms. Audience members are invited to participate in Humanity's interactive survival games and to contribute their photographic facial outlines as visual content for the performance. The author explores the theoretical framework behind designing audience participation and interaction by reflecting on the notion of dystopia related to the Covid-19 pandemic while reflecting on that event's outcomes and challenges.

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