

Instants of Metamorphosis: An Interactive Video Installation

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ABSTRACT

Instants of Metamorphosis 01 is an interactive video installation that is the first emergence of a process-based collective work by the Double Collective. Using a methodology-based on systemic measures of complexity and organization, the work is being documented and analyzed by focusing on the connections, the dialogue between the elements, and the emergences. The methodological parameters contribute to the conceiving and designing of the installation in a performative and process-based collective way, focusing the role of the audience in mixing the virtual and the material dimensions as part of a delicate network dialogue that happens *between*, *through* and *beyond* this dimension, allowing the subject to become a trans-actor.

KEYWORDS: complex adaptive systems, interactive digital art installations, storied spaces, mnemonic.

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Conceptually, the art work is a dynamic system and its narratives, the stories it tells and the ones it contains, have no end and no beginning. In this context, emergences can be understudied as system qualities that are brought forth from as-

sociations and dynamic connections happening on the user's level and could be, for instance, an acquisition of consciousness in a process of information exchange. A video performance is projected onto a volumetric base that composes a subject-sculpture—a reference to the never-ending spiral one may climb to acquire spiritual evolution. As one climbs and explores the volumes, the video follows one's movements, leaving frozen instants of the performance, memories of the metamorphosis of the self, printed on the ground.

A computer-controlled video projection falls directly onto the volumes on the ground, skinning it in real time in response to sensed movements of the audience, combining in a subject-sculpture the physical and virtual dimensions. The movements are captured by a wide angle web camera, allowing real-time responsiveness to the work. Using motion and color tracking, the camera input is processed using the JMyron processing library. Four speakers surround the structure playing in loop the sound of someone breathing deeply and slowly, making a reference to meditation practices that is intended to put the subject in deep contact with his or her essence. The immateriality of the video performance and its narrative aim to stimulate reflections on self consciousness, alluding to the borders and extensions one virtually constructs around oneself in order to live and maintain dialogue. All the actions, the *trans*-actions, are integrated in a never-ending timeline that incorporates

several times as a *garden of forking paths*, a never-ending *storied space* where imaginary beings live: *its*, ourselves, and the others.

Storied Spaces

Collective practice in digital arts and interrelated fields define a kind of practice that implies the interaction of several actors in processes that can have generative characteristics. The complex sciences' perspectives offer an opportunity to consider and study both the collective practice and the work generated as complex adaptive systems. In our proposition of a methodology to study this sort of complex, the specificity is related to the selection criteria adopted, which is based on the concept of storied spaces. It is an artifice to build a network of emergent meanings, helping to visualize the sys-

tem's infrastructure itself—the instances of organization and the relations between the system's elements. The idea of storied spaces could be helpful in an exercise of capturing these placeless places, spaceless spaces that give the self and the system visibility to themselves, from the flow of information to the construction of memories.

From the sociology of space, a sub-discipline of sociology, it is possible to reflect on spaces as constructions from action of living entities in dialogue with technology/media, constituted in processes of perception, recall, or ideation to manifest itself as storied structures. Considering this perspective, the notion of storied spaces explored by Basking in *Storied Spaces: The Human Equivalent of Complex Adaptive Systems* (2008), could be interesting as a way to incorporate the concept of space from an immaterial perspective, connecting and studying it as emergences (in the form of narratives) generated by the actions performed by subjects involved in creative processes.



Figure 1: *Instants of Metamorphosis: video performance*

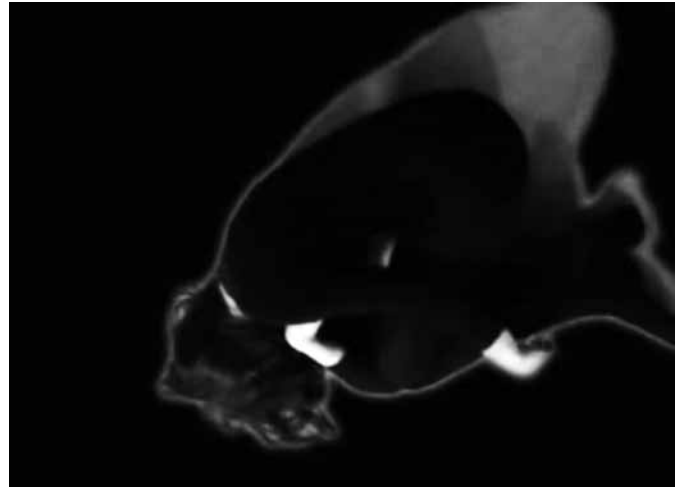


Figure 2: *Instants of Metamorphosis: video performance*

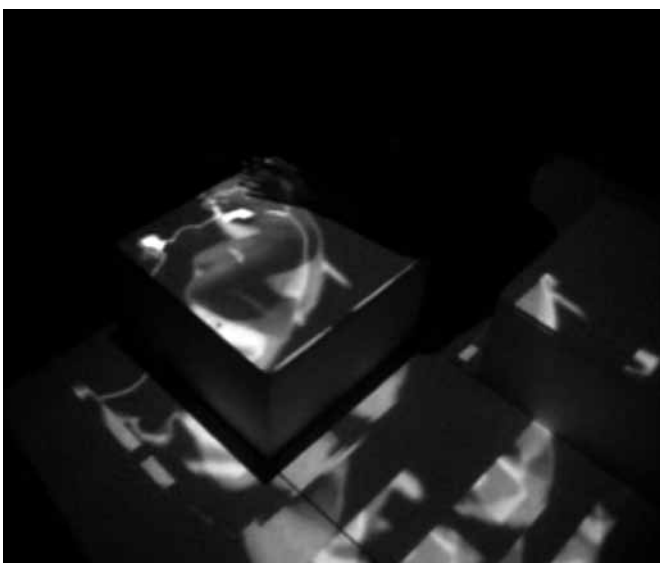


Figure 3: *Instants of Metamorphosis: the volumetric sculpture and the projections*

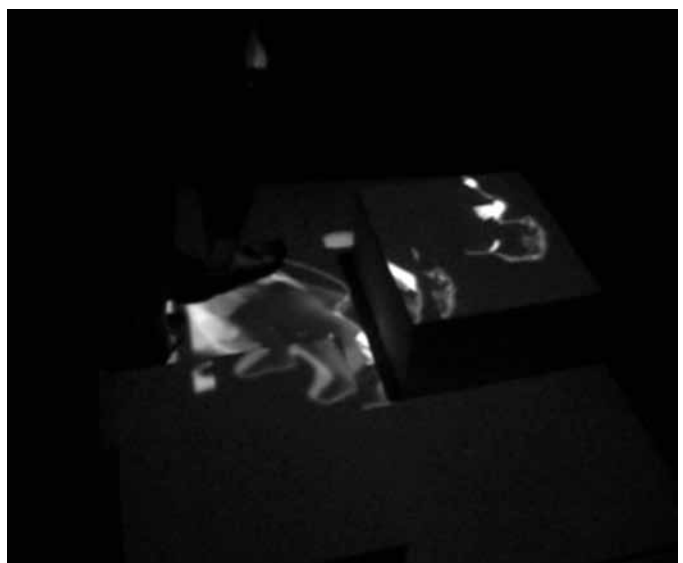


Figure 4: *Instants of Metamorphosis: the volumetric sculpture and the projections*

According to Baskin, storied spaces could be described as the collection of stories constructed from our experience, in the dynamic of interpreting the context in order to act.

Stream of Consciousness

Considering our system/creative process as structured in several and interrelated levels of organization, each level could be composed by several and interrelated contexts of meaning, a collection of storied spaces. The bottom instance represents the concept of what the whole work should be. The wide instance represents the versions of the work ready to be presented/experienced—an emergence from the system dynamic. The instances in-between represent the collective work, the system's parts working together, interacting, influenced by the bottom instances and by the objective of producing a work. Beyond these three instances is the system's environment/context that influences all the system's levels in the form of throughputs. Considering this organizational structure, the intention is to work with the concept of storied spaces as a way to visualize emergences that could be used in the process itself, re-integrating and influencing it. One way of reaching this objective is by designing a kind of metaphorical structure to map and group the narratives.

Considering the complex's structure based on interrelated information and meaning, the use of mnemonic techniques is an important tool to explore contents' associations as a base for conceptual constructions, helping to investigate different ways to stimulate the senses in a holistic way, combining sounds, moving images and texts by using the most different sensors and digital devices to create "spaces-imagination" from the interactions, the dialogues. According to Peter Matussek: ". . . in the wake of advances in interactive applications, the function of digital technology is no longer described merely in terms of 'storage and retrieval', but rather in terms of the performativeness of images in motion" (Matussek, 2001).

From the perspective of *The Art of Memory*, when we think about the connection between "*imagine et loci*" to memorize a discourse, this process is based on the association of inter-related contents. By using our imagination we must imprint in the memory contents that are related to a specified *loci*. According to Frances Yates in this process "you chose images to remind you of the points of your speech, and you placed these images, in your imagination or your memory, on the places which you had memorised" (1980, 4).

Analyzing the installation, we consider seven instances of organization and meaning, or seven storied space contexts that could be captured in a dynamic based on emergent writing and

drawing exercises. The mnemonic perspective can help to construct a network of meaning from the combination of the material collected in each one of the seven instances. From this perspective we can talk about the construction of dynamic visual memories in mnemonic spaces as images-memories in motion.

Conclusions

The artistic practice connected to these theoretical explorations involves the production of the *Instants of Metamorphosis* series. It involves the development of performative interactive video installations in a collective-based creative process that is influenced by the reading of selected texts on fantastic literature and emergent writing related to consciousness and perception. The expectation is that this "methodology-like perspective" could contribute to studying and running complex creative collective practices, recalling the scientific concepts of complexity sciences in a more humanized way, centering the approach on the subject by considering the diverse levels of reality we simultaneously integrate and produce, playing with the immaterial and chaotic realm of creativity. The artistic collective practice integrated in the research process is part of the attempt to design this methodology, an effort to integrate self-observation into the system.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the Brazilian government agency CAPES, the University of Sao Paulo, and the CAiiA-Hub, Planetary Collegium/The University of Plymouth, for providing PhD fellowship and financial support.

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