LEA

DISLOCATIONS
Dislocations: Questions of War, Place, Trauma and Context in the Transmediations of Art on Public Giant Screens

The habit of searching within a word for multiple meanings, exploring its multiple facets and etymology is an hermeneutic process that I have inherited from Professor Pino Paioni at the International Center for Semiotics and Linguistics at the University of Urbino. It is with this semiotic and linguistic approach that I had been researching the possible implications for the word dislocation to develop the underpinning concepts of the exhibition program by the same title on the Media Façade of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb (MUMOK) in collaboration with Kasa Gallery and part of the 12th Istanbul Biennial’s Official Parallel Program and of nanazpr1 Istanbul.

The Oxford English Dictionary provided me with two interpretations that suited the project that I wanted to develop.

1. Geol. A displacement in a stratum or series of strata caused by a fracture, with upheaval or subsidence of one or both parts; a fault.
2. fig. Displacement of parts or elements; disarrangement (of something immaterial); a confused or disordered state.

Both of these definitions with their implications became part of the conceptual underpinning of this exhibition. Dislocations was conceived as a representation of the displacement in the layers of meanings and conceptualizations of the artworks as well as a displacement of the whole artwork in a different media context which could and would feed back into the artworks and their curatorial frameworks.

This approach was based on the consideration that the contemporary work of art is no longer a static object or an isolated form that is not subjected to the influence of the technological context within which it operates or to the cultural context that surrounds it.

The openness of the artwork to other influences was explained by Umberto Eco in the seminal book TheOpenWork, which although mainly referencing textual work has ever since also been applied to conceptualizations and aesthetic processes in the visual arts as well. From an aesthetic and philosophical perspective Eco was codifying practices and approaches that, derived from Modernism and at times in an antagonistic relationship to it, were seeking, in a post-modernist rhapsodic approach, ways to supersede structural formats in an attempt to better understand and capture the complex reality of a world in constant evolution and transformation.

The Fluxus’ aesthetic and process based methodologies and the intermedia approach to art by Dick Higgins codified intermedia interactions in the field of art. The intermedia approach can also be considered as evolutionary, not in the framework of ‘art evolving from better to worse or viceversa;’ but as reflecting the aesthetic, conceptual and technological media developments in art.

Therefore, process based and intermedia art could be considered as evolutionary if it reflects technological, aesthetic and socio-political contexts.

The evolutionary element I was interested in and that was reflected within the program of Dislocations was a multiplexed complex matrix of all of the above contexts. In the exhibition there were three main foci: the first focus area was based on the influence of context in the understanding and deciphering of the artwork by the audience; the second was in the transformation of the artwork itself, which would have to adapt to a different medium and a different technological materiality and restraints in order to take advantage of the new strengths that large screens would provide to the artwork; the third was based on the conceptual strengths underpinning the artwork, enabling it to absorb and subsume layers of socio-political meanings even if contradictory.

When talking of evolution in art it is only in the framework of the ‘evolution of art for art’s sake’ and to analyze how an artist would take advantage of a medium that did not exist when the artwork was initially conceived. This is in order to understand how the artist (or the curator) would take advantage of a different cultural context that would add layers upon layers of new meaning and understanding to the artwork and the artists’ conceptualizations.

The material and conceptual transformation of a previously created artwork, in order to respond to the material restraints and opportunities of a new technology, can be best defined as transmediation, where the technological and the conceptual elements have to be redefined in order to present a new work that is still the same work. It is a process of artistic and aesthetic translation that
the artist does himself, preserving, in curatorial terms, the integrity of the artwork and its correspondence to what the conceptual frameworks and underpinnings are.

Particularly for early computer, digital and new media artworks there have not been many examples of transmediations done by the artist themselves in response to new technological possibilities that were only envisaged at the time of creation of the original artwork and were not yet technically feasible. For example how would Stan VanDerBeek transform his seminal artwork Movie-Drome if he had access to the contemporary technological context of immersive reality environments, augmented realities and giant screens?

In the exhibition program of Dislocations I was very excited in having the possibility of working with one of the early pioneers of computer and digital art, Charles Csuri, who was so kind to transmediate his early work, Random War (1967), into a mix of video and technological intervention via Facebook to be displayed on the giant screens of the MSU’s Media Façade.

Since processes of remediation, in order to preserve ephemeral digital artworks, had been at times implemented by curators without direct participation of the artist – I was keen to collaborate with the artists themselves, Song Gil Boyraz, David Cotterrell, Charles Csuri, Mathias Fuchs and Danielle Roney & Jeff Conefry, in order to re-adapt and alter the spatial and media’s frameworks for which the artworks had been initially conceived. I was interested in analyzing the alterations that the artists would implement in order to re-adapt and alter the spatial and media’s frameworks for their artworks had been initially conceived. I was interested in analyzing the alterations that the artists would implement in order to achieve a new aesthetic process of display functional to their original conceptual underpinnings and creative work.

I chose the title Dislocations for the program on the Media Façade at MSU as an experiment in transmediation. The program was also part of another larger curatorial concept – the dislocation and re-allocation of artworks as part of focus foused biennals. The Dislocations show, as part of the 12th Istanbul Biennial, was at the same time linked to and disjointed from the events of the biennial in Istanbul, responding to a globalized perspective of new-media frameworks of participations under meta-umbrella events.

The artworks in Dislocations were events scheduled on a weekly basis that coincided with the 12th Istanbul Biennial and that were presented in the press package of the biennial. The artworks were physically inaccessible to the audience present in Istanbul, but nevertheless present across the Internet and widely publicized.

With Mathias Fuchs’ borderline the Media Façade became a giant videogame screen with war exploding across Europe, while animated characters would act out and play (or perhaps more appropriately dance) attack moves.

With David Cotterrell the museum became a Theatre (2008–2011). It was both a theater as a spectacularizing giant screen of the Afghanistan war, in which David participated as a war artist, and also a theater as a way to enter into and assist to a surgical operating theatre where wounded soldiers were being ushered in. Theatre provided another element to understand the multilayered complexities, spectacularized mediations and overlooked long-term consequences of war.

Opposing Views (2011) by the artist duo Danielle Roney and Jeff Conefry displayed the neurophysiological visualizations of the brains of people in Zagreb discussing issues related to war and conflict. The MSU’s Media Façade became a physical display of people’s neuro-biological feedback based on the emotions that memory of war and trauma stirred up.

Dislocations and its multilayered structure was both challenging and rewarding. I was able, with the support of the artists, to showcase artistic practices in which the work of the artist is no longer exhausted in the creation of the artwork itself. Even if there is a moment in which the artwork is ‘complete,’ the conceptualization, engagement and re-thinking process of the curatorial practice, artistic process and audiences’ engagements continue to evolve through the process of interrogating the artwork and by revisiting the images. The audience developed a practice of driving by the Media Façade of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb, in order to discover new images transforming the public exhibitions into social forms of engagement that could be summarized as ‘drive by art’, entertainment or through more complex interactions based on commentaries and deeper engagements with the images that were being displayed in the public space.

The process of transmediation takes into account the media’s language specificity from the initial conception of the artwork and could be compared to the creative process of translation of poetic text or better still to the adaptation of a literary text to theater, film and TV.

Transmediation is a complex process that transcends the simple technological transfer – or re-mediation – and requires a reinvention of the text and/or the artwork. It can be described as a transposition process that sees the new medium into which the artwork is transferred as an entirely new space that requires alterations – at times drastically different from its original version – in the aesthetic conceptualizations of the artwork as well as its material manifestations.

These new media based spaces have technological requirements, media language specificities and are located within a physical reality that redefines the audience’s engagement while layering new
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The contemporary art locus – in the multilayered interpretation of Henri Lefebvre’s *Everyday Life in the Modern World*, it’s a space where these technological challenges are a reflection of social conflicts and of the struggle of the artist and the curator to respond to the contradictions and demands that the new spaces – both virtual and physical – impose upon the artwork.

Dislocations with its program and its artists wanted to analyze the complexity of contemporary artistic interactions in public spaces. It also aimed to showcase the technological challenges as well as the importance of the curatorial role for art that uses contemporary technology that is based on the understanding of space and of the transmediation processes as basic tools to build an aesthetic partnership between the artist and the curator. This is a partnership between the artist and the curator that in the context of contemporary multiple technologies is similar in its methodology to historical literary partnerships such as the one Enzo Pizzi invokes in his essay, or the one between Paul and Louise Tucker (1983) in Second Life LPDT2 (2010). “This Second Life version (built and enacted by Elif Ayiter, Max Mousseur and Selavy Oh, in association with Heidi Dahlsveen) is installed at INDAF incorporates an Artificial Intelligence which enables the public to enter into an SMS conversation with the artwork.”

The role of the curator becomes increasingly that of a creative partner in order to respond to the challenges that media and physical spaces thrust upon the artwork and its creator.

Lanfranco Aceti
Editor in Chief, LeonardoElectronicalManac
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REFERENCES AND NOTES


2. An entire chapter is dedicated in Eco’s book to The Open Work in the Visual Arts, “Informal art” is open in that it proposes a wider range of interpretive possibilities, a configuration of stimuli whose substantial indeterminacy allows for a number of possible readings, a ‘constellation’ of elements that lend themselves to all sorts of reciprocal relationships.” Umberto Eco, The Open-Work, trans. Anna Cancogni (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 84.


7. “Influenced by Buckminster Fuller’s spheres, VanDerBeek had the idea for a spherical theater where people would lie down and experience movies all around them. Floating multi-images would replace straight one-dimensional film projection. From 1957 on, VanDerBeek produced film sequences for the Movie Drome, which he started building in 1955. His intention went far beyond the building itself and moved into the surrounding biosphere, the cosmos, the brain and even extraterrestrial intelligence.” Jorgen Claus, “Stan VanDerBeek: An Early Space Art Pioneer” in Leonardo 36, no. 5 (2002): 209.

8. “At one end of this skyline dominated by important works we observed the emergence of everyday life, the revelation of its hidden possibilities; at the opposite end everyday life reappears but in a different perspective […] everyday life becomes less and less bearable, less and less interesting, yet the managers create an interest in this intolerable tediousness simply by telling it…” Henri Lefebvre, Everyday Life in the Modern World, trans. Sacha Raboinwith (London: The Athlone Press, 2000), 11.
Danielle Roney, Jeff Conefry

Opposing Views

A Travel from the Inside of the Mind into the Outside of the Body

Danielle Roney and Jeff Conefry exhibited Opposing Views (2011) at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb (MSU), with the drive of transforming the museum into a light-box through which invisible emotions and inherited traumas could be manifested and made visible.

Their work focused on war and war trauma, but they discarded the visible traces of war and concentrated instead on the invisible legacy that is left in someone’s mind as a form of unadaptive behavior and cultural trauma.

Roney and Conefry transformed the building into a mind reading machine, a window into people’s minds that would visualize brain waves and brain patterns of emotional responses following the elicitation of memories linked to traumatic war events. The conversations between two people on the topic of war would be traced through biological and neurological feedback and visualized as words brought to the surface in a surge of emotional responses on the Media Façade’s screen surface.

The screens became a digital membrane able to make visible the invisible processes of the mind. The Media Façade was suddenly a reflection of hidden emotions, a mirror of the invisible traces of war that, carved into the biological body, still condition and structure people’s lives and behaviors.

The history of conflict and the traumatic experience of divisive politics over the body (the Balkans have had a process of assimilation that made and makes it almost impossible to speak of nationalities, race and creeds in a clear-cut manner) is an indelible experience, whereby the body should be portioned and destroyed in order to respond to newly envisaged body politics.

The screens were flooded with an artwork based on the management of complex scientific data, theoretical assumptions on cultural inheritance, biological and behavioral theories, data visualization and aesthetic visual representation. The complexity of this operation was visible inside the structure of the museum, while outside the viewer would engage with the pattern developed by the data collected and based on emotional responses.

Roney and Conefry replicated the engagements that people have in real life, in real spaces, and in the appearances of spaces. They exploited the superficial gaze, the glance, which allows the possibility of multiple opinions that are disjointed and disconnected from the perceived reality of the experience of the object viewed. If it is impossible to recognize those who have lived through experiences of war and trauma with a glance, similarly it was impossible to see, by glancing to the screens, the reality that formed the visual patterns adorning the Media Façade. The constant proliferation of data-based images on the screen was a proliferation of appearances in the public space.

This discrepancy based on a different presence of the image and on the lack of engagement with the viewer who would look at the piece only from the outside, without entering in the museum, without entering people’s minds, was a further layering. A new stratum added to the artwork that, if excluding some, instead enriched the experience of others; those viewers that moved between the ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ of the artwork – experiencing physically the internal working of the artwork and physically moving into its external representation. It was a travel from the inside of the mind to the outside of the body (from inside the museum to the outside of the museum’s façade) that showed the reality and contradictions of contemporary emotive glances, appearances and engagements.

REFERENCES AND NOTES


2. Nicholas Mirzoeff, Bodyscape: Art, Modernity and the Ideal Figure (London Routledge, 1995), 76.

3. “[…] what one finds in the city is never the thing as it simply stands forth in its own presence, but rather a constant proliferation of things, or rather, of the appearances of things…” Jeff Malpas, ‘Heidegger and the Ideal Figure’ (London Routledge, 1995), 96.

PHOTO BY TOMISLAV ŠMIĐER
SYSTEM TESTING OF DEBATE FORMAT.

DANIELLE RONEY & JEFF CONEFY

OPPOSING VIEWS (2011).

ORIGINAL 3D ANIMATIONS.

Panoramic screen development (3): 3D mapping of virtual terrain with two participant channels, 3D animation, time software, biofeedback sensors, participants.

DANIELLE RONEY & JEFF CONEFY, OPPOSING VIEWS (SCREEN CAPTURE) (2011).
DANIELLE RONEY & JEFF CONEFRY

OPPOSING VIEWS (2011). PANORAMIC SCREEN CAPTURES.
DANIELLE RONEY & JEFF CONEFRY

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DANIELLE RONEY & JEFF CONEFRY, OPPOSING VIEWS (2011). PANORAMIC SCREEN CAPTURES.
DANIELLE RONEY & JEFF CONEFRY

D A N I E L L E  R O N E Y & J E F F  C O N E F R Y

D I S L O C A T I O N S

ANIELLE RONEY & JEFF CONEFRY, OPPOSING VIEWS (2011). PANORAMIC SCREEN CAPTURES.
DANIELLE RONEY & JEFF CONEFRY, OPPOSING VIEWS (2011). PANORAMIC SCREEN CAPTURES.
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DANIELLE RONEY & JEFF CONEFRY, OPPOSING VIEWS (2011). PANORAMIC SCREEN CAPTURES.
DANIELLE RONEY & JEFF CONEFRY, OPPOSING VIEWS (WORKING DETAIL) (2011). ONSITE SOFTWARE INTEGRATION.

DANIELLE RONEY & JEFF CONEFRY, OPPOSING VIEWS (SCREEN CAPTURE) (2011). SOFTWARE PATCH NETWORK.

PHOTO BY TOMISLAV SMIDER
Notes on the Author

Lanfranco Aceti works as an academic, artist and curator. He is Visiting Professor at Goldsmiths College, Department of Art and Computing, London; teaches Contemporary Art and Digital Culture at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Sabanci University, Istanbul; and is Editor in Chief of the Leonardo Electronic Almanac (the MIT Press, Leonardo journal and iaca). He is the Gallery Director at Koca Gallery in Istanbul and worked as the Artistic Director and Conference Chair for ISEA2011 Istanbul. He has a Ph.D. from Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, University of the Arts London. His work has been published in Leonardo, Routledge and Art Inquiry and his interdisciplinary research focuses on the intersection between digital arts, visual culture and new media technologies.

Lanfranco Aceti is specialized in contemporary art, inter-semiotic translations between classic media and new media, contemporary digital hybridization processes, Avant-garde film and new media studies and their practice-based applications in the field of fine arts.

He has worked as an Honorary Lecturer at the Department of Computer Science, Virtual Reality Environments at University College London. He has exhibited works at the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) in London and done digital interventions at Tate Modern, The Venice Biennale, MoMA, Neue Nationalgalerie, the iaca and the Irish Museum of Modern Art.

Previously an Honorary Research Fellow at the Slade School of Fine Art, Dr. Aceti has also worked as an Honorary Research Fellow at the Slade School of Fine Art, Istanbul Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna. He has a Ph.D. from Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, University of the Arts London. He has worked in published in Leonardo, Routledge and Art Inquiry and his interdisciplinary research focuses on the intersection between digital arts, visual culture and new media technologies.

SONGIU BOYRAZ studied Sculpture at Mimar Sinan University of Fine Arts, Istanbul and Academy of fine Arts, Vienna. In many of her works she deals with the human body and its fragmentation. Closely connected with the space created by the medium (video and photography) the concentration on the parts pro toto without any accessories and deception is able to tell in detail about the brutality and tragedy inherent in everyday situations.

JEFF COWERY is a media artist and painter specializing in 3D content development and interactive interface design. His recent projects include media production and technical systems for the u.s. Pavillon, Venice Biennale of Architecture, pilot asset creation for BARK BARK Studios, and time-based construction animations for building information modeling. His work has been exhibited nationally including the Atlanta Biennale and the Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago. He attended The Rhode Island School of Design and holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Painting from the University of New York at Purchase.

DAVID COTTERELL is an installation artist working across varied media including video, audio, interactive media, artificial intelligence, device control and hybrid technology. His work exhibits political, social and behavioural analyses of the environments and contexts, which he and his work inhabit. David is Professor of Fine Art at Sheffield Hallam University, has been a consultant to strategic masterplans, cultural and public art policy for urban regeneration and Theatre Performances.

CHARLES CSUR built is best known for pioneering the field of computer graphics, computer animation and digital fine art, creating the first computer art in 1964. Between 1971 and 1987, while a senior professor at the Ohio State University, Charles Csuri founded the Computer Graphics Research Group, the Ohio Super Computer Graphics Project, and the Advanced Computing Center for Art and Design.

MATHIAS FUCHS has pioneered in the field of artistic use of games and is a leading theorician on Game Art and Games Studies. He is an artist, musician, media critic and currently Senior Lecturer at the University of Salford. Since 2011 he holds a visiting Professorship at the University of Potsdam. During the last 3 decades he presented sound- and media-installations. Since 2004 Mathias Fuchs’ work focuses on Creative Games for Museums, Urban Planning and Theatre Performances.

Mathias Fuchs studied computer science in Erlangen and Vienna University of Technology, and composition in Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst Wien, Vienna and in Linz, Fylkings in Stockholm.

DANIELLE RONEY is an artist working with hybridization, immersive environments and interactive media architecture in the context of global identity structures. She attended the University of Georgia in sculpture and digital media and has held studios in Los Angeles and Beijing. Roney is currently working with translational spatial narratives and the migrant human condition through interactive architectural facades.
DISLOCATIONS, AN ART PROGRAM
OF RE-CONTEXTUALIZATION AND
TRANSMEDIATION, SEES THE
PARTICIPATION OF JENNIFER KOPP, DAVID
COTTERELL, CHUCK COURL, MARK
SKWAREK, LILY & HONGLEI, JOHN
CLEATER, TAMIKO THIEL, CHUCK
CSURI, AND NAOKO TOSA.

For its world premiere Dislocations will also introduce "From the Venice Biennale to Kasa Gallery, even though the artworks are re-contextualized, misinterpreted and transmediated, the participation of songul boyraz, david cotterell, charles csuri, mark skwarek, lily & honglei, john cleater, tamiko thiel, chuck csuri, and naoko tosa. For its world premiere Dislocations will also introduce..."

About David Cotterell
David Cotterell studied Fine Art at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. He attended the University of California, Santa Barbara for his MFA in Design and holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Painting from the University of California, Los Angeles. Cotterell's work has been exhibited in the United States, Europe, and Asia. His work is often collaborative and involves a variety of media, including installations, interactive digital art, and public art. Cotterell is currently working with interactive spatial narratives and the use of advanced technology in urban and public spaces.

About Charles Csuri
Charles Csuri is best known for pioneering the field of computer graphics, computer animation, and digital fine art. He received his Ph.D. in Computer Graphics from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1964. Since then, Csuri has worked as an artist, writer, critic, and educator, with a focus on the intersection of art and technology. His work exhibits a deep understanding of the human body and its fragmentation. Closely connected to Csuri's work is a critique of the limitations of the human body and its relationship to technology. Csuri's work is often collaborative and involves a variety of media, including installations, interactive digital art, and public art. Csuri is currently working with interactive spatial narratives and the use of advanced technology in urban and public spaces.

About Songül Boyraz
Songül Boyraz studied Fine Art at Mimar Sinan University of Fine Arts, Istanbul and Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. In many of her works, she deals with the human body and its representations. Boyraz received her Ph.D. in Computer Graphics from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1964. Since then, Boyraz has worked as an artist, writer, critic, and educator, with a focus on the intersection of art and technology. Her work exhibits a deep understanding of the human body and its fragmentation. Boyraz's work is often collaborative and involves a variety of media, including installations, interactive digital art, and public art. Boyraz is currently working with interactive spatial narratives and the use of advanced technology in urban and public spaces.

About Danielle Roney
Danielle Roney is an artist working with Turkmenistan, American Express and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She attended the University of California, Los Angeles for her BFA in Design and Technology, and currently works as a senior designer at Nike. Roney is currently working with interactive spatial narratives and the use of advanced technology in urban and public spaces.