

Video Installation in Public Space

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Received 31 May 2018 ▪ Revised 27 June 2018 ▪ Accepted 29 July 2018

Abstract

The present study is dedicated to the research of video installations placed in the public space, such as exhibition halls, streets and theatrical spaces. The theme “Video installations in the public space” is the understanding of the essence of video and space and its aspects through the production of various spatial solutions and practical imaging solutions in the field of video art. The subject of the study is essence of the problem. In the case of this study the object is the video installations, and the subject is the process of their creation, and the concept of environment. The whole range of phenomena studied is related to the works of video art, their development and expression of opportunities and the idea of environment is an aspect of exploring the space in which they are presented.

Keywords: installations, video, public space, phenomenon, movement.

1. Introduction

When we think of artists, we think of paint on canvas, or clay masterpieces, or beautiful, timeless drawings, but what do you think when you hear digital artists? The acceptance of digital art into the mainstream art community is a controversy that is slowly becoming history. The controversy is essentially what many people believe in that art is created by the computer, and not by the artist. Numerous art exhibitions and shows do not allow digital art in just for that reason. This is a lack of understanding of how the art is created, because images cannot be created unless there is a creator with an idea and that person has gone through the creative process just like a normal artist.

The controversy over digital art is partly to blame on its short history. When any new media in art is introduced, it is not accepted well because there is no understanding of it. Digital art is just the first step in an art revolution. As soon as people become educated about digital forms of art, they can appreciate the outcome and the creative process that accompanies the finished product. When people know what a demanding process it is to create these masterpieces, they can disprove the myth that digital art is just button pushing. When the population becomes aware of the processes they can then be judged fairly. The controversy also includes the debate that digital artists have it easy, and it isn't as hard to create masterpieces as in traditional media. Many digital artists are traditional artists that can draw, and paint and understand colour and they believe that digital art is very demanding and requires the artist to not only use and understand creative tools but also mechanical tools. Many digital artists believe themselves to be artists first and technicians second.

2. Method

The aim of this paper is to show how video installation is taken place in modern art environment. Some comparison show the difference between digital art and non-digital technics. In this sense that paper will conduct some reflections on issue such as origin of installation as a whole, digital art, environment and site-specificity.

Their comparative analysis will result in the formation of one basic concept. That the city can act as an inspiration for the contemporary artist.

3. Results

I feel very strongly that, in our modern world, public art will be more interesting and engaging if it continuously changes, or, even better — if the art has a two way communication and interaction with the environment (wind, water) and/or the viewer. An example is when the sculpture can “see” and “hear” the viewer, and can communicate directly with them, and change accordingly. As these interactive sculptures are also connected to the Internet, they can be seen via Internet webcams, and interacted with via smart apps from anywhere in the world. Two different orientations can be observed in the work of video artist, primarily related to the location of the technical means of creating the work.

The first type of orientation can be conditionally called external (documentary). The camera is used as a normal recording device. It is rather a tool for documenting certain actions of artists or situations created by them. An example of such an approach is Bruce Nauman's experiments, which puts a camera in his studio, letting him record every motion or mimic, and then selects certain frames from the recording for performance. To this approach to the video can refered to recording of conceptual art – actions, happenings, often concentrated on the artist's body itself. Also, representations of body art are also photographed. In these cases, artists use the video to increase their documentation, limited to texts and static photos.

For the second type of orientation, the capabilities of video technology are used to generate, manipulate, and change visual images. We can call it inner (manipulative). We also include a formal study of plastic elements. A similar approach is used by Nam Jun Pike. Electronic devices are exploited not just as a recording device but as a complex artistic approach to manipulate the video image. Pike manages to make black and white abstract records by manipulating the disposition of electronic elements inside the camera itself.

Regarding the way in which video works are presented, two categories could be distinguished: by directly presenting the work of a monitor or video wall or as part of a synthetically produced video sculpture, installation, performance.

After the 90s art video has been changing. The “Document 10” in 1997 was the first major art forum to include video art in the formal gallery community. Since then, works of video art have begun to appear in galleries. Many young artists, who are often unfamiliar with this tradition, are oriented towards this form of expression. Under these factors, the exploited themes are expanded. Topics of philosophy, social criticism, and the history of art itself enter.

An artwork where the creator's instrument is the artist himself. Art, where the only limit is consciousness – it sets the beginning and the end of the performance. The audience participates in the work through its reactions and actions. It can last for a few hours, even for days. This is the meaning of the performance. This is the arena in which it develops. In the second half of the 20th century, a new art emerges and rapidly evolves, combining elements of pantomime, theater and dance, but remains heavily tied to the history of fine arts. This type of art becomes known as performance. The origin of the performance can be found in various acts of artists from the beginning of the century, but its formation and its imposition as an independent art form took

place in the 1960s. Then the authors start to experiment more and more with different means of expression by freely incorporating into the work of art and their own body.

Performing is understood to mean any artistic performance or action in front of an audience, which, unlike theatrical performances, does not have any written fixed dialogue.

For greater theoretical clarity, it is better to perhaps place the performance on the 20th century axis and point out its modern origins. The notion of performance comes to the scene and somehow combines the happenings in the 1950s and 1960s, body art, constellation art, live art, demonstrations, agitum prop and all kinds of expressions – pure artistically or socially engaged. All of them aesthetically and ethically have their prototype in high modernism, in the traditions of avant-garde – futurism, dada, surrealism. Performance is a modern phenomenon that, as a neo-vanguard form, is experienced through the consciousness of the rejection of all theatrical concepts – the classical, theater-destined theater scene that holds the spectator at the required distance; “The presence of an acting game”, which aims at incarnation in images; the primary importance of the text and the subordinate function of the plastic, visual and sound image; the leading figure of the director.

The performance, as a free flow of experience and desire, has undermined the stable structures of classical theater, naturally renegotiated the conventions of the communication scene-audience, event-viewers. Viewers can no longer expect their “symbolic” reading, they become an integral part of the creative act, they become part of the energy flow, and in their involuntary complicity they are free to react to what influences them and to ignore what they are leaving it indifferent, without in any way damaging the full communication with the performance or damaging the “intent” of the show.

The performance (performance, performance of a theater, musical or other action program) takes place in a pre-prepared scenario – conscious action, and is oriented towards the individual's psyche. The so-called pictorial play can be repeated many times. The performance is in most cases not documented, but aims to leave a trail in the viewer's mind. Unlike the traditional theater play, the actors in the performance fully prepare, direct and control the action according to their own purpose. During the show the participants can communicate with the audience. Performance is rather: “the movement (of bodies and processes of signification) that provokes the spectacle or event”.

The ruin of the modernist myth of “species purity” – the boundaries between painting, graphics, sculpture and architecture disappeared, and between art and non-art. Traditional, classical materials, tools and procedures (canvas, cardboard, paper, wall, stone, wood, bronze, metal plate, oil, watercolour and graphic techniques, brush and cutter, painting and molding, drawing and modelling, etc.) were abandoned and replaced with ready-made or industrially-produced objects – stacked or simply disorderly messed up in the exhibition, museum or the most common environment (in the so-called post-studio – “alternative spaces”: abandoned schools, barns, quiet streets or deserted, deserted squares); replaced with moving, enigmatic shapes and lights: variable and stationary, electric and neon; with physical and chemical processes; with photographic, television and video images – laser, holographic and computer; with acoustic, choreographic and musical performances; with industrial and urban waste; with a direct involvement in nature (as a natural “scene” and “plastic material”); with the human body (the author or his chosen models), etc.

4. Discussion

Objects used in contemporary art have a range from each day of our life or natural materials to new media such as installation, performance, video or sound. Contemporary postmodern practices often face and undermine what is familiar to us in the world of art, which

justifies why postmodern art is so diverse and fascinating. The question “what is postmodern art?” cannot yet receive a concrete and complete answer. According to some, postmodernism is a phase of modernism (similar to Expressionism, Futurism, Dadaism and Surrealism), and according to others, its complete negation. For most artists, postmodernism is everything created in the field of art in the last quarter of the 20th century, since pop art. In other words, it originates from the so-called conceptual art, which legitimizes the right of an artistic work to be both logical, confusing and conceived. There are also those who, based on the bias of postmodernism to the sensationalism and the combination of opposites, see it as a rebirth of the Baroque.

A characteristic feature of postmodern art is interpretability. It breaks with the fictitious idea of realism and modernity of originality. Here is not the originality of the work, but the rediscovery and re-creation of something already invented in previous artistic practices.

In postmodernism there is no original. Each work is processing another. There is nothing left that is not invented anymore. It is only possible to quote, to repeat what has already been said. Through the quote, elements are transferred and moved, rejecting the subjective strategies of author originality. Postmodernists create an art of quote play.

Parts of deconstructed totals of already existing artistic texts are constructed. The unobtrusive way of looking at the postmodern viewer, holding in his hands the TV’s remote and having hundreds of television channels, turns fragmentation into one of the canonical forms of postmodernism.

Concerning the theory of conceptual art, Joseph Kosuth’s study *Art after philosophy* (1969), which distinguishes art and painting as concepts, is important. Painting as well as sculpture imply inclusion of aesthetic criteria, assessments from the point of view of the form, however, the art exhibition must be freed from all the values of tradition, and it is an antagonistic concept, not a general category that includes painting, and for Kosuth the works of fine arts in museums and galleries are re from the past, today they have no ideas, the study shows both the avant-garde iconostasis of the Dadaists and the proletarians, as well as the influence of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s philosophy. Kosuth quotes him: “Oblivion is a measure set to reality when the form that is recreated is logical, then the image can be called logical”. Of course, there are also proverb such as: “for which we cannot speak, it must be silent”, “every philosophy is a critique of language”, etc. In a moment when the wave of structuralism is the best, high, Wittgenstein’s novel reads from the basic theoretician of conceptualism.

Installations use sculptural materials and other natural materials to change the way we perceive space.

4.1 *Digital art*

There are many different types of digital art. The media and techniques range from lasers, computers, holograms, photocopiers, and satellite transmissions. It is used in fields such as advertising, journalism, and graphic design. However, these fields are driven by money and commercialism and this is where digital art gets its reputation for not being real art. Because computers were first used for business and science, people see computer generated art as used for craft, and not as art.

This in turn reflects who buys digital art. Because it is used for commercial purposes, and bought by big companies for advertising, the majority of people believe that these creations are not art, but pieces made just to get the job done and to earn a dollar. Artists argue this point that it is just a different form of art. Just as artists use different media, in digital art there are different purposes. Several people confuse “computer artists” with “graphic artists”. Again, stressing that artists many times consider themselves artists first, and technicians second. Who is to say what is art and what is

not? On the other hand, digital art is bought just like fine art is purchased at exhibits and shows and auctions. Art is not what it is made of, but rather the message or feeling the artists is trying to convey.

Digital art and written communication in the relationship between the elements found in the works and how these elements relate to one another to form a whole. The digital focuses completely on the relationship between elements for example, tones, sound, and how they build up to create a motion form. Digital art focuses on the beauty of each element and how they form together with one another with no recognizable formal subject being imposed on the listener by the artist. Sound is therefore applicable in contemporary artistic practice in the arts world, because much of today's use of sound in installations is based on concepts that are focusing on the use of colour. The article uses several lines to communicate to the viewer because the details are arranged in lines after the other. Digital art is able to combine and transform more traditional types of art such as painting, sculpture, photography, animation and filmmaking. Digital technology allows the artist to create and manipulate colour, images, and texture, instantly. Images can be made to appear, disappear and even combine or morph.

Digital art has many hurdles to overcome before it will be fully accepted by the mainstream traditional art community. Frequently, digital art is seen as graphics or pretty pictures rather than art. It is becoming more widely accepted as an art form but only a few museums and galleries display computer art.

These technological innovations however, have allowed artists to combine traditional forms with new electronic techniques to produce unique and exciting works of art. The computer has increasingly become a versatile tool for digital artists. Many artists are creating dynamic and flexible works of art through computer networks. The digital age is creating a new movement in the art world and the computer is becoming a symbol for this revolution. The future of digital art is tremendous and it has the capability of transforming how art is defined and created. It is not the tool that determines what is art, but the artist and their personal vision and style. The complexity and diversity of the new digital media will be challenging to artists and allow them a new means to express their vision of the world.

4.2 Installation

The idea is not to fill the gallery space, their use would be appropriate in both private and public places.

Nearly all kinds of materials are used in installations to recreate a particular environment. The materials used in modern installations range from daily and natural materials to media such as video, sound, presentation, computers and the Internet. Some installations are designed for specific locations. They rely entirely on sensory perception to bring the viewer into an artificial system that raises its subjective perceptions.

Interactive installations typically include audience participation. There are several types of interactive installations, web based installations, gallery-based, digitally-based, electronically-based, and more.

At the core of this art, the interaction of the elements of performer - ideology - action - media - knowledge creates the work. A new dynamic dynamic "aesthetics" is created, which is neither mimetic nor prescriptive, normative, related to values and works, but is purely poetic, fluctuating, active (actional), not allowed to leave an artifact. The hidden "production" of the work before the audience becomes a presentation of its process, in performance. The work is the very construction of the work – poetry itself becomes a dynamic work. The performance functions as poetry (production, creativity) to social norms and not as a mimesis (imitation) of already

completed forms of life, behaviors, things, and is directly non-medialized (or grabbing, capturing) the real as such.

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Rather than displaying isolated objects through the interactive installation and environmental art pieces, the artists represent their awareness about politics, society and identity in order have us awakening and changing about the way we view our modern culture. As an interactive installation artworks often involve viewers performing on the piece responding to the artist's activity, the viewers become to realize how they see their political and social issues in the modern community. Professor Jennifer Gonzalez, one of the history of art and visual culture associates, defines installation art as a work of art that is usually temporary and that surrounds or engages the viewer on a large space. Yet, "installation art is often described as an artistic genre of site-specific, three-dimensional works designed to transform the perception of a space" (Stiles, 186). Since the 1970s, the installation artwork has proposed by many artists in an infinite variety of ways and ideas. Essential aspects of installation art pieces are its habitation of a site and its connection to real social conditions.

The viewers are urged to participate to play active roles to build their own narrative developments with the narrative structure which is a key element of video installation art. The video installation art piece finally leads the viewers to deal with their own personal records of technologies and realize how they use of the technologies to create more satisfying modern lives. Therefore, as the artist exercises the video electronic technology with installation artworks, the entire video installation art piece enables the artist to explore most popular social issues of technologies.

Before the term "installation" developed in an avant-garde perspective, it was the actual embodiment of its literal definition: its purpose was for mounting artworks into the void walls of the museum. The transformation to the installation art we know today is indebted to the influence of numerous artistic movements including *Spatialism*, *Futurism* and *Constructivism* – to name a few. Some say installation emerged from the 50s when Jackson Pollock liberated the frame introducing gestures beyond the canvas by freely throwing paint on the large, open sheet of burlap. Others believe the influence came before that time from the Dadaists, and in particular, Marcel Duchamp, who took the everyday object (i.e. toilet), hung it in a gallery space and created the "readymade". Even others rely on the El Lissitzky's Proun Environment which is arguably the first installation piece because it alludes to the notion of space as a physical material (form). Nevertheless, installations such as these are of the timeless nature-true installations continuously change.

Installation art is not sculpture or architecture, at least not entirely. In today's contemporary society, one can practically go anywhere in the urban community and find the foundations of installation art without even knowing it. From window displays to the interiors of some chic night clubs-installation art is noticeably connected to our modern culture. As outsiders looking in, the primary goal should be to learn more about this form of art that has been firmly

stimulating the artistic global community since 1993.

With this progressive contemplation in mind, one can consider the art further than what it would mean two-dimensionally. That is, with an open mind, the average person can go beyond the aesthetics of the art to understand and see it for the interdisciplinary study it is. The goal, therefore, is to determine what installation art is and how it fits in to present society. However, there is no absolute explanation that can describe what installation art actually “is”, or what it includes. This is the very beauty of the art – its boundaries are blurred resulting in a virtually infinite number of solutions regarding medium and theme. By criticise installation art – which is only defined by the perspectives of contemporary critics, artists and artworks- with an interdisciplinary motif in mind, a greater understanding of the art will transpire, translating into an appreciation for the “total work of art”.

It is obvious however that installation was remembered or it would not have existed in the 60s. During this era, “assemblages” and “environments” were terms associated with the act of bringing a host of materials together to fill a given space. Today’s installation art is not completely different, but it does aim to work with (and exploit) the qualities of a given space, rather than “fill” it. In addition, today’s concepts of installation art stretch to include space, time and interaction. The materials can vary, but are ultimately used to create a mood, or activate the sensory stimuli. Much like the abstraction of the Cubist paintings, the materials of installation art are objects that have been rearranged, gathered, synthesized, expanded and dematerialized. But art cannot be made on materials alone – there must be careful thought involved on the artist’s part. After all, not just any old junk can be installation art – if this was the case we would all be artists. For critic Holland Cotter – whose viewpoints are expressed in Erika Suderberg’s *Space, site, intervention: Situating installation art* – if an artist claims to be creating installation art then the artist must do something with the space being utilized – making sure to evoke user participation. Otherwise, it is “not considered an installation” (Suderberg 149).

It is this concept of participation and its ties to theatricality that significantly contributes to the definition of installation art in an interdisciplinary perspective. The implication of theatre is meant to be introduced in regards to the relationship between the art, artist and audience – the latter being of most importance. In essence, because installation art is meant to be seen in three-dimensions (a given space, that is), it appeals to the audience in a more informal way. The objects have more personality than a two-dimensional painting – they have weight and height, and the constructs which define them are of identifiable situations – our own realities (even if in a dream). No longer must the audience stand behind an artwork (painting usually) questioning its relevance. Instead, the frame no longer exists and much like the fall of the fourth wall in theatre, the audience begins to ask themselves why the artwork is there for them, and how they feel towards it.

The role of the artist begins to change in this context of theatricality as well. In the essay entitled *Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology and installation art* by Robert Hobbs, the audience begins to see that the art was created – not to bridge the thoughts between the artist and the viewer (Hobbs, 23) – but to allow the viewer’s own personal experience decide the relevance behind the work. The artist is not making the art to entertain the audience, nor are they attempting to impose their feelings onto the audience. It is then a reversal of perspective: as a spectator, one will look at the artwork, but one will seldom notice the artwork (or the artist) looking at them. If we are “active participants rather than passive onlookers”, artist Ilya Kabakov says: “we [will] set the artist’s world in motion and give it meaning” (Storr, 4). Just as this artist looks upon the audience, the spectator must continuously reflect on their own interpretations and responses to avoid misleading intuitions. As Allan Kaprow, founder of “happenings” (major influence in installation art world) writes: “here ended the world of the artists; beyond began the world of the spectator and reality” (Storr 2). The artist is just another member of this audience, relating to what they have created in his/her own way and taking in the reactions of their “spectators”. Thus, it is the personal experiences brought in by the audience that gives installation art its meaning.

James Turrell may be one of the only artists to use light as his primary “palette”, but he is certainly not the only one to use electricity as their “brush”. It was the Futurists who wanted us to realize the potential of new materials and techniques, and this has been done: the contemporary equivalent to the total work of art is mixed media or multimedia. Multimedia installation or video installation is the best form of artistic communication because it serves to overlap the disciplines, adapt to various electronic platforms while captivating the attention of the audience on a sensory and emotional level. It encompasses everything that was discussed – including the art’s ephemeral which foreshadows its future usage. It is this “totality which results in a much closer relationship between the artist and the audience” (Suderberg, 143) and this totality which will continuously redefine our perceptions and opinions of installation art.

4.3 *Environmental art and site-specificity*

Given that environmental art often brings different worldviews on our political and social issues, we, as the viewers, are influenced to change the way we perceive the relationship with the contemporary civilization. Environmental art has emerged since the 1960’s in reaction to the environmental movements. The phrase environmental art generally refers to any form of art that contains the political, historical or social perspectives with ecological topics. Its goal is to make smooth progress of a sustainable balance between human and non-human environment through political or social involvements. Since the examples of human and non-human environment can be pictured through the medium of art, the artists interpret historical, political or social problems to help us fill a gap which separates practice from theory and nature from our modern culture. Some of the environmental art would be so large in size, that it would be considered to be monumental. This kind of art cannot be moved without destroying it, and the climate and weather can change it.

The viewer should recognize the importance of having a temporary solution to contemporary art. Without significance placed on duration, there is little consistency to installation art as it can take on any form or location. The theme of theatricality continues in the sense that there is no permanency. Most installation art cannot remain in the same place as it continuously changes and evolves. Like theatre, no “performance” (or showing) is alike – there are too many factors that contribute to its growth. Cultural movements, political shifts, social conditions, and personal complications modify the way the viewer experiences and their relationship to the artwork. Thus, even if the installation had been site-specific, or if it was relocated (which it can now do), the meaning behind the art would differ.

Site-specificity implies neither simply that a work is to be found in a particular place, nor quite, that it is that place. It means, rather, that what the work looks like and what it means is dependant in large part on the configuration of the space in which it is realized...if the same objects were arranged in the same way in another location, they would constitute a different work (de Oliveira et al., 35).

What, however, makes the artists almost at the same time come out of the white cubes of the galleries and start working directly with the medium/place, often loaded with meanings, and often with history and ideology, or vice versa, in places completely indifferent to the work? Do the same context have two locations with the same function?

The idea of the specificity of the place as predetermining the contextual links of the artistic work with itself and its formal parameters appeared in the 1960s. It is precisely then a tendency in contemporary art that stems from the traditions of land art and conceptual art and develops and transforms to this day.

4.4 Gallery



Image 1. “Liquid Light” Site Specific Video and Performance at Long Pond, Wellfleet MA presented as a part of Fleetmoves Dance Festival 2013. Photo by Whitney Brown.



Image 2. “Elsewhere”, video art installation at a railway station in Malmö, project was conducted by Chilean artist Tania Ruiz in 2010 at the Central Railway Station.



Image 3. 10.000 Moving Cities – Same but Different, VR (Virtual Reality)
Interactive net-and-telepresence-based installation, author Hek Basel.



Image 4. Claude Cahun



Image 5. Liang Yue, "The Quiet Rooms", installation view. Image courtesy of ShanghART.

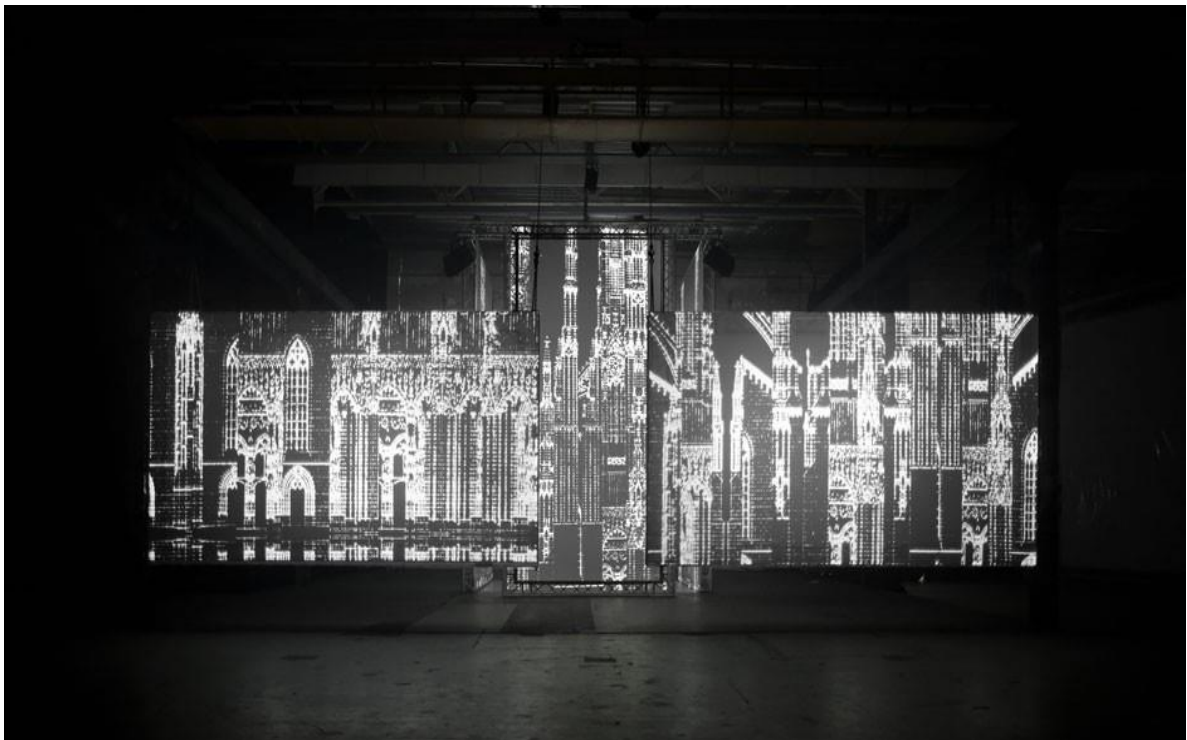


Image 6. Audiovisual Installation by Joanie Lemerrier.



Image 7. TV Circle 1987, installation of 7 TV's in 7 steel cases, video 4.5min loop, Bellever Tor, Dartmoor then Museum of Art, Oxford, Leeds City Art Gallery, Centre d'Art Contemporain, Paris.

5. Conclusions

Most people are of the opinion that art must be created in the old fashioned way to be considered fine art. Traditional art is created with pen and ink, brush and paint or chisel and stone. Art generated by a computer however, defies the traditional rules, values and boundaries of the mainstream art community. The computer is considered technical; therefore, it is not artistic. Computer artists must contend with the narrow mindedness of the traditional art world. The digital media artist is thought to be less skillful than a painter or sculptor because the production of his artwork seems simple, requiring less skill and training. Contemporary art can not turn its back on its surroundings, every space serves us as an inspiration in our works. I think every artist has his own unique reading of what he does, no matter what expressions he has chosen to use.

Acknowledgements

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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