
<Bridge> and <Ripplecast>: Engaging the Audience through Performative Interaction

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Abstract

This paper discusses how performative interaction and participation can increase the audience's engagement in the experience with the artwork. By comparing two pieces of artwork, <Ripplecast> as an interactive media artwork and <Bridge> as a non-interactive artwork, this paper will examine how implicit and explicit interactivity can evoke the personal aesthetic experience with performativity.

Keywords

Performative interaction, artistic engagement, aesthetic & reflective experience, media art, critical distance.

ACM Classification Keywords

J.5 Arts and humanities, H5.m. Information interfaces and presentation.

Introduction

In *Art as Experience*, Dewey says that a work of art is an individualized participating experience[1]. According to him, a work of art is recreated every time that it is aesthetically experienced by the viewer. The viewer creates an imaginative relationship with the self through his/her experience with an artwork, and this kind of process can be called "interactive engagement." In this participation and interaction with the work of art,

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the most important thing is the interacting with the self. In this sense, according to Dewey, all artwork is interactive. However, questioning why and how interactive experiences can be perceived differently in interactive media art work from non-interactive art work, my former research has examined different aesthetic experiences from the interactive media art work, particularly focusing on the screen experience[3]. Looking at how physical and perceptual interactivity becomes a central component of the relationship between viewers and many artworks, the research examines that unlike the screen experience in non-interactive artworks, interactive media screen experiences can provide viewers with a more immersive, immediate, and therefore, more intense experience through its instant feedback system. For example, many digital media artworks provide an interactive experience for viewers by capturing their face or body through real-time computer vision techniques. What I focused on in this situation was that as the camera and the monitor in the artwork encapsulate the interactor's body in an instant feedback loop, the interactor becomes a part of the interface mechanism and responds to the artwork as the system leads or even provokes them. This kind of direct mirroring experience in interactive screen-based media artworks hardly allows the viewer the critical distance or time needed for self-reflection for interacting with the self. Therefore, in media art experience, the critical distance or time needed for self-reflection in the course of interaction needs to be greatly considered. And the interactive mechanism based on computational closed feedback system needs to be approached more philosophically and aesthetically.

In this notion, this paper discusses how the audience's mode of participation and engagement with the artwork can be created and approached by comparing a non-interactive artwork and an interactive artwork. Also this will explore how the implicitly or explicitly approached and embedded interactive engagement can elicit the performative participation from the viewers while experiencing with the work and can create interacting with the self. A multimedia installation <Bridge> will be analyzed along with an interactive media artwork, <Ripplecast>. Both were presented at a exhibition entitled "Encounter-Bridge" at Sungkok Art Museum in Seoul, Korea from April 10th to May 5th in 2009.

<Bridge>



figure 1. Viewers watching <Bridge> installation and video played in the screen

<Bridge> is a multimedia installation providing the audience with a homely experience which can recall personal memories from the nature. The artist's personal experience on the bridge in a shiny summer day looking at children playing in a wooded valley and a vivid reflection on the water surface recalls her childhood memory in nature, and initiates this work. This work is also to conceptualize the relationship between contingency and intent in representing and forming memory space through the artwork

experience—Artist's intent representing personal memory through media artwork presentation and viewers' contingency involuntarily recalling their personal memories while observing at and participating with the artwork. Thus the exhibition title, "Encounter-Bridge," symbolically means an unintentional coincident of artist's perception meeting the viewer's one (encounter), and for this purpose, the intended artistic approach to connect these two (bridge).



Graffiti left on the bridge by the audience (a photo shot after the exhibition).



figure 2. <Bridge>multimedia installation

To represent the personal memory and experience, the work re-situates the situation of the experience in the gallery room as a theatrical setting with several physical components such as a bridge structure, a suspended video screen, and a piece of rock. In a video screen, a video recorded the part of that particular scene seen from the bridge was projected and the surrounded sound was set to augment the experience. Rock in between the bridge and the video screen was put to reinforce the interrelation the virtual world that video

and audio creates and the real world that viewers can phenomenologically experience in the gallery space. Through the exhibition period, the gallery visitors are allowed to leave their own memorable experience in graffiti on the physical bridge structure. In this way, the bridge existed not only as representation of the artist's memory and experience, but also as a meaningful and personally engaged space for visitors to remember their experience and recall it later. Thus, this work intends to create the perceptually intertwined network of individuals' memories and experiences, from different time and space, and in between the real and the virtual.

<Ripplecast>



figure 3. <Ripplecast> interactive media installation

Initially developed as a WiiArt project, which was to create the artistic experience using Wii-remote interaction, <Ripplecast> attempts to provide a calm engagement and a chance to encounter nature in an interactive media art experience[2]. In this work, as if the interactors were standing on the shore of a lake,

the projected image of a still pond on the big gallery wall laid waiting for viewers. The interaction with the WiiRemote is designed to mimic the movement of throwing stone that we do with our hands. Similar to the way we grip a real stone with our fingers, holding the WiiRemote and pressing the big button on the bottom of it, interactor can release a virtual stone. As a result, ripples form on the surface of the still pond depending on where the interactor throws the stone. Based on the strength and degree of the throwing motion, the stone skips making one or more hops. Although certain movement, directions, and speeds are programmed to get better results, because the user's gestural motion made up in the air, the interaction output does not bring expectable result every time. Rather, this aims to invoke a reflective mode of user experience by leaving an element of arbitrariness that is not explicitly revealed to the viewer in the cause and effect relationship. Thus, this suggests interactors to look back on their body and mind from a distance, and bring their own memories and experiences with nature while they are interacting with the piece.

Engaging the audience through performative interaction

<Ripplecast> is designed to request the audience to create explicit and performative interactions. Without their participation, this work shows nothing but the still

References

- [1] Dewey, J. *Art as Experience*. Perigee, NY, USA, 1980.
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pond. In <Bridge>, the audience can engage with the work actively or inactively. They can voluntarily choose to either participate with the work by leaving graffiti within the work or not. Whereas <Ripplecast> requests the viewers to act like children to recall their childhood memories with nature, <Bridge> elicits the viewer to look at the children's play from the video and recall their childhood. Both works intend to create the connected experience in between the physical world and the virtual world, but the connection in the former can be made through the active action and in the later, it can be created through the provided theatrical setting. The performative interaction and participation is made for the viewer in both work. Sometimes the viewer and observer's position can be switched inspired by looking at the other viewer's(now they are interactor and participant) performance and participation.

Interactive artworks commonly explore the audience interaction as an operational means to reveal its artwork concept and engaging their experience. However, whether the interactivity is formed explicitly or not, the performative interaction from the viewers can be imaginatively and flexibly approached. Because the participatory and performative engagement can heighten the viewer's experience up to a more bodily, and therefore, reflectively and aesthetically engaged one.

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[3] Lee, H. *The Screen as Boundary Object in the Realm of Imagination*, Ph.D. thesis, Georgia Institute of Technology, GA, USA, 2009.