POETICS OF DIGITAL ART

Syllabus

Dr Dejan Grba, Associate Professor

Seminar Web Page:

Context

Digital art permeates, reflects and generates a wide spectrum of the most relevant social phenomena. It is a dynamic laboratory that creates powerful means of human expression and interaction through complex interrelations between creativity, science-technology, politics, economy, media, entertainment and popular culture. Many contemporary digital artists are highly distinguished and the cultural sector is finding new ways of collecting, archiving, presenting, theorizing, promoting and commercializing their productions. The growing interest of academic community and general public in digital art and culture is evident in the expansion of all kinds of discourse—from manuals, journals, magazines, TV programs, films, blogs and websites, through workshops, seminars, festivals, lectures and panel discussions, to studies, monographs, catalogues, historical, philosophical and theoretical literature. Significant changes in art education are taking place with the introduction of various art programs which research the creative space between art, (digital) technology and science.

At the same time, creative and expressive potentials of digital art are largely unknown and unexplored, and its social consequences unexamined. Digital art and culture engender many tensions, contradictions and paradoxes ranging between technocracy, opportunism, manipulation, shallowness and arrogance on the one side, and smart, layered, insightful, comprehensive critique on the other. The rich and illuminating histories of digital art and culture are often obscured by the pace of change in commercial digital technology and its effects. In contemporary digital art, many poetic qualities and creative achievements remain unjustly overlooked, while some other get disproportionately advertised by the ideological authority of digital paradigm in cognitive capitalism.

Course Description

Poetics of Digital Art is a required seminar at the Digital Arts DA program with Interdisciplinary Studies at University of the Arts in Belgrade. It is a platform for structuring the skills and knowledge provided by core practical and theoretical courses in Digital Art program. Dedicated to the critical examination of creative factors in digital art and culture from a broad spectrum of aspects, the seminar

enables the students to integrate the extensive research in digital art and culture with the preparation of their dissertations and the production of their doctoral projects. The term *poetics* refers to the conceptual, cognitive, emotional, intuitive, ethical, narrative and contextual qualities that define the production, presentation and reception of an artwork. Poetics is established in complex correlation of the artist's experiences, notions, intentions, skills and imagination with the ideas, techniques, procedures, discourses and politics that she employs. It is a fundamental property of the artistic process and creativity in general.

Topics

The seminar explores the poetic factors in a range of areas and topics that include information society; early computer art; digital visualization and infographics; sound art; digital animation, cinema and video; game art; Internet art; tactical media; algorithmic and generative art; digital installation, physical computing and interactive art; digital architecture; bioart, etc. The focus is on the experimental art intended for the gallery, museum and festival presentation, with refined and clear poetic qualities, and exemplary characteristics of digital paradigm.

Outcomes

The seminar develops a wide spectrum of professional competences:
- Enhanced research methodology and critical assessment of the poetic values of digital art and culture;
- Creative integration of the acquired knowledge and skills with the current art production;
- Comprehensive, clear and academically sound communication of the acquired knowledge in live/oral, written and multimedia forms.

Program

The seminar comprises lectures and consultations.

Lectures

In the lectures, I present the thematically relevant examples of digital art and cultural phenomena, and discuss them from various poetic aspects. The lectures are focused at building a complex research framework of interrelated artworks, poetic approaches and cultural phenomena. The lecture contents are not intended for explicit learning and reproduction.

Consultations

In consultations, we explore further the themes addressed in lectures, open the special topics in digital art and culture, support your research and preparation of your exam presentations. CONSULTATIONS MUST BE PRECISE, CONCISE AND EFFICIENT. Prepare a clear working draft of your exam presentation, specific questions you want to ask, and be focused in conversation. E-MAIL CONSULTATIONS ARE NOT ALLOWED.

Program Structure

The phenomenological diversity of digital art requires a dynamic program strategy. The sequence of topics and the number of lectures per topic are defined according to the contextual aspects, my and your current academic and artistic interests. Here is the overview of the main topics:

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE: Introduction and detailed presentation of the seminar.

INFORMATION SOCIETY, DIGITAL CULTURE AND DIGITAL ART: The key factors in the emergence of information society, a historical sketch of digital art and an overview of its current status.

VISUALIZATION AND INFOGRAPHICS: Art projects based upon digital image creation and manipulation, and upon the principles of digital encoding. Infographics, based upon the software solutions for processing, conceptualizing and visualizing databases.

SOUND ART: Digital art projects primarily created through experimenting with sound.

DIGITAL ANIMATION: Artworks created through digitalization of animation as a basis of film.

DIGITAL FILM: Commercial film within the context of digital paradigm, and digital artworks exploring the phenomenology of commercial film.

DIGITAL VIDEO: Artistic production based upon the digital techniques for creating, recording, manipulating and distributing video. Idiosyncratic, ludic, transgressive, culturally generated, transcoded, interactive and programmed video.

INTERNET ART: Art projects that utilize the specific qualities of networked culture—primarily of the Internet—such as ubiquity, ease of use, arguable anonymity, speed, multimediality and interactivity.

GAME ART: Cultural, educational, economic and political context and consequences of computer gaming; strategies and problematics of artistic computer games.

TACTICAL MEDIA: Creative contexts of digital activism and tactical media as one of the most exposed, most attractive, most ambitious and simultaneously one of the most disputable domains of digital art.

GENERATIVE ART: Art that uses various techniques to formalize the natural unpredictability of the creative process, and to aestheticize the contextuality of an artwork. Artistic approaches and productions based upon the precisely defined procedures in conceptualizing, generating, rendering, performing and/or presenting the artwork, and art projects primarily based upon coding.

DIGITAL INTERACTIVITY, INSTALLATION, PERFORMANCE AND EMERGING FORMS: A heterogeneous field of digital interactivity, installation, performance and emerging forms in which the artists employ the existing methods and develop new techniques for the active transformation of the artwork in relation to the viewer/participant.

BIOART: Historical, socio-political and technological overview of BioArt, and the related concepts of biopolitics, bio-power, etc. Relationship between the art projects based on biotechnology and biotechnological research projects that acquire the identity of an artwork.

DIGITAL ARCHITECTURE: An overview of the artistic experiments in digital, algorithmic, parametric and biomorphic architecture.

DIGITAL DESIGN: An overview of design artists and studios whose conceptual platforms and production methodologies are based upon the digital technology.

Exam

Pre-Exam Requirements

Regular class attendance.

Exam Requirements

A written poetic analysis of the selected digital artwork, set of artworks, artists' production or cultural phenomena from the fields of digital art and culture covered during the semester. The exam presentation manual is in the attached file Uputstvo za pripremu ispitne prezentacije (in Serbian).

Core Bibliography

No course-specific textbooks are required for learning and for following the lectures.
I curate a selected bibliography of digital art and culture as a source for your exploration of and research in digital art and culture preparing for the exam. You will find it in the attached file Bibliografija za istraživanje digitalne umetnosti i culture (in Serbian, majority of titles in English).