Digital Synesthesia

A Model for the Aesthetics of Digital Art

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(Eds.)

DE GRUYTER

At Play

"At the heart of our work is t
the performativity existing i

A

kondition pluriel (Martin Kusch / Marie-Claude Poulin)

At Play

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Empowering Users through
Design: Interdisciplinary Studies
and Combined…, Ed. David
Bihanic, 2015, Springer 2015

At Play – a moment in the life of objects
Might the empowerment of objects contribute to questioning our relation-
ship to them, as well as the very meaning of their production?
(David Bihanic)[1]

Every environment, its components and the relationships between them
is enigmatic; a mystery to be penetrated, a space to comprehend. How
should a place be read? Which decisions and actions should we carry out,
and which relationships should we have?

    At Play is a responsive audio-visual environment that invites visitors to
make stacking combinations with plastic storage bins to build the archi-
tectural landscape of the installation. Miniature versions of containers

that carry goods to world markets, these everyday objects, are playfully moved around by visitors to the exhibition like pieces of a puzzle.

Resonance chambers, light sources and dynamic projection surfaces all at the same time, the boxes are integrated into a pattern recognition system that matches each sculptural composition with a particular visual and sonic atmosphere. The projected images and sound ambiances embed the visitors in fictional worlds in which they become the actors. Playing with building blocks that appear a priori analog, their actions reveal atomized sections of a world undergoing a perpetual mutation, calling upon their spatioception (perception of space). The grey material of the objects, fused with the lighting of the projected 3D imagery, comes to life through multiple trompe-l'œil nuances. The acoustic universe takes its source from the immediate environment of the installation, and both image and sound undergo a series of transformations in real time that imbues the grey boxes with a mysterious expressive power that has political undertones.

The visitors act, but also tele-act; navigating in real space and in virtual space, they are guided by their senses of touch, balance, hearing, proprioception and sight. These usual integration mechanisms of their perception are altered by the afflux of multimodal and heterogeneous sensory information, which is not limited to the experience of the real.

Instead, the experience oscillates between real and virtual, while the manipulated objects act as limits and physical constraints, but also as tools and partners of the imaginary. The sensorial displacement generated by the experience of the installation, a doubling of personality, does not allow the visitors' body image (the corporeal schema) to stay intact: rather, it becomes dislocated to reincarnate itself in another form, in a synesthetic autopoiesis.

The "construction blocks" of *At Play*, symbolic objects of both childhood and the adult world, evoke our enactment of social roles through our functions, or simply by the way we live, in a globalized world waiting to be reinvented. By proposing an inversion of perspective – an attempt to see the world from the point of view of objects, *At Play* brings into question our existential dilemma and our relationship with things and places. The boxes ultimately become information units, the visitors potential catalysts of change, and the installation a transformation platform.

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At Play

A, B, C
"Enjeux" Performance at Theatre
La Chapelle, Montreal
Photo: Bruno Colpron,
© kondition pluriel, 2015

Diver — a cyber-kinesthetic installation

kondition pluriel (Martin Kusch / Marie-Claude Poulin)

Artistic media:
Various options (360° immersive full-dome projection installation;
dynamic multi-screen installation; giant urban screen application)
Primary sensory modalities:
Kinesthetics, Vision, Audio
2016
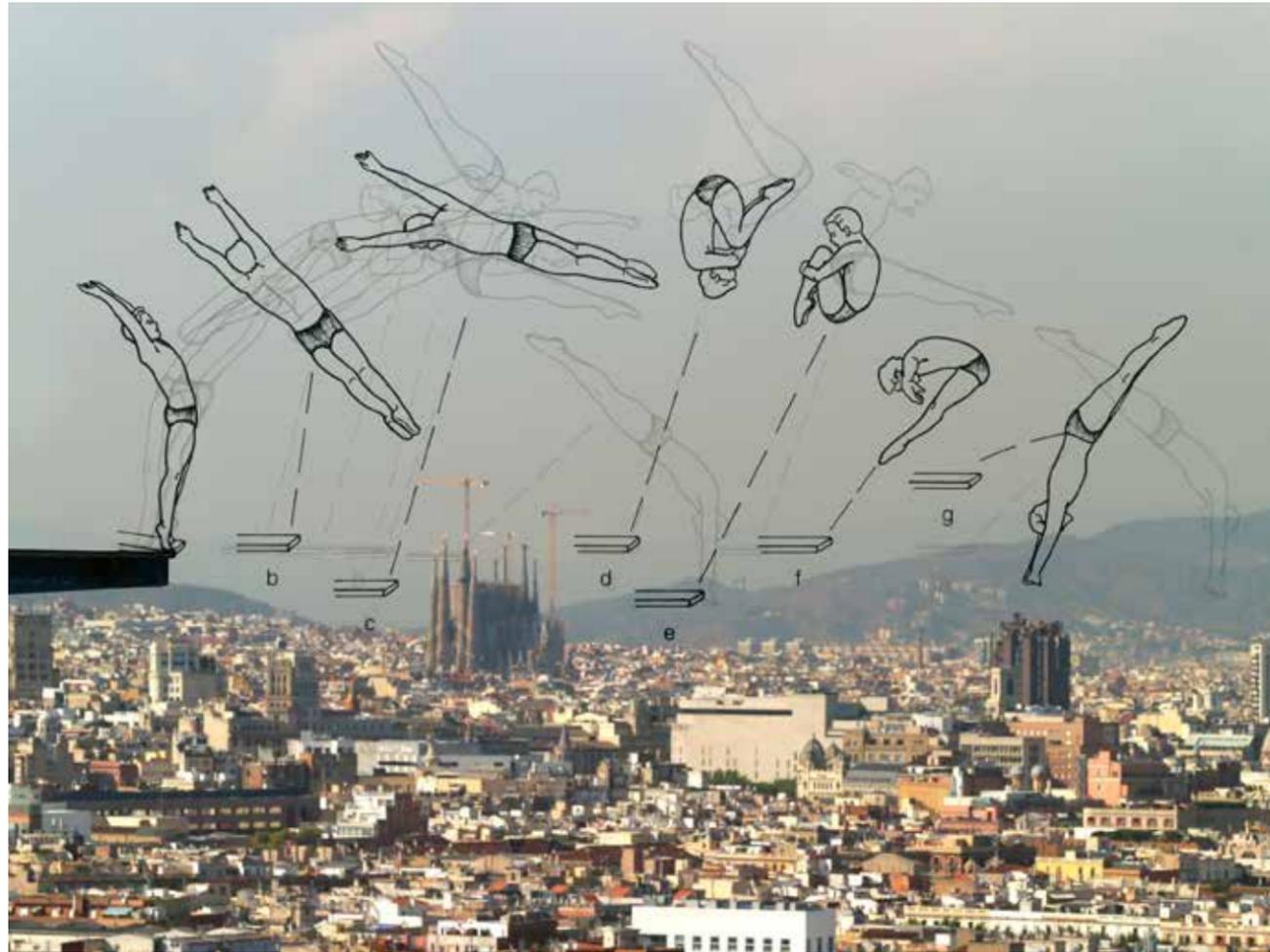
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Diver — a cyber-kinesthetic installation

A
kondition pluriel: Diver
(Sketch), 2016
Photo: kondition pluriel

"By crisscrossing assignations between media-d
fabric of relationships in which all the elements

"It is difficult to understand how the sense of corporeal movement, or kinesthesia, is commonly excluded from the list of the traditional five senses, even though it is essential to our survival. A plausible reason for its omission is its reliance on multiple receptors located deep within the body (muscles, joints, inner ear). Also, unlike the case for the other senses, corporeal movement is not generally perceived consciously." (A. Berthoz)

Diver is a transdisciplinary interactive media installation that gives eyes to multiple viewpoints captured from the body of a competition springboard diver. The images, sound and biometric data – like velocity, kinesthetic inertia and gravity – as well as camera-tracking data originating from the diver's body, are the source-material for the installation.

The piece is adaptable to three installation formats: a 360° immersive *fulldome* projection installation; a dynamic multi-screen installation in a gallery setting; and a giant urban screen application. By moving about or by using their smart-phones, visitors and passers-by modify simultaneously transmitted video and audio recordings from the various viewpoints, transforming and recombining the media material, drastically slowing it down or speeding it up. The orchestration of these mobile and dynamic viewpoints offers a myriad of possibilities for composition; in collaboration with other viewers, the participants become the co-authors of an augmented visuo-kinesthetic work.

Regarding her video-installation machine-vision, Steina Vasulka said: "When a human being operates the camera, the assumption is that the camera is an extension of the eye. You move the camera the way you move the head and the body." (1974) In her work she mounted motorized mirrored spheres in front of camera lenses, simulating all possible camera movements, and spoke of "freeing the human eye from being the central

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point of the universe". Today we have reached a cultural state, where technological developments lead to a hyper-media reality and our perception expands beyond the micro- and macroscopic level. The perfect simulation takes over the imperfect reality and we live in a multi-sensorial state of existence.

With eight cameras installed on the surface of a diver's athletic body, his limbs, joints and skin transform into a myriad of eyes. This policed body, a metaphor for the struggle for control of the physical body, becomes "the centre of the universe." The movements of this perfectly controlled and hyper-conditioned body become the motor for delivering an insight into that which we are not able to see or perceive. *Diver* brings into being a hyper-body with multiple body-eyes that become the extensions of the viewer's eyes. Sight and hearing are coupled with kinesthesia into an uncommon union, in which these senses are the extension, or the mirror of each other.

This project deals with systems of control and the human body as a metaphor of that control, and it questions our connection to authorship and the autonomy of humans and machines. Data captured, analyzed and choreographed by machines are part of this process. The project reflects on the tension between representation and performance, between the organic and the mechanical and between centralized and distributed control.

In *Diver*, the viewer is invited to explore the materiality of media in real time, and the installation offers a participative multi-sensorial experience of a hybrid reality that incorporates the performative and event-like
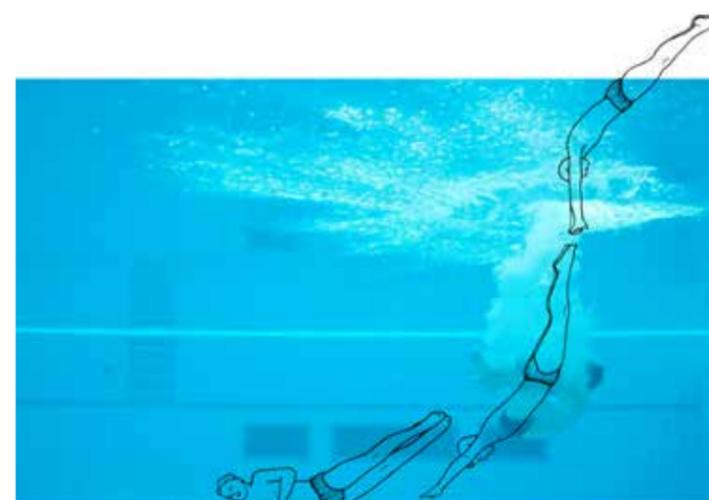
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kondition pluriel: Diver
(Sketch), 2016
Photo: kondition pluriel

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Visual programming and media setup: Johannes Hucek and Martin Kusch
Sound: Alexandre St-Onge and Martin Kusch
Diver: N.N. and N.N.
Camera body mount: Dominik Guggenbauer

gestures of an athletic body. A blend of human and technical presence, this body has no "real" existence or single identity, no personal history and possibly no real future in our society of surveillance and spectacle. However, the installation apparatus dismantles this anonymous, normative corporeal condition: instead of simply stimulating the observer's vision in isolation, the extreme slowness of the source images and the rhythm and sequenced timing of the media elements create new narratives, potentially touching the senses and deep-seated memories of the viewer.

Paradoxically and unexpectedly, the installation conveys a decolonized kinesthesia close to Walter Benjamin's flâneur: a trembling, floating, vacillating body; an environment-architecture oscillating between background and foreground; the experience of the dizziness of falling; images and sounds suspended in time and space. *Diver* offers an exploration of sensory relations within an elastic notion of time, of perception from the inside rather than the limited perception of the physical exterior of things.

In *Diver*, positioning and tracking technology separates the components of the action, then recombines them in various layers to create relationships between the media-created space, the recorded space, and the real space. The generic athletic body is made accessible to the non-athletic bodies of the viewers via their physical involvement. The repeated images of the dive transform into an inextricable post-human machine performance. What we see is a hyper-networked-body, encased in environments both immediate and distant; a social and autopoietic entity revealing cyber-kinesthesia, the fruit of an integrative digital visuo-kinesthetic synesthesia that allows us to experience other *possibles*.

kondition pluriel (Martin Kusch / Marie-Claude Poulin)

Diver — a cyber-kinesthetic installation