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THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE
ARTS, SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY

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LEA

DISLOCATIONS



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DISLOCATIONS

by Lanfranco Aceti



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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 re-searching 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 (MSU) in collaboration with Kasa Gallery and part of the 12th Istanbul Biennial's Official Parallel Program and of ISEA2011 Istanbul.

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

- c. *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. ¹

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 material 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 *The Open Work*, which although mainly referencing textual work has ever since also been applied to conceptualizations and aesthetic processes in the visual arts as well. ² 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 rhizomic 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 ³ 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. ⁴

The evolutionary element I was interested in and that was reflected within the program of *Dislocations* was a multilayered 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, ⁵ 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, Songül 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 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 locus focused biennials. 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.

The Media Façade of MSU in Zagreb was transformed each week during a period of five weeks into a different container. First it became a box containing and restricting womens' sense of identity, existence and upward social mobility. The idea was to create a trap through a media framework imposing a constant existential gender war reflecting womens' battles for equality (Songül Boyraz, *UT.(HANNA)*, 2011). Then the façade was transformed into an enormous data crunching machine of a war field – with Charles Csuri's *Random War* (1967–2011) – presenting the audience with a 'typewriter' cascading effect of my personal Facebook friends, being killed in action, being awarded medals, being reported as missing in action as well as surviving. Lev Manovich himself, in this process of transmediation, was registered in the artwork on the Media Façade as dead.

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.

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.

Opposing Views (2011) by the artistic 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.

The complexity of *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 consumed 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 choice of a transmediation process of already existing artworks for giant screens was influenced by today's constant presence of multiple media outlets – from giant screens to iPads – that increasingly require a process of re-adaption or media specific translation: transmediation as defined by Lev Manovich or Henry Jenkins.

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 translation 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

local contextual meanings upon the artwork itself, further enriching or problematizing the artworks' conceptual underpinnings.

The contemporary art locus – in the multilayered interpretation of Henri Lefebvre ⁸ – is a space where these technological tensions 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 that in the context of contemporary multiple technologies is similar in its methodology to historical literary partnerships between writers and translators (who often are themselves writers in the language they translate into).

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, *Leonardo Electronic Almanac*
Director, Kasa Gallery



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Also I am grateful to Özden Şahin, who continues to support me in my multiple endeavors, and John Franciscutti who patiently encourages me in my creative and curatorial processes.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford University Press) <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/54709?redirectedFrom=dislocation#eid> (accessed May 10, 2012).
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, 1989), 84.
3. Dick Higgins, "Intermedia," *Leonardo* 34, no. 1 (2001): 49–54.
4. Thomas Munro, *Evolution in the Arts: And Other Theories of Culture History* (Ohio: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1963).
5. Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001). See also N. Katherine Hayles, "Translating Media: Why We Should Rethink Textuality," in *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 16, no. 2 (Fall 2003), 270, Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2006) and Michael Ryan Moore, *Adaptation and New Media*, *Adaptation* 3, no. 2 (2010): 179–192.
6. One example is Roy Ascott who transmediated *La Plissure du Texte* (1983) in *Second Life LPDT2* (2010). "This Second Live version (built and enacted by Elif Ayiter, Max Moswitzer 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 LPDT2 metaverse." "ROY ASCOTT @ INDAF LPDT2/SYNCRETICA," i-DAT, <http://www.i-dat.org/roy-ascott-indaf-lpdt2syncretica/> (accessed March 10, 2012).
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 1963. His intention went far beyond the building itself and moved into the surrounding biosphere, the cosmos, the brain and even extraterrestrial intelligence." Jürgen Claus, "Stan VanDerBeek: An Early Space Art Pioneer," in *Leonardo* 36, no. 3 (2003), 229.
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 author manages to create an interest in this intolerable tediousness simply by telling it..." Henri Lefebvre, *Everyday Life in the Modern World*, trans. Sacha Rabinovitch (London: The Athlone Press, 2000), 11.

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 ISAST). He is the Gallery Director at Kasa 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 ICA 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 AHRC Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Birkbeck College, University of London, School of History of Art, Film & Visual Media and as Visiting Research Fellow at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Notes on the Artists

SONGÜL 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 pars pro toto without any accessories and deception is able to tell in detail about the brutality and tragedy inherent in everyday situations.

JEFF CONEFRY 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. Pavilion, 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 COTTERRELL 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, healthcare and growth areas.

CHARLES CSURI 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 theoretician 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 EMS, Fylkingen 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 transnational spatial narratives and the migrant human condition through interactive architectural facades.

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Dislocations

September 12
October 16
2011

David Cotterrell

Chuck Csuri

Mathias Fuchs

Jeff Conefry & Danielle Roney

Songül Boyraz

KASA GALERİ

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VICE DIRECTOR AND IN HOUSE CURATOR ÖZDEN ŞAHİN
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Chuck Csuri - (Monday, 19 September to Sunday, 25 September)
Mathias Fuchs - (Monday, 26 September to Sunday, 2 October)
Jeff Conefry and Danielle Roney - (Monday, 3 October to Sunday, 9 October)
Songül Boyraz - (Monday, 10 October to Sunday, 16 October)

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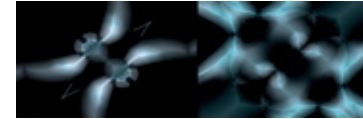
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DISLOCATIONS, AN ART PROGRAM OF RE-CONTEXTUALIZATION AND TRANSMEDIATIONS, SEES THE PARTICIPATION OF SONGÜL BOYRAZ, DAVID COTTERRELL, CHARLES CSURI, MATHIAS FUCHS AND DANIELLE RONEY.



Re-interpretations, misinterpretations and un-related contexts create new modalities of perception and understanding, leading to the rediscovery of the self and human commonalities beyond local realities and globalized stereotypes. Dislocations presents artworks that are inspired by or reference acts of war and the dislocated realities that we live in.

For its world premiere Dislocations will also introduce to the world audience Random War, the new transmediated artwork on Facebook by the digital pioneer Charles Csuri, inspired by a 1967 plotted drawing by the same title.



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