

Archiving Strategies in the Computational Age: Creating a Media + Data Art Digital Media Library Based on a Curatorial Methodology

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Abstract

As an innovative solution to the challenges of documenting, indexing and researching new media art, this proposal proposes the creation of the Video-Policy media library (from now on MeViPol) within the framework of the research group HUM-1062: Policies of the audio-visual image and its technological environment in artistic practice. This project focuses on two lines of research. On the one hand, curatorial strategies for archiving works developed in Media Art and Data Art. On the other hand, we consider that the artistic trends encompassed in these two blocks have characteristics of obsolescence due to the rapid advance of technology, so MeViPol proposes a virtual space in which both the programming code with which these works are developed and the records generated for their development, both technical and conceptual, is collected.

Keywords

Interactive Archive, Media Art, Data Art, curatorial politics, territoriality, otherness, art research

Introduction and background

We start from the conviction that audio-visual artistic production and its exhibition and dissemination are knowledge producers. Thus, we face the complexity of contemporary artistic practice. It is increasingly necessary to provide multidisciplinary tools to society and local culture to encourage understanding of new audio-visual languages. From this point of view, we focus our attention on the functionality of the media library, whose main purpose is to protect the audio-visual memory and to point out the importance of image and sound in culture.

Media libraries are resource centres designed to meet the academic community's cultural, educational, or research needs. For Marita Sturken, Professor in the Department of Media, Culture and Communication at New York University, "postmodern excavations of the archive" operate by drawing on its contents and at the same time dismantling its structures. In this sense, "much contemporary art can be seen as a deliberate disarrangement of the archives - institutional, authoritarian, colonial - that were considered a guarantee under modernism" [1].

Although the artistic practices around Media Art and Data Art have become critical elements at the intersection of art, science and technology, there is a risk that threatens these creative tendencies, namely rapid technological obsolescence, which implies, among other things, the impossibility of executing certain projects if the technologies with which they were created are no longer updated or their development is halted. To face this problem, it is essential to develop innovative solutions to deal with the collection of documentation, indexing and media art research [2], i.e., creating up-to-date archiving policies.

We can observe that the computational factor is becoming more and more common in the creative field as it allows for a more fluid construction of interdisciplinary environments of interaction between human beings and technology. As Foncuberta (1998) states: "Electronic culture forces us to rethink the whole cultural and political architecture of our value system, it induces us to investigate its remains and to examine ourselves" [3]. In the artistic field, working with specific programming code has enriched the different disciplines by providing the layer of artificiality that allows the spectator/user to interact with the work more directly, making them a participant in the transformation and state of the work [4].

Other studies in this line of research include the curatorial project entitled Deep Storage, 1998. This became the first thematic exhibition of what is today, for many, one of the most important trends in the art world: the figure of the archive. In the catalogue of Deep Storage, Ingrid Schaffner noted that the main aim of the exhibition was to address "storage and archiving as image, metaphor or process in contemporary art. In many cases, fine art storage has practically become an art in its own right" [5].

From this conceptual framework arises our proposal for the creation of MeViPol, whose aim is to meet the pedagogical, cultural and research needs of the Spanish-speaking academic community specialising in Digital Humanities, specifically in the creative environment linked to Media Art and Data Art. We are committed to reflecting on the

diversity of styles in contemporary creation from a broad understanding that integrates new artistic trends and their staging. We believe that observing these movements will provide new research methodologies and diverse processes of creative experimentation.

The fundamental strategy of this project is oriented towards promoting and experimenting with different multi-purpose digital technologies of modular visual programming that are being incorporated into various trends of artistic expression. These new tools demonstrate their usefulness in representing questions around the construction of identities as a differentiating element in the constitution of societies [6] at a time when the figure of the other, the body, the subject, the territory and, in short, coexistence are inevitably crossed by these digital technologies. In this sense, the creative experiences inscribed in the analysis of the ideas of otherness and territorialisation that we intend to highlight are containers of a specular reflection that unites audio-visual praxis, production of the subject and research of the environment [7]. These principles will lay the foundations for establishing the curatorial line implemented in MeViPol.

This project intends to establish a certain taxonomic order from a purely artistic strategy such as curatorial discourse, that is, to create a "proposition, often affirmative, interrogative, inquiring or denouncing, whose arguments are the artistic manifestations selected by the promoter of the story itself" [8]. In addition, we tried to establish cataloguing based on the conceptualisation of a series of artistic works and practices that use audio-visual support and code support. In this way, MeViPol focuses on updating digital resources and their integration into academic research in the artistic field. We aim to articulate new relationships between theory and practice, linking concepts from science and computer technology with interdisciplinary artistic experimentation, using different digital tools and their transmission in workshops and exhibitions, to encourage, promote, socialise and disseminate the use of Media Art and Data Art.

The different lines of action that precede this project support the intention of establishing relations between contemporary art theory and computational artistic practise within the visual arts. The purpose of this is to point out the fusion between the scientific and creative methods to provide a humanist vision linked to the processes of creation related to Media Art and Data Art.

Initial hypothesis

Our hypothesis is based on the need to attend to the archiving of contemporary artistic material developed in Media Art and Data Art environments to create repositories of artistic work, paying special attention to the results generated with creative programming code, as well as to the software, hardware and resources needed for the

visualisation and compilation of the code with which they have been developed.

On the other hand, we consider it necessary to attend to this progressive incorporation of new generative and visualisation languages using curatorial policies and methodologies [9]. This updating is essential to be able to name, through artistic representation, the changes that the phenomenon of globalisation incorporates both in our experience of everyday life (virtualisation of the environment) and in the shaping of our identity processes, like the desire for identification, in the processes of subjectivation, in the perception of the environment and the Other, in short, in the modes of social encounter. This technological knowledge is a very useful instrument for an artistic reading of our present.

Objectives

In this context, the design and creation of MeViPol have been proposed for the management of Media + Data Artworks by the different formats, content supports and visualisation tools and code compilation. We offer the first approach to creating a diverse and combined collection of audio-visual material with other content in visual programming code accompanied by ad-hoc visualisation tools, which will allow us to collect the necessary information following the MIDECIANT model [9]. The objectives we propose for these purposes are the following:

Objective 1: Virtualisation and musealisation of Media Art and Data Art.

This phase aims to virtualise and musealisation of audio-visual products and their standardisation and homologation to design a repository of artistic production as a historical repository of Media + Data Artworks.

Objective 2: Creation of MeViPol as a repository of the artistic practices of Media + Data Art.

The idea of the MeViPol project arises as a space with a clear academic component for the reinforcement of artistic production conceptualised in principles of otherness and territorialisation with works ascribed to the categories of Media + Data Art.

Objective 3: Content management, access policies and MeViPol dissemination platform.

This objective contemplates the policies of incorporation, acquisition, donations, free access to part of the collection, with restricted access to a database of scientific rigour open to researchers.

Objective 4: Develop workshops and artistic production proposals based on transversal competence training.

The workshops will introduce the tools and produce Media + Data Art projects based on the thematic strategies that characterise MeViPol. The interdisciplinary workshops will specialise in a range of modular visual programming tools,

which will be kept up to date to review the latest software updates and study and incorporate them into these workshops. In this sense, a study has been initiated to establish categories and typologies of software according to their creative use from their application in different innovative trends [figure 1].

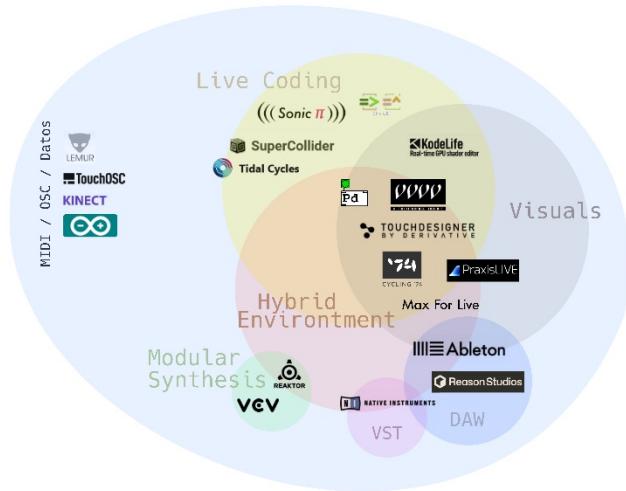


Figure 1 Diagram showing some pieces of software organised by their typology of use in a hybrid creative environment. Image created by Vertedor-Romero, J.A.

Methodology and working plan

The nature of this project is open and alive in its creation and development, where MeViPol is presented as a qualitative online repository formed by artistic projects that will be selected following curatorial criteria and methodologies through various strategies, these are projects created in the workshops, open calls and own exhibitions, following the line that so far has been developed from the research group, HUM-1062. The aim is to substantiate a development community that offers free access to all the documentation and streaming broadcasts of projects in progress, making the devices that generate them visible.

As for the curatorial methodology to be followed, we will reference the principles established by Harald Szeemann. He is one of the key figures that helped understand how curatorial practice expanded as an autonomous field from the 1960s. His contributions form cartography of curatorial practice, from its independent origins in the 1960s and 1970s to the experimental programmes developed by European and American institutions in our own time. Szeemann describes his curatorial methodology as "structured chaos". His eclectic and varied exhibitions "translucent a boundless energy for research and an encyclopaedic knowledge not only of contemporary art but also of the social and historical events that have shaped our post-Enlightenment world" [10].

On the other hand, there are numerous methodological cases for classification or taxonomy concerning the vocabulary of these new media, languages, and codes, aiming to contrast and categorise works developed in interdisciplinary artistic fields. These studies "start from definitions and technological components of new languages" [11]. In this sense, we will take different references as a methodological basis, such as the case of the "Variable Media Questionnaire": The Variable Media approach, whose objective is to preserve the current work of art, a product of new media. This methodological reference develops a questionnaire based on a taxonomy of new media through behavioural categories [12].

To conclude this section, the following flowchart shows the interaction of the project with the parties (figure 2). On the one hand, MeViPol incorporates the experience in developing the structure of similar repositories in previous research projects, such as VOREMETUR, AEMA or MIDECIANT, in which researchers currently present participating in the MeViPol project has worked. We also consider production lines, curatorship, workshops and internationalisation as resources that will provide MeViPol with content. We add the dissemination of results using their internationalisation and transfer through festivals, publications, congresses and other collaborations. Finally, access for researchers is indicated as the main point of consultation.

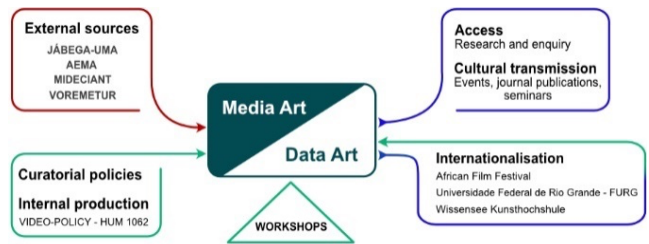


Figure 2. Interaction of the parts that make up the MeViPol creation project. Image created by the project.

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Authors Biographies

Alonso-Calero, J.M. Lecturer and Researcher in Fine Arts. Doctoral thesis: "The flow of the scene in physical interaction: participation, virtuality and presence". He has combined his teaching work with the management and organisation of scientific events related to the hybridisation of artistic and creative languages. Her research activity is carried out in the field of interdisciplinary artistic creation. She is studying for a PhD in Audiovisual Communication. Research grant in a Virtual Reality group in the Department of Computer Architecture to later join the professional world of the audiovisual sector. He carries out different artistic projects framed in the relationship between art and new media, highlighting interaction projects, relational art and territory, etc... IP of projects such as "Map of design transfers", "Bürohack. Bureaucratic Experience by UX", "SCENUX Prototype: a tool for the registration through gamification of the user's experience in creation and reception", "LIMBO Space Social Sound XD".

Vertedor-Romero, J.A. Artist and interdisciplinary researcher. Currently on a research stay at the University of Granada with a Margarita Salas grant. PhD in Communication in the audiovisual research line at the University of Málaga. Master's in Interdisciplinary Artistic Production at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Málaga. Research support grant for postgraduate studies at the University of Malaga. Artist-in-Residence Scholarship at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Malaga. Fine Arts at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Malaga.

Robles-Florida, J.C. Lecturer in Sculpture since 2019, with three six-year periods of research CNEAI, active, since 2019, Director of the Department of Art and Architecture of the UMA. My artistic research is concerned with making visible the conditioning factors of the formation of desire to elaborate strategies for approaching the Other in the current moment of mass media globalisation of culture. Through photography, video, sculpture and intervention in public space, I open a reflection where the contemporary multitude inhabiting is the protagonist.