

HOW DIGITAL IS THE DIGITAL ART MUSEUM?

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Inspired by Ad Reinhardt’s poster-manifesto “How Modern is the Museum of Modern Art?” (1940), this paper questions to what extent digital art museums and collections are really exploring the possibilities of Digital and Internet Art.

Let’s look at the context

In the past few decades, museums seem to have dealt well enough with the digital revolution and with its promises of democratic knowledge: most of them have improved their websites, updated their archives, promoted virtual tours, or digitised their collections into increasingly open access databases. However, while these transformations have decisively changed the face of many museums, in different ways, the permanence of the ‘physical’ still largely continues to determine the shape of the so-called digital art museums, somehow preventing them from fully embracing the potentialities of an effective virtual turn.

WHAT DOES ‘DIGITAL’ MEAN? AND WHAT DOES ‘VIRTUAL ART’ MEAN?

Does it mean an artistic practice based on electronic technology?

Does it mean art exclusively created within and for computer-based environments?
(what about displaying it in the museum?)

Does is it mean art without an actual place?
(what about artworks that can be seen everywhere simultaneously?)

The Austin Museum of Digital Art (AMODA), founded in 1997, defines digital art “as art that uses digital technology in any of three ways: as the product, as the process, or as the subject”.

[<http://www.amoda.org/about/>]

Is the artist a programmer?

Is the web the new canvas?

Are digital artists the new romantics?

“Just as the Romantics responded to the industrial revolution, this group of artists are similarly responding to the current information revolution.”

The New Romantics exhibition at Eyebeam, New York, 2014
[<http://eyebeam.org/events/the-new-romantics>]

IS THE DIGITAL ART MUSEUM A ‘BUILDING’?

To what extent is the permanence of the ‘physical’ determining the shape of virtual art works and digital art museums?

What are the differences between digital representations of an existing museum building and a purely virtual, web-based exhibition space?

Has the digital art museum completely lost its walls? (what about firewalls?)

How global are digital art museums, if they keep appearing in the same locations?

The tension between material and intangible references is particularly evident if we question whether the digital art museum can still be regarded as a ‘building’, or if it has completely lost its walls in favour of an intense and uncertain network circulation that takes place somewhere else (since most Internet and Post-Internet artworks are actually more likely to be found outside institutional spaces).

Is the Digital Art Museum ACCESSIBLE?

Are virtual museums the most democratic form of all museums?
(then why does Internet Art remain so unknown?)

Is the Internet the ultimate all-inclusive global archive?
(what about the memories of those who do not use computers?)

“Museums of the 19th and 20th centuries may have prospered by reinforcing boundaries for rare experiences discovered by instruction. But museums of the 21st will prosper the same way that successful Internet enterprises have: by piercing boundaries for ubiquitous experiences discovered by extraction.”

Jon Ippolito, [unplace](#) project interview, 2015

IF INTERNET ART IS EVERYWHERE, THEN WHY IS IT SO DIFFICULT TO SEE IT IN MUSEUMS?

Can the museum deal with Internet art? Is there a museography for the virtual?

How can we distinguish an online exhibition of digital art from an entertainment application?

Is it possible to have a real experience when visiting a virtual exhibition?

The persistence of ‘real-world’ paradigms in digital museology is visible not only in the architectural conceptualisation of digital art museums, but also from the fact that most digital and Internet artists, together with purely web-based exhibitions, are strikingly underrepresented, if not completely absent, from major museum collections and policies worldwide.

These are some **CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS** working in the field of **DIGITAL** or **INTERNET ART** included in the [unplace](#) research project:

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ALEXEI SHULGIN
ALFREDO JAAR
ANDRÉ SIER
ANTOINE H. JONQUÈRES
ANTÓNIO CARAMELO
ARAM BARTHOLL
ART IS OPEN SOURCE

AYMERIC MANSOUX
BEATRIZ ALBUQUERQUE
CADA
CAO FEI
CHARLES BROSKOSKI
CHRIS MAKER
CLEMENT VALLA
CONSTANT DULLAART

CORY ACANGEL
CUSS COLLECTIVE
DAVE GRIFFITHS
EVA & FRANCO MATTES
FRED FOREST
GISELLE BEIGUELMAN
H. HUSBERG & L. MCLEAN
HITO STEYERL

JENNY HOLZER
JODI
JOÃO PAULO SERAFIM
JOHN F. BARBER
MARCUS NEUSTETTER
MARISA GONZALÉZ
MARISA OLSON
MARK AMERIKA

MARK BEASLEY
MARK NAPIER
MILTOS MANETAS
NATALIE BOOKCHIN
OLAFUR ELIASSON
OLIA LIALINA
PAOLO CIRIO
PAULA LEVINE

PERRY BARD
SANDRA GAMARRA HSHIKI
THOMSON & CRAIGHEAD
VUK COSIC
WILFREDO PRIETO
YOUNG-H. C. H. INDUSTRIES
YTO ARANDA
3KTA

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