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Experiencing Contemporary Art at a Distance

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Abstract. This panel wants to start a discussion about the importance of designing new ways of Contemporary Art digitization and digitalization to foster the creation of successful user experiences for its remote fruition.

Keywords: Contemporary Art, Extended Reality, Digitization, Digitalization, Cross-disciplinary Collaboration, Digital Job Skills.

1 Description of the Topic

The perception of Contemporary Art experienced remotely, at a distance, forces us to put a screen between us and the artworks. This makes us lose all those physical sensations that stem when seeing, living, feeling, sensing, and interacting with art in presence [1].

All these sensory aspects are all superimposed and intertwined with the memories, inferences, and sensations that we have experienced in similar situations and this whole complex system strictly depends on the presence of the body within a space.

This panel wants to start a discussion about the importance of designing new ways of Contemporary Art digitization and digitalization to foster the creation of successful user experiences for its remote fruition. To do so, first of all, the differences between

the live and the remote (digitalized) experiences of Contemporary Art fruition need to be identified [2].

We are facing two precise ways of thinking about this process, which led towards two distinct ways of interaction and user experience design. The first one is lean to enhance and increase the existing online experiences of art fruition with techniques able to fill the void left by the lack of physicality and senses, using hybrid and multilevel technology implementations. The second one is oriented toward the modification of the state-of-the-art paradigm and creation of new forms of experience, free from the body and previous inferences, memories, and perceptions [3].

From a technological perspective, the first approach results in the exploitation of Extended Reality (e.g., Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, Mixed Reality), while the second one is meant to adopt new and old technologies in disruptive and even unpredictable ways, not yet experimented in the Contemporary Art field [4]. In both cases, the process to design for these new user experiences needs to consider the contribution of three main elements: the mind of the designer, the technological tools at hand, and the context/environment in which the idea is developed and capable of being accepted. This diversity needs to be represented in the processes of digitalization by enabling a cross-disciplinary collaboration of domain experts: Contemporary Art curators, HCI/Interaction Design researchers, and Multimedia Software Engineers.

To address all audiences in the widest way possible and allow inclusion in art, the mediation tools are multiple and involve sensory experiences such as hybrid exhibits combining haptic and digital interactions.

This panel aims to bring together professionals in different disciplines and practices but who have in common active experiences in the artistic application field and the expertise in developing new services, software, and devices attentive to the sensible use of digital archives for Contemporary Art.

2 Format

The panel will be moderated by a single moderator, Jose Abdelnour-Nocera, and will see the participation of 6 panelists. The format of the panel will follow a *presentation style*:

- The moderator introduces the topic and briefly presents all panelists (5 mins).
- Each panelist has 10 minutes for uninterrupted position presentations (60 mins).
- Moderator-curated questions directed to the panelists (15 mins).
- Questions & answers with the audience (15 min).
- The moderator thanks the panelists and the audience and closes the panel (5 mins).

3 Panelists

The panelists have been selected to represent the diversity of experts who are today involved in the field of Art Digitization and Digitalization. Their backgrounds and

viewpoints will provide the audience with different perspectives and will make the discussion stimulating. Short bios of the panelists are provided in what follows:

Maja Ćirić is an award-winning curator (Lazar Trifunović Award (2007), ArtsLink Independent Projects Award (2008), ISCP Curator Award (2011), Dedalus Foundation Curatorial Research Award (2013), VAI Visiting Curator Award (2019)) and art critic with experience in leading and contributing to international projects since 2003. Maja was the curator of the *Mediterranea 18 Young Artists Biennale*, in Tirana (2017), and has been both the curator (2007) and the commissioner (2013) of the Serbian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. Maja holds a Ph.D. in Art Theory (Thesis: “Institutional Critique and Curating”) from the University of Arts in Belgrade. Her speaking engagements have been, among others, at MAC VAL (2017), the Centre Pompidou (2018), and the MNAC Bucharest (2018). Her most recent writings appear in *Obieg*, *Artforum*, and *Artmargins Online*. Maja’s areas of expertise are geopolitical and curatorial through curating as a practice of institutional critique. She conducts research on, and lectures about, the methodology and epistemology of curating. Maja thinks about the art world in terms of criticality and post-globalism and is recently involved in projects critically examining and articulating the relation between art and science in the context of the digital turn.

Gerrit C. van der Veer has been a researcher and teacher in University since 1961. He started in Cognitive Psychology, moved to Ergonomics, and into Computer Science, where he specialized in design of interactive systems. He has been teaching in many European countries including Belgium, Germany, Spain, Italy, Romania, and the Netherlands, as well as in India and China. His research concerns user centered design methods, task modeling, individual differences, cultural differences, mental models, cultural heritage, and visualization. He received several ACM, SIGCHI, and IFIP awards. In 1998 he was awarded the IFIP Silver Core. In 2007 the Dutch local ACM chapter CHI-Netherlands installed an annual “Gerrit van der Veer Price” for best MSc Thesis in Human-Computer Interaction. He was one of the initiators of HCI activities in the Netherlands. He received many Dutch and European research grants, often in multidisciplinary domains. Gerrit is Past President of ACM SIGCHI, the world leading international society for Human-Computer Interaction.

Fabio Pittarello is Associate Professor at the Ca’ Foscari University of Venice, where he teaches human-computer interaction, information visualization, web and UX design for the Computer Science and Digital and Public Humanities curricula. Besides, he teaches interaction design and interactive systems for the curriculum in *New Technologies for Arts* at the Fine Arts Academy of Venice, since its foundation. His current research interests include both conceptual and practical aspects of human-computer interaction and information visualization in web-based, mixed reality, and ubiquitous contexts, with applications in art, cultural heritage, digital humanities, and environmental studies. He serves as reviewer and program committee member in several international conferences and journals. Recently he co-chaired CHIItaly 2019, the biennial conference of the Italian SIGCHI Chapter. He has published more than 100 papers in

international refereed conferences and journals. His activity includes collaborations with public and cultural institutions, such as: Accademia di Belle Arti di Venezia, La Biennale di Venezia, Palazzo Grassi, Pinacoteca Giovanni e Marella Agnelli al Lingotto, Regione Veneto, Università IUAV.

Nuno Jardim Nunes is a Full professor at Técnico – University of Lisbon and the President and founder of the Interactive Technologies Institute (ITI), the leading HCI and design research institute in Portugal. Nuno is the co-Director of the Carnegie Mellon International partnership and adjunct faculty at the Human-Computer Interaction Institute at Carnegie Mellon University. Nuno is a strong advocate of the role of human-centric design in participatory culture and sustainability. His research influenced how digital technologies (including sensors, ML/AI, interactive storytelling, and mixed reality) can engage and inspire digital citizens to act sustainably and connect to nature and the broader ecosystems. Recently Nuno was nominated by the Portuguese Government to coordinate the working group to propose a vision for Portugal's participation in the New European Bauhaus. His contribution led to the Bauhaus of the Seas manifesto he is currently pursuing as a thematic NEB proposal. Nuno organized several critical conferences of the ACM SIGCHI and published more than 160 peer-reviewed papers in international journals and conferences in the areas of HCI, software, energy, sustainability, design and service science. He was PI and co-PI of several research projects totalling more than 15M€ from European to nationally and industry funded.

Letizia Bollini, Architect and Ph.D., is Associate professor of Communication/Interaction/Transmedia Design at the Faculty of Design and Arts of the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano. Letizia Bollini has an extended research and professional expertise in multimodal user interfaces, interaction and user experience design, visual design, and socio-spatial representation especially in the field of Digital Archives and Cultural Heritage. Main research projects: MilanoAttraverso. People and places that transform the city (ASP Golgi- Redaelli, Fondazione Cariplo 2018); The Open Archive: semantic strategies and digital tools for the enhancement of the documentary heritage (Regione Lombardia 2014-16), The design of Cultural Heritage between, history, memory, and knowledge (PRIN 2008-11), Mediterranean Drawing-Design (PRIN 2007-09), Orchid experimental project, Valceno.org. The environment as an opportunity. Management and Valorization of Environmental Information for the Relaunch of an Apennine Territory (2003-12). She has been a member of the AIAP (Italian Association for Visual Design) board, Italian representative at ICOGRADA (1999-09). Since 2017 she has been leading the commission Theoretical, historical, critical research and publishing projects of the ADI (Italian Association of Industrial Design) Design Index preselection of the Compasso d'Oro Award, and previously the Communication/Visual design commission (2011-16).

Alexandra Verdeil holds a trinational master's degree from ESCP EUROPE with a specialization in project management in the social field. Alexandra has been responsible for the development of Tactile Studio in Germany for the past five years. She first worked in Germany in the cultural department of a German town hall and took part in

a Franco-German solidarity workcamp in Bavaria with people with hearing impairments. Currently in charge of several hybrid inclusive mediation projects (combining physical and digital interactions), she represents Tactile Studio at specialized conferences and coordinates important inclusive mediation projects for internationally renowned cultural institutions, opening multiple levels of médiation. Some of her past experiences are with StadtPalais - Museum für Stuttgart (2017), Historisches Museum Frankfurt (2017), Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien (2018), Klassik Stiftung Weimar (2019), Futurium Berlin (2019), Jewish Museum Frankfurt (2020), MdbK Leipzig (2020/21), and Deutsches Museum Nürnberg (2021).

4 Moderator Curated Questions (a sample)

While some of the Moderator curated questions will be suggested during the panel by the presentations, others will be focused on guiding the panelists through some open issues and challenges that are worth to be discussed in such a cross-disciplinary group of professionals:

1. To help to move from a cultural elite appropriation of Contemporary Art to a more universal and open access digital experience, a shift in Arts education is desirable. How do you think this could be made, considering the Arts education done in schools (for children and young adults)?
2. Which skills in the field of Contemporary Art and Arts, in general, should be acquired by an interaction designer to be able at designing products and services for an audience of both experts and novices?
3. In the light of this shift we are proposing, in digitization and digitalization of Contemporary Art, what skills, profiles, attitudes should a manager in the cultural heritage domain have, for being able to supervise these new design processes?

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