

The Mixed and Augmented Reality Art Organisation: An Overview of Ten Years Since Our Launch at ISEA 2013

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Abstract

This presentation will provide an overview of the previous ten years of operation for marart.org, or *The Mixed and Augmented Reality Art Organisation*, as we were originally launched as, as ISEA Sydney in 2013. Since our launch by the myself, Paul Thomas and Ross Harley marart.org has seen several conceptual transitions and a sound body of outputs, including exhibitions and symposiums in Adelaide, Munich, London, Fukuoka, Merida and Hertfordshire, exhibiting an evolving format that has progressed from defining augmentation and materiality through interface, body and archival politics and approaches, to fashion, privacy, ownership and identity, all in the context of mixed reality discourse. This presentation will showcase these outcomes and discuss how the organization has developed, our current status quo and future directions.

Keywords

Mixed Reality, Augmented Reality, Augmentation Aesthetics, Digital Communities, Arts Based Research, Media Art Organisations

Introduction

The Mixed and Augmented Reality Art Organisation (marart.org) was established in 2013 and launched at ISEA the same year, to better facilitate rigorous research into this specific field of mixed and augmented reality art aesthetics, within a wider arts discourse. Through this organisation, a range of unique contributions have been made, including several events that explicitly explore the themes covered in this thesis. Such events brought together other artists, theorists and scientists working within and on the fringes of the field, producing collaborative artworks, exhibitions, discussions, interviews and written contributions.

MARart.org seeks to develop new dialogues in regard to high-end research methodologies, cultural inquiry and representation in the increasingly immersive and pervasive field of mixed and augmented reality art. We aim to do so independently of any institutional involvement as we value a (non-hierarchical) networked community approach to research and discussion. This is an open group for researchers dealing with mixed reality art focusing on augmentation aesthetics. It has a specific (conceptual) focus on convergent realities as art mediums and the theoretical discourses that surround this field.

Since our inception and launch in 2013, we have transitioned through many conceptual paradigms in regards to our core area of research and these have been presented at each transition in a format that included exhibition, panel discussion, symposiums/paper presentations and an accompanying publication.

By scoping the field of Augmentation Aesthetics through the presentation and analysis of particular research outcomes, we have been able to develop criteria that can assess its processes of production and positioning within the media arts. Through this we have been able to develop flexible strategies for hybridised research practice, in a number of open platforms that will scope current trends and exemplary models from a variety of approaches. Artistic practices in marart.org have been presented and discussed in order to locate new research paradigms that address issues including its cultural absorption, social codes and systems, ownership of content and intellectual property. Functioning as an open community group for researchers dealing with mixed reality art focusing on augmentation as a medium. Long before the Covid-19 pandemic ushered in the era of hybrid physical/virtual events, we adopted this approach, as evidenced in nearly all of our events, where our approach was more about having the write people participate in our projects, than the ones that were available or could afford/get funding to attend.

It has a specific conceptual focus on convergent realities as art mediums and the theoretical discourses that surround this field. The organisation was established, not as a commercial/advertising group, in fact striving to be the opposite of this- an open community for free exchange of ideas, projects and discussion relating to the field.

History and Events

Since our inception and launch in 2013, we have transitioned through many conceptual paradigms in regards to our core area of research and these have been presented at each transition in a format that included exhibition, panel discussion, symposiums/paper presentations and an accompanying publication. These events have included the following:

1. Our Launch at ISEA (2013) Sydney with Ross Harley and Paul Thomas hosting
2. Initial launch panel including Andrew Burrell, Troy Innocent, Kuai Shen and myself at ISEA (2013)
3. Transreal Topologies Exhibition and Artists Panel at IEEE ISMAR (2013), Adelaide with: Tracy

- Benson, Mez Breeze, Andrew Burrell, Andy Campbell, Mar Canet, Varvara Guljajeva, Josh Haglar, Damian Hills, Troy Innocent, Pierre Proske, Jorge Ramirez, Kevin Raxworthy and Paul Thomas
4. Developing Flexible Approaches to Collaborative Engagement in Mixed and Augmented Reality Panel (2013) with Mark Billingham, Jay David Bolter, Troy Innocent, Damian Hills
 5. The Aesthetics of Augmented Reality Panel (2013) with Jay David Bolter, Maria Engberd, Julian Staddon and Sandy Walker
 6. Beyond the Interface Exhibition Munich, (2014) curated in collaboration with Furtherfield (Marc Garrett and Ruth Catlow) featuring: Zach Blas, Mez Breeze, Nick Briz, Heath Bunting, Jennifer Chan, Genetic Moo, Julian Oliver, Pierre Proske and Erica Scourti
 7. Beyond the Interface Artist Panel at IEEE ISMAR (2014) with Nick Broz, Heath Bunting, Ruth Catlow and Julian Staddon
 8. Beyond the Interface Disrupting the Market Panel at ISMAR 2014 with Tatiana Bazzichelli, Annette Doms, Heath Bunting and Wolf Lieser
 9. Rethinking Aesthetics Panel at ISMAR (2014) with Zach Blas, Nick Briz, Thomas Grundnigg and Erica Scourti
 10. Beyond the Interface Exhibition at Furtherfield, London (2015) featuring Zach Blas, Branger_Briz, Mez Breeze, Heath Bunting, Jennifer Chan, Francesca da Rimini, Genetic Moo, Nathaniel Stern
 11. Data Body as Artifact Exhibition Fukuoka (2015) featuring, César Escudero Andaluz, Marios Athanasiou, Jöelle Bitton, Branger_Briz, Heather Dewey-Hagborg, Anna Dumitriu and Alex May, Chris Henschke, Raphael Lozano-Hemmer, Shannon Novak, Julian Oliver, Christa Sommer and Laurent Mignonneau, Julian Staddon, Stelarc and Adam Zaretski.
 12. Data Body as Artifact Catalogue (2015) with essays by Heather Dewey-Hagborg, Thomas Retter, Julian Staddon, Stelarc, Paul Thomas and Brigitta Zics,
 13. Bodies of Matter Panel Fukuoka (2015) with Jöelle Bitton, Heather Dewey-Hagborg, Chris Henschke, Julian Staddon and Adam Zaretski
 14. Matters of Embodiment Panel (2015) with César Escudero Andaluz, Nick Briz, Brannon Dorsey, Julian Oliver, Jorge Ramirez and Julian Staddon
 15. Contextual Engineering Panel (2015) with Mark Farid, Masahiki Inami, Luke Mason, Daniel Pinchbeck and Carl Smith
 16. Experiencing AR in Public Environments with BC Bierman, Mark Billingham, Ian Gwilt, , Shannon Novak, Julian Oliver and Lu Weiwuan
 17. Algorave Tour Japan (2015) with APNOA, Renick Bell, Chris Henschke, Smell in Stereo and Swan_Panda
 18. Affecto Material, Merida (2016) with Branger_Briz, Archangel Constantini, Alejandro Gomezrias, Jaime Lobato, Manuel de Landa, Plethora Project, Kuai Shen and 220
 19. Plethora of Senses: Human Machine Symbiosis Panel (2016) with Thomas Sanchez, Carl Smith, Liviu Babitz, Pablo Padilla, Jorge Ramirez and Jaime Lobats
 20. Art and Mixed Reality Berlin Fashion Film Festival (2016)
 21. Embodied Realities Lab Guadalajara (2017)
 22. Glitching Gender /Augmenting Identity (2017) etc House of Vans London
 23. EVA London Mixed Reality Education Panel (2017) with Nick Lambert, Julian Staddon and Ian Wilcock,
 24. Mixed Reality Aesthetics at London College of Fashion (2017) with Martina Menegon, Brigitta Zics, Miyö Van Stenis, Rebecca Stewart and Erik Zepka
 25. OOPS: Obfuscation, Ownership, Privacy and Sousveillance at University of Hertfordshire (2018) Tiare Ribeaux & Donald Hanson, Heather Dewey Hagborg, Erik Zepka, Heath Bunting, Pierre Proske, Varvara and Mar, Julian Staddon, Branger_Briz, Rob Myers, Mez Breeze
 26. OOPS We Did is Again Artist Panel (2018) with Tiare Ribeaux & Donald Hanson, Heather Dewey Hagborg, Erik Zepka, Heath Bunting, Pierre Proske, Varvara and Mar, Julian Staddon, Branger_Briz, Rob Myers, Mez Breeze
 27. Beyond TOR, A Discussion About How We Can Protect Our Online Privacy and Why Panel, University of Hertfordshire (2018) with Dionysia Mylonaki, Yannis Baboulis, Ruba Aba Salma and Panjiotis
 28. Living an Honest Life in the Field: Tips for Survival and Identity Obfuscation for Artists Workshop with Heath Bunting (2018)

Conclusion

Throughout the last ten years, marart.org has produced a significant body of arts-based research outputs that adopted a community and dialogue driven approach and its success is evidenced by both the quality of those that participated in our events and the quantity of the outputs that were produced. The short presentation will showcase the more significant of these outcomes in order to provide a context for our future directions moving forward as an organization.