

# THE NEW MEDIA ARTIST AS THE CREATOR OF POTENTIAL SPACE AND TIME HETEROGENEITIES

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## Abstract

This essay explores the abilities of the artist who works with the new media to redefine, reconstitute, rearrange the space as well as the sensory perception, the experience and the cognition of the viewer, thus creating new narratives, postmodern landscapes, and fluid spaces. Taking as a starting point, the project called Echo Chamber (2017), a video - sounding-mapping installation by the artists Stelios Dexis, Myrto Vounatsou, Cynthia Gerotherasiou, Ioanna Kazaki and Panagiotis Triantafyllidis, there is an attempt to explore the concept of the project, its specific features, and ultimately the new ‘realities’ that it creates, highlighting the artist as the architect of the space of events, the designer of inexhaustible worlds and virtual stories.

**Keywords:** *video mapping projection, montage of realities, time-space heterogeneities, potential space, virtualities, echo chamber*

## Introduction

Perception describes the multiple ways in which people receive information from their environment, allowing them to recognize it. Noisis, or the way people understand the environment, happens through the direct sensory experience, in combination with memories and experiences from the past, as well as expectations and fears for the future.

According to J. L. Borges there are three tenses and they all refer to the present (P. Bartoloni, 2003). The present is the one we perceive, in which we reflect and the one which is fragile and fleeting, because it immediately becomes the past. Then there is the past of the present, that is the past the way we perceive it in the here and now and it refers to memory. Finally, there is the present of the future, which is whatever we hope for, expect, and fear. Borges himself suggests us “to deny the reality of the past and the future” outlining Schopenhauer and Marcus Aurelius’s opinions.

*“The form in which the will manifests itself is always the present. It’s never the past of the present: these exist only for the perception and for the smooth evolution of consciousness, subject to the principle of logic. No one has lived in the past, no one will live in the future. The present is the form of all life” (The world as will and representation, Volume A’, 54). ... Marcus Aurelius repeats: “Whoever has seen the present, has seen it all: what happened in the unexplored past, what will happen in the future” (Meditations, Book 6, 37) (J. L. Borges, El Tiempo Circular).*

Also, according to Einstein’s theories about time, the notions of the past, present, and future are identical *“People like us, who believe in physics, know that the distinction between past, present and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion.”* (A. Einstein, a letter to the Michele Besso’s family).

Certain types of art, and especially those that deal with space, time, as well as digital media, are more capable of involving the sensory experience of the viewer, the memories and their expectations. Through the editing of ‘realities’, they can create a utopia regarding the ‘present’, the rupture with whatever is considered known and familiar and finally the conception of a space-time entity.

*“Art can make the vertiginous jump in the virtualization, that we so often blindly and unwillingly perform, perceivable and accessible to the senses and the awe. But art can also intervene or influence the process...”* (P. Levy, 1999, p.189)

### **ECHO CHAMBER (2017), triple synchronized video projection mapping installation with sound. Duration: 1min 47sec**

With the video-sounding installation Echo Chamber (2017) as a trigger, artists Stelios Dexis, Myrto Vounatsou, Cynthia Gerotherasiou, Ioanna Kazaki and Panagiotis Triantafyllidis are investigating the *“conversion of a semiotically loaded material, the rubble, into a contradictory, controversial space between reality and dream, truth, deceptiveness, illusion and deceit”* (V. A. Vayenou, 2017).

Through the analysis of the project, an approach is sought for how through the process of a widened ‘montage’ between real spaces, objects and sound on the one hand, and images created through digital media on the other hand, the essence of the material itself can be changed, reducing it from a simple means of recording to a malleable material for creating a new space- time reality that plays with the viewer’s perception.

### **Analysis of the project**

The *Echo Chamber* (2017) project was created with the following stages:

**1<sup>st</sup> Stage:** Design and materialization of the installation. A structure of crushed concrete boulders and twisted iron bars was created on a 2 x 3 m gray-colored surface. The final composition points to the ruins of a bombarded landscape (figure1).



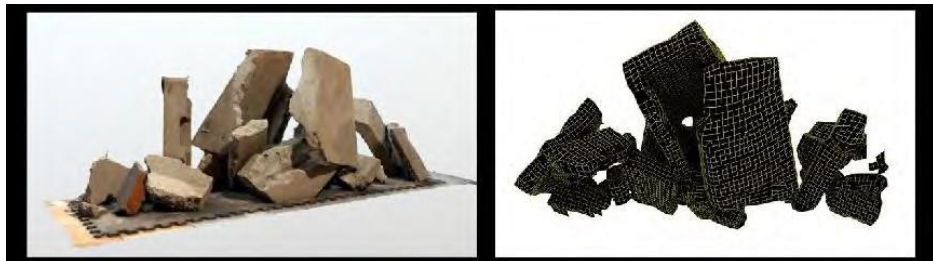
figure1

**2<sup>nd</sup> Stage:** Photoshoot of the structure. This space was photographed from a fixed focal length, (250 still frames), thus capturing the installation into an imaginary 180 ° dome in space as well as in 3 dimensions (figure2)



figure2

**3<sup>rd</sup> Stage:** Importing the photos into a software that performs photogrammetric processing of digital images and generates 3D spatial data (Agrisoft PhotoScan) and then into a 3D computer graphics software (Blender) in order to be transformed into a three-dimensional wireframe (figures 3 &4).



figures 3 & 4

**4<sup>th</sup> Stage:** Creation and edit of three videos and sound.

- 1<sup>st</sup> Video: The wireframe was inserted into a compositing software (Adobe After Effects), and a rudimentary synthetic motion was added to it that gave the grid a sense of fluidity. Afterwards, a basic animation was created that depicts an animal (a sheep) that is jumping over an obstacle. The animation was multiplied and placed in specific positions-paths relative to the wireframe (figures 5).



figure 5



figure 5-detail

2<sup>nd</sup> video: This captures the course of a large flock of sheep that gets squeezed at the exit of a paddock (bird eye view) and eventually gets lead out of the scene and disappears in the dark, with a direction from left to right (figure 6).



figure 6

3<sup>rd</sup> video: The particular video depicts a small sheep that stands still and that is constantly looking at the viewers (figure 7)



figure 7

- Sound design: An audio file was created based on a well-known children's lullaby to which further interventions were made. The rhythm for the editing of the 1st video was organized based on that sound.

**5<sup>th</sup> Stage:** Organization of the final installation.

The final installation includes 3 videos and a structure of crushed concrete boulders and twisted iron bars.

The 1st video was projected onto the structure of concrete boulders.

The 2nd one was projected on the back of the structure, on the ground of the space. These two parts of the project were synchronized using a mapping projection software (Resolume Arena 5).

The 3rd video was screened at another place in the room by a mini projector. All videos were playing in loop under a sound-edited lullaby (figure 8).

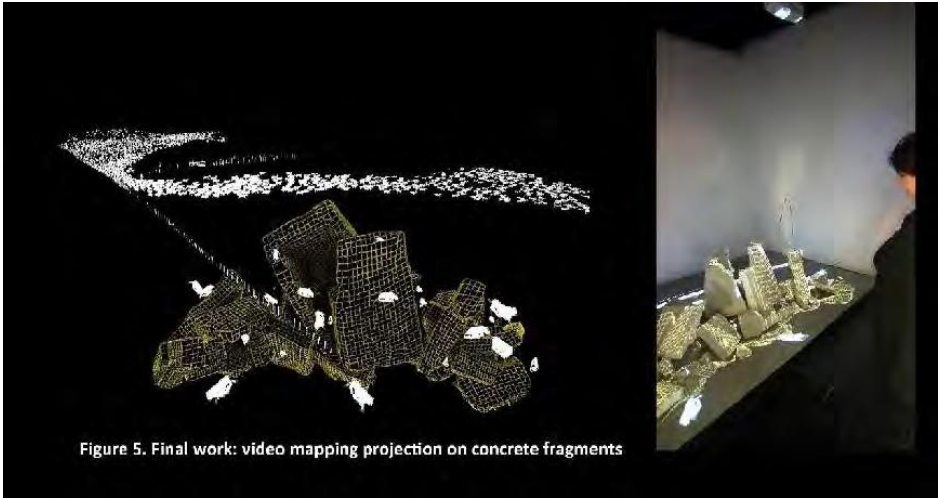


Figure 5. Final work: video mapping projection on concrete fragments

figure 8

### The Concept of the project

The combination of the use of traditional symbolism and stereotypical images and sounds, along with the visual and audible repeatability, leads to the spectator's 'tuning' and 'hypnosis'.

*"The news media term 'echo chamber' refers to the condition in which information generated and manipulated by power is reproduced, homogenized, accepted without critical filtering and ultimately established as correct and universal by means of their 'bombardistic' repetition by the mass media.... The artists use the combination of the traditional symbolism of the elements of their work with the inherent ability of visual and sonic repeatability to 'put to sleep' and 'hypnotize' the viewer to comment on the practice of power systems to put citizens in a 'passive' mode, avoiding thus any notion of risk." (V. A. Vayenou, 2017).*

Much of our perception of the world is based not on experience, but on conclusions drawn from prefabricated or even false information that give the illusion of control over 'things', free will and a sense of security.

*"Essentially, the work deals with the contradiction of 'risk taking' in its most realistic, contemporary version, at a time when truth and ignorance alternate without distinction by the ruling power according to its purposes. The seemingly safe or the precarious daily life is to a great extent a product of 'processing' and determining the consciousness of the masses by the power systems. Consequently, 'risk' and 'non-risk' s are not defined by objective criteria or healthy consciences, but by whom, how and why the role of the patron of society has been obtained. The idea that 'seeking the truth requires risk' is not of philosophical nature, but a fundamental principle of the*

*protection of basic human rights”* (V. A. Vayenou, 2017).

### **Objectives:**

The objectives of the project through the paradox of the video-mapping installation are

- To transit the viewer from a passive attitude to an active process.
- To test their perceptual ability, through their senses and memories, in recognizing the multi-level and complex concept of space to produce ideas and associations.
- To inspire a debate and raise questions about the practices of power and control systems that want to put the citizens in a ‘passive’ function, avoiding any sense of risk.

### **The project as a blending of ‘realities’**

The project is part of the category of the mapping projection videos which are the modern video-scapes. Video projectors are used to display artificial images (3d, edited images) over existing structures {buildings, sculptures, landscapes (urban or non-urban)}. The ephemeral light of the projector interferes, redefining urban design issues, spatial planning or design issues. This visual language interprets the architecture of a space and articulates new narratives through fragments of both real and CGs edited images. Some works of mapping projections go beyond a simple projection of the visual content that matches the size of the structure of the architecture, the landscape, or the object. They try to articulate a new artistic language through the blending of the narrative interventions of sound and image with the overall conception of space, architecture, acoustics or whatever else determines this space, which mixes the real with the virtual.

*“I like to do a project in such a way that it looks very organic,” says Bart Kresa an projection mapping expert. “We bring it in as art. We create a fantasy world and put people in a dream state. We try to make it impossible to comprehend what’s going on before their eyes.”*

Due to the projections, this project is transformed from a static structure of cement fragments, into a miniature city, a fragmented urban landscape full of motion. Little carefree lambs are jumping on the ruins. However, as a result of the abstract design, they also look like mice that seem to be hiding in the cracks of the structure or even falling into the void, therefore leading the viewer into ambiguous interpretations. The sound, which is a digitally edited lullaby, has a feel of military march. The whole project transforms the sculpture-structure into an experiential experience, redefining its space and thus its time, and giving it the narratives of her creators.

Physical reality can also be ‘virtualized’ with or without the help of new media.

*“Street lighting might also be considered protovirtualized physical space, changing night into artificial day. In such ways, physical space has been transformed into the ‘non-space of the mind’” (M. Morse, 1998 p.192).*

Literature, which uses imagination, has come first on the level of the creation of a space that is virtualized, due to projecting on it an image that was created at another



time. In ‘Morel’s invention’, the hero, through an accurate and chronological record of his experiences on an island, describes a series of events that create a system of holographic imprinting and projection machines. These machines record a reality (which involves a series of characters and actions) in the past. The machines then project this recording (the projection does not only consist of light, but also includes a material state and characteristics, such as ambient temperature {heat} etc.), in the ‘present’ tense that the hero is experiencing. The result is the creation of a space determined by the mix of all tenses at a paradoxical present. The recorded reality and its holographic projection become more real and present than the reality of the hero itself.

*‘.... I looked at the wall I was bewildered. I looked for the opening I had made. It was not there...Thinking that this was just an interesting optical illusion, I stepped to one side to see if it persisted. As if I were blind, I held out my arms and felt all the walls. I bent down to pick up some of the pieces of tile I had knocked off the wall when I made the opening. After touching and retouching that part of the wall repeatedly, I had to accept the fact that it had been repaired. I looked for the spot where I had made the opening, and then I began to tap on the wall, thinking that it would be easier to break the fresh plaster. I tapped for a long time, with increasing desperation. The tile was invulnerable. ... I was overcome by the horror of being in an enchanted place and by the confused realization that its vengeful magic was effective in spite of my disbelief... But then I understood: These walls are projections of the machines. They coincide with the walls made by the masons (they are the same walls taken by the machines and then projected on themselves). Where I have broken or removed the first wall, the projected one remains’ (A.B. Casares, 1964 e-book, p.81-82).*

The false and the real blend together. In editor’s notes Casares highlights that “*the fact of the coexistence, in one space, of an object and its whole image, suggests the possibility that the world is made up exclusively of sensations*” (A.B. Casares, 1940, p.145).

*“Virtual reality is not at all a fictional or imaginative world. Instead, virtualization is the very momentum of the common world, it is that through which we share a common reality. Far from being the kingdom of the false, the virtual is precisely the way of existence from which both truth and falsehood emerge equally” (P. Levy, 1999, p. 188).* Lev Koulesov believed that the ideas in the cinema are created by linking fragmentary details that produce a single action. These details may be totally unrelated to real life. Through his experiments and by the fragmentation of the material and its reconstruction, he creates a virtual- cinematic space and time, that exists regardless of the real one.

*“A few years later I made a more complex experiment: we shot a complete scene. Khokhlova and Obolensky acted in it. We filmed them in the following way: Khokhlova is walking along Petrov Street in Moscow near the ‘Mostorg’ store. Obolensky is walking along the embankment of the Moscow River—at a distance of about two miles away. They see each other, smile, and begin to walk toward one another. Their meeting is filmed at the Boulevard Prechistensk. This boulevard is in an entirely different section*



*of the city. They clasp hands, with Gogol's monument as a background, and look— at the White House! — for at this point, we cut in a segment from an American film, The White House in Washington. In the next shot they are once again on the Boulevard Prechistensk. Deciding to go farther, they leave and climb up the enormous staircase of The Cathedral of Christ the Savior. We film them, edit the film, and the result is that they are seen walking up the steps of the White House.” (L. Kuleshov, 1974 p.52)*

Painting has always been able to create worlds that are plausible, which have, however, been created by fragments of details of people and landscapes. El Greco's painting *View of Toledo* is a clear example (Eisenstein, 1990). The view of this landscape does not really exist and some of the elements that consist it would be impossible to be seen from that point of view. Some of these would have been hidden. Willumsen's view is that “(the painting) is nothing more than a synthesis of motifs and visual elements, that have been selected independently in order to be edited into the non-existent and arbitrary construction of a unique view angle. The painting meets completely the intimate compositional needs that were guiding the painter” (*El Greco y el cine* (1990)). The *View of Toledo* was not based on what the painter saw but on what he knew. It is a mental mapping (a term referred to in Stanley Milgram and Denise Jodelet, 1970), which is unrelated to the true mapping of a space. The residents, who live in a city, map out some important elements of the city selectively by linking them through their everyday experiences as well as through their own social representations of places, which may not be part of their everyday experience. Toledo has eventually been used as a starting point, so that the painter, by imposing his own view and by fragmenting the reality, recreates it in such a way that is aligned to the capture of the image he had in mind.

If space can be produced, meaning that it is a product of social development, and social, political, economic and natural reasons play a primary role in its production, so that space is not defined only as material, but also through the perspective of time (Lefebvre, 1996), then projects such as mapping projections that are based on the viewer's personal perception and interpretation, take a different meaning. Space is ultimately built from material products (sounds, lights, movement) and non-material products (experiences, personal perception, etc.)

Digital media have brought new possibilities, but also more ruptures with reality. Mapping projections artworks, and even more augmented reality artworks, reveal the experimental nature of art, which in combination with the achievements of technology, require another type of artist, the mechanic - researcher who is capable of creating transitions from the real or the actual existing to the virtual.

*“Art here does no longer consist of the synthesis of a ‘message’, but in the creation of a mechanism that will allow the still mute piece of cosmic creation to make its own song heard. A new type of artist appears, who no longer narrates a story. This is an event space architect, a world designer for millions of stories that are to come. He directly carves the virtual” (P. Levy 1999, p.189).*

## **Conclusion**

As digital artists and co-creators of Echo Chamber, but also of many other similar projects based on new technologies - through the process of an expanded 'editing' and with digital technology as a tool, we have the ability to redefine, reconstruct, and rearrange the space. This is because 'editing' (whether it is time-editing or space-editing) can follow the quality of the 'flow of consciousness'. The latter does not follow the course of the clock, but instead it requires the freedom of the back and forth, the blending of the past, the present and the imaginary future (R. Humphrey, 1962).

This process makes the creator able to reveal the multiple aspects of a psychological space-time, an extended temporality that is directly interwoven with the viewer's inner experience, associations, the personal, mental, and psychological involvements, their memories and their mind, the accumulation of private interpretations and the creation of personal symbols.

### **And a Question...**

In the future, will the artist be able to create worlds of fragments of his/her thought and reality, not only using the light (of a projector or a computer) that is based on illusion, but in an empiric, holographic, or time-space way? Will he/she be able to create narratives that will contain matter and edited 'soul material'? Perhaps the viewer will not only be part of the depicted world, experiencing it with the five senses, but their soul material will also be part of that world. Perhaps in the future the artist will not only make new narratives or postmodern landscapes. But will he/she be able to create in- visible places and space-time heterogeneities with soul and consciousness?

*"My soul has not yet passed to the image; To the person who, based on this reference, then invents a machine that can assemble disjointed presences, I make this request: Find Faustine (heroes beloved lover) and me, let me enter the heaven of her consciousness. It will be an act of piety"* (A.B. Casares, 1940, last page).

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