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Experiencing Contemporary Art at a Distance

Barbara Rita Barricelli¹[0000-0001-9575-5542], Antonella Varesano², Giuliana Carbi³,
Torkil Clemmensen⁴[0000-0002-0934-2336], Gian Luca Foresti²[0000-0002-8425-6892], Jose Abdelnour-Nocera^{5,6}[0000-0001-7935-7368], Maja Ćirić⁷, Gerrit C. van der Veer⁸[0000-0001-5021-2042], Fabio Pittarello⁹[0000-0003-2825-9754], Nuno Jardim Nunes^{6,10}[0000-0002-2498-0643], Letizia Bollini¹¹[0000-0003-2825-9754],
Alexandra Verdeil¹²

¹ Dept. of Information Engineering, Università degli Studi di Brescia, Brescia, Italy
barbara.barricelli@unibs.it

² Dept. of Mathematics, Computer Science and Physics, Università degli Studi di Udine, Udine, Italy

{gianluca.foresti, antonella.varesano}@uniud.it

³ Trieste Contemporanea, Trieste, Italy

giuliana.carbi@triestecontemporanea.it

⁴ Copenhagen Business School, Copenhagen, Denmark

tc.digi@cbs.dk

⁵ School of Computing and Engineering, University of West London, London, United Kingdom
jose.abdelnour-nocera@uwl.ac.uk

⁶ ITI/Larsys, Madeira, Portugal

{jose.nocera, nuno.nunes}@iti.larsys.pt

⁷ Independent Curator – Art Critic, Belgrade, Serbia

curator@majaciric.com

⁸ Dept. of Computer Science, Vrije Universiteit (VUA), Amsterdam, The Netherlands

g.c.vander.veer@vu.nl

⁹ Dept. of Environmental Sciences, Informatics and Statistics, Università Ca' Foscari, Venice, Italy

pitt@unive.it

¹⁰ Instituto Superior Técnico, Lisbon, Portugal

nunojnunes@tecnico.ulisboa.pt

¹¹ Faculty of Design and Art, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, Bolzano, Italy

letizia.bollini@unibz.it

¹² Tactile Studio UG, Berlin, Germany

hello@tactilestudio.de

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 Topic of the Panel

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]. Then, it is also fundamental to distinguish between digital objects and digital user experience: when speaking of digitization and digitalization, most of the attention is given to the chosen technologies, but very little attention is usually given to the humanists' knowledge about the objects that are digitalized. Location, time, social context, senses involved (sight, touch, hearing, smell – some of all of them are often entangled) are the aspects that need to be taken care of when designing for experiencing Contemporary Art at a distance.

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 the 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. We believe that the definition of a new

model, a new idea of creative design in Contemporary Art, emerges by the coexistence of three aspects: 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 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 Interdisciplinary Perspective

The six 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 points of view, leading to an interdisciplinary perspective, and will make the discussion stimulating. *Maja Ćirić* will discuss the point of view of the curators within art critic's perspective; *Gerrit C. van der Veer* will bring to the discussion the perspective of user-centered design experts and specifically will explain the influence of individual differences and cultural diversity, applied to cultural heritage and visualization; *Fabio Pittarello* will contribute by pointing out the challenges that exist in the field of Digital Humanities for Arts and Cultural Heritage; *Nuno Jardim Nunes* will provide insights that emerged from the Bauhaus of the Seas manifesto; *Letizia Bollini* will provide her point of view as architect expert in interaction and user experience design for Digital Archives and Cultural Heritage; *Alexandra Verdeil*, manager of Tactile Studio, will be carrying a voice from the industry of this sector.

3 Challenges and Open Issues to be Discussed

Several challenges and open issues affect this research and application domain. The intent of this panel is to exploit the expertise of the panelists and the audience to investigate how to apply academic and industry competencies for advancing the field.

There are mainly eight questions that will be guiding this panel:

1. How can we improve digital experiences of Contemporary Art through innovative digitization and digitalization processes?
2. How can be technology used for increasing, integrating, or even creating a new experience of Contemporary Art artworks?
3. Is it sufficient to enhance the experience or do we need to shift the paradigm and completely freeing experience from senses and inferences?
4. What are the possible development models to get beyond the standardized digital vision of archives, producing multilevel and hybrid user experiences?
5. What forms of design are needed to produce new forms of user experience?
6. 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 could this be made, considering the Arts education done in schools (for children and young adults)?

7. 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?
8. 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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