Man, nature and technology – eastern philosophy, global issues and western digital visualisation practice

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Abstract
This artistic work submission consists of two video art animation which are presented on wall-mounted flat screen displays as video paintings. They are the outcomes of a practice-based research project that investigates the relationship of man and nature in Eastern traditional art and philosophy via contemporary digital visualisation technology and transposes the content to contemporary global environmental issues.

Keywords
Video Art, Digital Visualisation Practice, Eastern Philosophy

Introduction
This artistic work submission consists of two video art animation which are presented on wall-mounted flat screen displays as video paintings.

They are the outcomes of a practice-based research project that investigates the relationship of man and nature in Eastern traditional art and philosophy via contemporary digital visualisation technology and transposes the content to a contemporary manner of global environmental destruction.

1) mountain-water-painting
digital video scroll, 2D/3D Animation, 2015/16, Color, 7.15 min

2) shizen?natural
digital video scroll, 2D/3D Animation, 2009, Color, 6.12 min

Content
The Chinese hand scroll is often referred to as first motion picture. Proceeding from Eastern thought and aesthetics the traditional concept of landscape painting ‘Shan-Shui-Hua’ (mountain-water-painting) is recreated as modern video art.

Chinese landscapes usually include small human figures that blend harmoniously into the vast world around them. Man and nature interact and complement each other to reach a state of balance and harmony.

The two horizontal video ‘scrolls’ transpose this traditional relation of man and nature into a different, more contemporary Western manner reflecting on current environmental disasters:

1) mountain-water-painting
   - It uses the figure of the Western mountaineer equipped with special tools and protective clothing to vanquish the highest peaks in order to conquer nature rather than searching for harmonious existence, thus counterpointing Eastern and Western ideals.
   - The ambient ‘video scroll’ presents a poem of the famous Chinese poet Han Shan as a reflection on the Western mountaineers fight against nature ascending and descending the highest peaks counterpointing the Chinese attempt of spiritual harmony.

2) shizen?natural
Shizen is the Japanese word for nature and the video reflects our relationship to nature by transposing the Makimono - the traditional Japanese horizontal hand scroll - into a contemporary manner: Throughout the year seasonal motifs are changed - accordingly spring, summer, autumn and winter progress as well as the destruction of our environment.

The video refers to the nuclear meltdown after the Earthquake and Tsunami in Japan in 2011.

A global question and challenge arise for mankind: to coexist in harmony or to control, master and exploit nature?

The ambient ‘video scroll’ presents a poem of the famous Japanese poet Yamabe no Akahito as a reflection on the conflicting relationship struggling between tradition and technological and cultural progress.

Detour via China – Eastern and Contemporary Western Philosophy
In his book ‘The detour via China’ (free translation of the German title ‘Umweg über China’) (1) the French philosopher Francois Jullien attempts to create a new approach to Western culture: A ‘local change of thinking’, a process of distancing from Western thinking as an effective strategy where Eastern philosophy functions as an ‘outside’ from which to see more clearly the values and preoccupation of Western culture.
The video work reflects the individual response of an artist: In the sense of Francois Jullien the artist makes a ‘detour via China’: Emphasizing to some extent philosophical as well as pictorial concepts and practical aspects of the Chinese painting process enables me to distance and to take a fresh approach to Western thinking and film and digital visualisation practice, but at the same time using software tools that generally have been devised to create 2D and 3D artefacts from a Western cultural perspective avoids the pitfalls of echoing and imitating Chinese landscape painting too closely.

The concept of multi-perspective and the endless scroll are explored through digital filmmaking, video compositing and virtual camera, depths and particle systems.

Challenging the Western preoccupation with narrative and distinct meaning the work also contains no complex narration and attempts to be a meditative open art work - a detour via China - combining and contrasting Western and Eastern culture by reflecting our current relationship to nature.

The technical equipment would need to be provided by the conference. Both videos can be presented together on one wall-mounted flat screen display and can run alternating as a continuous loop.

References


Christin Bolewski Biography

Christin Bolewski is a digital media artist and experimental filmmaker from Germany.

Undergraduate studies in film, video and photography, postgraduate studies in audiovisual media at Academy of Media Arts Cologne Germany. Researcher and lecturer at Academy of Media Arts Cologne, Konstfack Stockholm, UCSC California, Loughborough University. Professorship in Audiovisual Media FH Lemgo Germany.

Her work is a critical investigation of the potential of digital media to expand the aesthetic possibilities of audiovisual / film art. It includes video installation, genre mix, alternation and remediation of traditional art concepts / film structures, nonlinear storytelling, combination of still / moving image, video / photography.

Figure 1. mountain-water-painting, digital video scroll, 2009, HDV, 6.12min. © Christin Bolewski.

Figure 2. shizen?natural. digital video scroll, 2015/16, HDV, 7.15min © Christin Bolewski.