

FROM EDWARDIAN SELFIE TO TELEPRESENT COMIC

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on the media archaeology accounts of ‘Illusions in Motion’ by Erkki Huhtamo (2013) this paper will compare and discuss audience participation in three specific self-view artworks involving interacting public audiences captured and presented in live telepresent film and video performances since 1900. This comparative study will draw out an underlying cultural fixation and amusement with the self-image, analogous to Henri Bergson’s understanding of laughter in meaning of the comic (1900). These case studies will include my own artistic practice that focuses on telematic encounters and shared visual dialogues between public audiences linked via Internet videoconferencing in ‘Peoples Screen’, in collaboration with Charlotte Gould for the Guangzhou Light Festival in 2015. The seminal live satellite public performance ‘Hole-in-Space’ by Kit Galloway and Sherie Rabinowitz in 1980, providing the passing public in New York and Los Angeles with opportunity to converse, co-create and play in the first live public connection of its kind. And Mitchell and Kenyon’s historic films of Edwardian public crowds in the 1900’s, allowing audiences the opportunity to play and perform in front of the film camera in the knowledge they could watch their spectacle in its screening at the local traveling fairground. In all these cultural events the audiences become both performers and viewers by creating an improvised response to the camera and screen. The striking similarity with the way audiences react and perform comical narratives from these early self-view film screenings to telematic performances possess all the unique traits of telepresent interaction and the selfie phenomenon.

Keywords: telepresence, public, interaction, telematic, play, performance

Themes: How does contemporary art reveal re-conceptualizations of the self and the world that break with traditional media perspectives? Which contemporary forms of self-expression has art generated, and how are these mirrored in self art (as for instance in ‘selfies’)?

Biography

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Biography:

Since the early nineteen-nineties Paul Sermon's practice-based research in contemporary media art has centred on the creative use of telecommunication technologies. Through his unique use of videoconference and blue-screen techniques in artistic telepresence applications he has developed a series of celebrated interactive telematic art installations that have received international acclaim.

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