Linkages, Languages: connecting traditional art and digital technologies

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Abstract

This paper proposes a case study elucidating a creative process in the arts that well illustrates a constructionist approach. It describes the design and the implementation of IMAGO TRANSITUS, a video-light installation created during a residency early in 2008, in the Chapel St Eloi of the Domaine de Soucy, Fontenay-les-Briis, France.

As an artist, I'm making sense of space, time, light and materials with my artworks. I develop my own models exploring and using a variety of tools: materials, lights, virtual images, visual language, computer languages and software, silence, sounds, body movements…

In this particular case, the artwork was made of a wadding-light arrangement associated to a video projection. Digital contributes to the emergency of dynamic qualities of the material work while the later offers to the digital image a new medium of expression and existence.
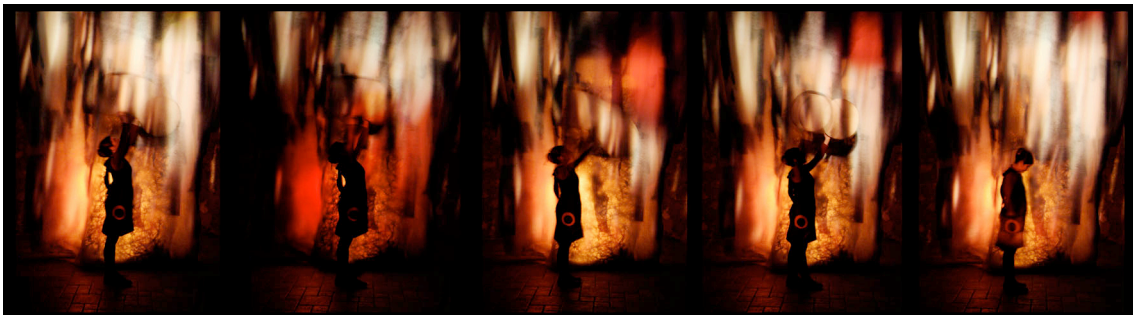

Figure 1. IMAGO TRANSITUS, five moments of the masterpiece. Performer: Irina Zhekova

The finalisation of the artwork can not be considered as the last step of the process. The exposition of the installation in a public space indeed induces a new dialogue with other artists and visitors that could lead me in return to modify the models, the techniques or the tools I use.

" Linkages, Languages " is the motto in which I build my artistic creativity as well as my own reality.

Keywords

Traditional art, digital technologies, linkage, language, creative process, interaction.

Describing the creative process of Imago Transitus

My artistic purpose is the creation of evolving illuminated art works. The marriage wadding-light becomes the material drive and the space to comprehend is conceived to be a place of actual experience.

Mindful of the interaction of the materials under the influence of lights, I built my work and its field of vision, using composite techniques including drawing, sculpture, photography, video, scenography. New technologies and the concept of reuse have increased in importance in my latest artworks.

The wadding, comprising fullness and emptiness, is the privileged area for a fluid, permeable and breathing gateway between exterior and interior. The digital technologies offer the movement to light who magnifies the materials as well as magnifying itself. Thereby the couple wadding-light enhances the visual and tactile qualities of the evolving masterpiece and questions the notion of borders and identity.

This paper describes the design and the implementation of IMAGO TRANSITUS, a video-light installation created during a residency early in 2008, at the Domaine de Soucy, France.

The creative process follows a constructionist strategy. I present a serial of mental and manual operations made during the experience to illustrate how intelligence (intuitive, logic, practice…) and environment (a shadow of a plant in sunset, a library of "trial and trash", a software…) interact following the initial purpose set for this project: express visually the notion of flowing.

The artwork is conceived as a complex, open and dynamic system, the digital techniques as a tool and also as an exploration territory [4].

The language of visual art combines with the digital language, making sense. Due to its fluid nature, digital contributes to the emergency of dynamic qualities of the material work while the later offers to the digital image a new medium of expression and existence.

" Linkages, Languages " is the motto in which I build my artistic creativity as well as my own reality [6,7,9].

The context and the purpose

The place to invest is a former twelfth century chapel located in the park of the domain.

The visit of the chapel took place in December 2006. According to the proportions of the space and due to its size, I decided to work on verticality. The apse hosts the artwork. The medium artwork was made of a wadding-light arrangement.

Figure 2. Sketch: interior space of the Chapel St Eloi (XIII century)

For this project, I was able to identify quickly my aesthetic choice clearly stating my intention: I wanted to express the notion of flowing.

To this aim, I used a video-projection. The first reflex was asking me which was the suitable image to build my video, but the answer did not reach immediately. The design and the implementation of the video followed a particular path.

Figure 3. Wadding-light arrangement in the space of the apse. Stage of implementation. January 2008

Seeking the singular image

While I was writing the blurb of IMAGO TRANSITUS project at sunset, I have spotted the beautiful images of the houseplant leaves shadows placed near from my desk. I took a serial of photos I put in my picture library. I recognized them later as the images I was looking for, those which resonated with my purpose.

Freeze Frame and Insight

A particular photo (Figure 4A) drew my attention. The eye just stopped on it, whereas time seemed to do the same, it stopped. My perception was increasing. The presence of this image was of a rare density, almost hypnotic, so strong that it made me forget its context, as if there was no bottom [5]. What did it want to tell me? How this image was meaningful for me? Subconsciously, I knew that this representation appeared containing information and an expressive potential. How to decrypt it?
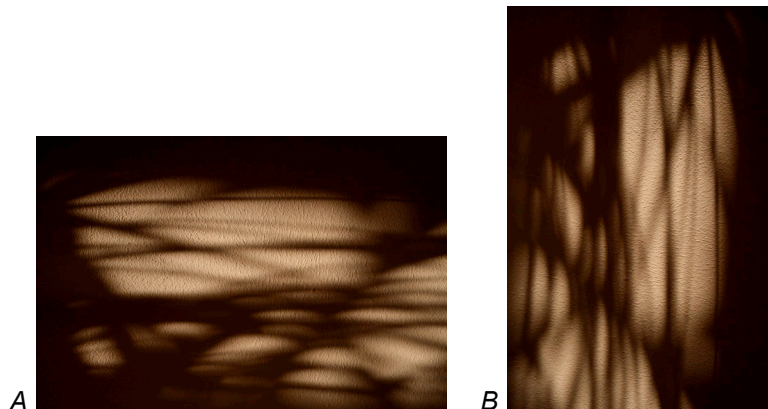

Figure 4. The shadow of leaves plants at sunset. Digital image

The play, its stakes and the Interpretation

Playing with the graphics editing program I made a simply but decisive operation: the rotation of the image (Figure 4B). I suddenly took conscious of the meaningful of this image and recognized its capacity to express the notion of flowing, it was vertical and streaming.

Our intention, our intimate project determines our interpretation.

The image processing

In order to elaborate the video, the image of Figure 4B was transformed using a graphics editing program.

I wanted to build the video that once projected was going beyond the physical limits of the work. Thereby, it met the requirements concerning the proportions of the physical medium of the work as well as the physical constraints of the exhibition place without forgetting my artistic purpose.
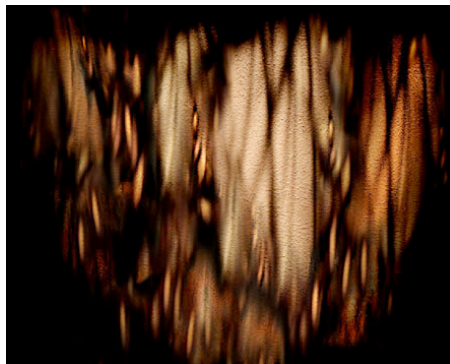
The resulting image is presented in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Changing the image of the figure 4B using a graphics editing program

The digital image has an evolving capacity through the fluidity of numbers and language being unstable, mobile, changing. But it is also inalterable, endlessly duplicable, transmitted without loss and stable through the pixels, the last components of the decomposition digital image [2].

Virtual images have a so real exploration potential!

Seeking movement

I used the morphing tool to create the motion between two identical images searching to erase the mechanical aspect of the movement. Morphing transforms gradually one image into another by computer processing.

Both departure and arrival points are the same. The movement is generated from the position of the key points. Obtaining a fluid motion necessitated a "trial and error" process.

From this moment I entered the domain of video.

The resulting motion picture represented properly the notion of flowing I was seeking for.

Figure 6. Morphing: From X to X

An evolving intention, a richest meaning

Watching the video again and again, a crucial need to add an event of short duration appeared: it would offset the endless fall. For instance, something that goes up, like a bubble coming out of a thick liquid.

My library of "trial and trash" provided me the image more than adequate. It was a detail in the photo-souvenir of a fleeting creation: a red bubble (Figure 7).
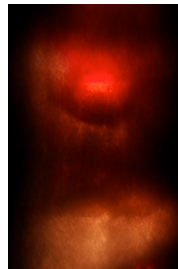

Figure 7. Red bubble in a photo of my Library of "trial and trash". Fleeting creation.

This bubble intertwined with Figure 5 to obtain three new images (Figure 8). Then, from these new images, I built other motions and finally, a video richer in meaning.
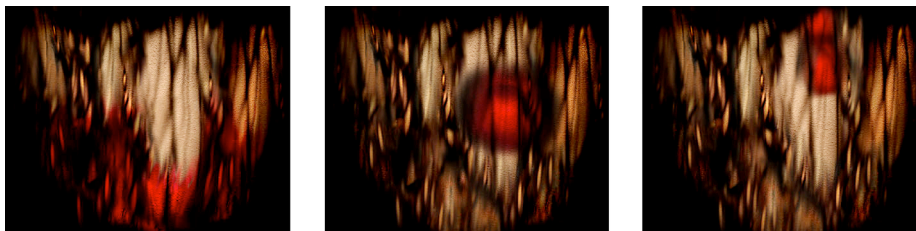

Figure 8. Three images enriching the video

The Video is ready

The intervention associated with this paper would present the motion picture in its entirety. The duration of this animation is about one minute.

The development of morphing and videos has been based on visual and tactile results obtained on the medium artwork. This one has been amended several times to meet the video needs. They are intimately linked.
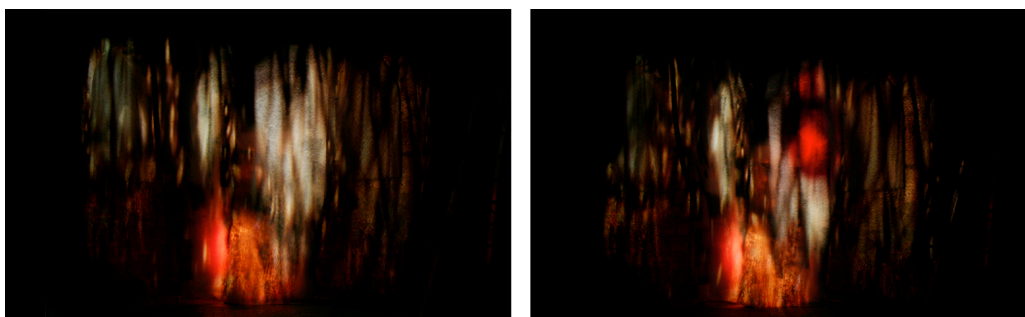

Figure 9. Imago Transitus, two installation views

Opening Imago Transitus [3,8]

This artwork was not standing alone. It was associated with other artistic projects.

The masterpiece enhanced its potentialities by the sensibility of the sound design proposed by Charlie Dalin. The motion pictures and the sound had a different looping period. This contributed to the renewal of perceptions and meaning.

Irina Zhekova injected the dimension of performing art. Her "bendir" was the magic magnifying glass of the Opening day.

Figure 10. Imago Transitus. Performer: Irina Zhekova

Concluding remarks

This contribution proposes a case study elucidating a creative process that well illustrates a constructionist approach.

As an artist, I'm making sense of space, time, light and materials with my artworks. I develop my own models exploring and using a variety of tools: materials, virtual images, visual language, computer languages and software, silence, sounds, body movements…

In the specific artwork presented here, IMAGO TRANSITUS emerges from the dialogue between a tool-matrix, a concrete arrangement wadding-light, and a tool-machine that processes a virtual image to transform it into an animated projected light.

When the installation is exposed in a public space, it's time for me to hear visitors' remarks and reactions. That allows me to see the impact of the artistic entity I created. The changes I could make are also highlighted. I can then envisage modifying the models, the techniques and the tools I use. This is a nourishing dialogue, an exchange that falls within the "Public Entity" mentioned by Seymour Papert.

This approach is inevitably reductive, as it is very difficult to reach and moreover to explain "l'infracassable noyau de nuit" [1] mentioned by André Breton.

Acknowledgments

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1. Breton, André *Préfaces "Les Contes bizarres" d'Achim Von Arnim.*

   "THE UNBREAKABLE CORE OF NIGHT". I chose this metaphor to say that creation is intelligible but irreducible: it always remains a part of intuition that can not be reabsorbed by logic.

   The word " infracassable " doesn't exist in French. It is composed by juxtaposing and overlapping prefix and words presenting common syllables: IN -un- / INFRA -infra- / FRACASS(ER) -to shatter- / CASSABLE -breakable-.

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   Exhibition: 15th mars -13th April 2008 Chapel St Eloi, Domaine de Soucy, Essonne, France.

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