



Stanza

How can a tool such as the PC become the prime mover for new creativity?

We are starting to see more and more traditional artists move into the web from other media.

The PC has now become a central tool within new media creativity. This has happened because of a combination of economic conditions, and the artists continual 'search for the new'. Once one has overcome the technical problems of a PC and learnt how to switch it on, then the possibility for creative expression becomes an endless combination of merging audio-visual entities. Things have always had to be learnt. In zen painting a zen master would teach his student how to position himself, how to hold a brush, etc., and not until three years had elapsed would the student be allowed to dip the brush in the ink and make a mark.

Things have to be learnt and with the PC too. To learn to make these marks a number of elements need to be combined. This includes the use of software and hardware as well as the users responses to understanding that all tools peculiar anomalies and quirks that can be pushed. Once these functions are understood artists can exploit them for creative expression. And the very reason that PCs are so versatile is now allowing a whole generation of artists a new tool to exploit for creative potential.

The PC and the Internet offers various economical and valuable distributive benefits for artists and artworks. They also offer a variety of shifting parameters within which the interpretation of previous art histories may be re-evaluated.

This is why 'expression' and use of the Internet as a medium, and a resource has expanded to envelop our new world framework and is embraced by so many artists and art colleges. The use of this new technology also offers a sense of belonging which was never exposed through various other art histories.

This sense of connection is one of several qualities inherent to the Internet as a medium for creative expression; sound, visual effect, time, movement and interaction all provide new parameters for the development of contemporary art. Here we have the convergence of painting and printmaking, photography, film and music.

So for the PC to actually become a prime mover it needs to be where new media creatives exist and to future specialised and innovative projects where creative artists make work.

Is convergence the essential factor in this transformation?

The merging of linear music and linear video, i.e. combination of the audio-visual is increasingly becoming a central issue in the development of interactive media. Web artists are fusing the arts, incorporating a wide range of approaches to the medium of the Internet and audio-visual practice. Artists are producing new audio-visual experiences, and this includes art, games, generative music, and interactive environments.

Previously the artist's or musician's studio was a place of many gadgets, hardwares, softwares, bits and pieces, are used to make an artistic process happen. Artists have always been influenced by technology. Today instead of brushes and paint and wooden stretchers and huge space for storage we have a small box that can be both studio and gallery. For musicians instead of all sorts of instruments and masses of expensive gear, we have the same small box the PC. So the convergence of hardware and software has enabled many type of creatives to meet or converge within the PC. The PC acts as studio and gallery. Works can be disseminated globally. The distribution system has changed and the artist has access to a bigger audience through his very own "white cube " gallery.

Are we seeing the emergence of a new art form?

In a sense yes we are seeing the emergence of a new art form. As the newness unfolds a history will unfold with it. At the moment there is a blurring as many approaches are adopted, confused further because of the constantly changing and developing nature of technologies which also allows for the artwork themselves to change. We are starting to see a much bigger emphasis on works that generate and evolve. Formal relationship to art will change as the artists relationship to the process changes. Certainly there is now a whole new category of online art and music driven by the PC and computer technology.

Online, we have net art. Artists like myself specifically addressing the uses and abuses of the Internet as a medium for creative expression. Within this context artists are exploring many technologies including shockwave, flash, vrml, java. The soundtoys (www.soundtoys.net) site offers insights into the diverse and creative nature of the web which is available to today's artists. These works can be seen as a new art form, or as a contribution to the new music and electronica. These works encounter and engage the user without whose presence in the interactivity the work is not only meaningless but does not exist. Within the global exhibition of such works the parameters of the artists relationship to his audience have shifted ground. We see emerging a shared multidimensional relationship to these works. So now we find that the computer, this box, is in fact the gallery, the exhibition space, (again the computer as white cube). This box has become specification for which these works are made and are experienced.

Fifteen to twenty years ago very few computers were being used by creatives in colleges or universities. Now a visit to any college will see classes of art, fashion, graphics, music, interactive design, all huddled up around the computer screen. Art colleges are now almost like computer colleges with students all creating their work on PCs and all using similar softwares.

Does this new form possess its own specificities, and its own existence?

Artists are specifically looking at creative possibilities for the computer and the Internet as a medium. One thing seems obvious, more and more artists are being drawn to new media.

The diverse range and plurality of backgrounds means that the specific of this form is hard to evaluate. Its enough to say creatives from music, architecture, fine art, and graphics are all converging, they are all using PC, they are all using similar software and they are all interacting with this work across networks.

From design, music, art, and programming various skills are need to produce work in the digital domain. As artists learn these skills to varying degrees it becomes possible to express oneself. So net art is exhibited globally, in real time as Internet specific artworks.

To fully engage with the Internet as a medium the artist must adopt multiple and diverse skills and languages in addition to those traditional associated with the arts. Presented with an Internet - specific artwork, the visitor must physically engage with the work to experience it as it is meant to be (in that the work must utilise the qualities inherent to the medium if it is to be considered Internet art at all) - time must pass, things must change, connection must be made for the experience to be complete. Visitor becomes user.

As well as providing this non-linearity, the work may change over time, i.e. generate. The "user" may control these evolving pieces through movement. The character of the resulting piece is unique to the user. This change in the relationship between the 'user' and the artist changes the perception of the artwork. The user can choose what they experience. At any time the user can make subtle or total change to the work whenever they want to explore further. Or simply watch the piece change itself, in a generative way. So for example in my amorphoscapes (www.amorphoscapes.com) The work can be installed into 'real' environments, where the movement of people in the room or gallery triggers the interactivity within the work. They could be thought of as drawing and paintings machines, in the future to be projected, onto buildings, on clothes and on cars, and on large plasma screens in your living room.

Will it be the first art form attainable by all?

The main attraction (to put it crudely), is access for all. Ideas can be disseminated quickly and with a potential global audience.

Musicians that previously had to publish via record labels on CD can put up their own digital formats whether it be real media mp3 or swa files. They can get more inventive and make interactive pieces. Artists like - wise the same. Fed up with a culture dominated by curators, artists with something to say have the means to say it and have an audience to evaluate and feedback about the work. The potential for many people to experience these new art forms is huge. The amount of people looking at my work online is substantial. My stanza site, the amorphoscapes series, the central city projects, etc., these are now attracting visitors ten of thousands monthly.

This is a huge audience already passing through experiencing these works as artworks.

About Stanza

Stanza is an artist who deals with net art, multimedia, electronic music and painting. Most of his work can be viewed from www.stanza.co.uk The work has gained an international reputation for net specific artworks and number of these interactive audio visual online net artworks have been exhibited internationally. Most recent exhibitions include Sao Paulo Biennale on the theme of metropolis in Brazil and Zeppelin in Barcelona. This main stanza site features lots of work including, the Internet art project, The Central City as well as lots of soundtoys, interactive movies, gallery of fine art. Also online are paintings, photos and conceptual pieces from 1984 when at Goldsmiths', to the present day. The net artworks are heading onto plasma screens and into art galleries. Selected works have been made as installations. Most of my time at the moment is spent making works for the web. This time is spent addressing the issues around net art, and the protocols of the net as a medium. I am interested in net specific works, designed for the Internet, that use elements of html, javascript, and could also incorporate flash, shockwave and java. Other projects include Subvergence, which subverts and fragments the notion of our old browser incorporating full screen desktop take-over.