RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE STUDY OF A FRAMEWORK FOR ART WORK AND THE ROLE OF RECENT EMERGING MEDIA

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT

The principle objective of this study is to examine the culture of networks that are implicated in the production of culture, specifically as it pertains to artists' design and use of digitally networked information and communication technologies (ICTs) for the production of artworks. The analysis in this study seeks to reveal a better understanding of the working practices that underpin artists' creative engagements with new media while recognizing the significance of discursive continuities that inform such engagements. Theoretically, a case is presented for combining several theoretical perspectives into a multilayered conceptual framework for examining the circulation of power as it relates both to artistic creativity and to technological innovation.

INTRODUCTION

The principle contribution of this study is to establish new conceptual and methodological bridges between studies of new media and of the production of Art.

I seek to know how artists design and use digital information and communication networks for the production of artworks in order to gain insight into the production and circulation of creativity and innovation relating to the arts and new media as well as to gain a clear understanding of how society produces culture, specifically with new ICTs. The aim of this chapter was to provide a brief overview of the study and to present some of the arguments that underpin the spirit in which it was written. As demonstrated above, identifying productive dichotomies between art and new media, as well as the social and the cultural, represents a first step in developing a framework for answering the research question. In the following chapter, I take these broad dichotomies and refine them using two theoretical traditions – "production of culture" and mediation theory – in order to generate a conceptual framework for operational sing the research.

The History of New Media art do exist (Wilson 1991, Loeffler & Ascott 1991, Stallabrass 2003, Gere 2006). But many of them concern themselves with the aesthetic and epistemological debates attempting (or decrying) cronical overviews of recent or not so recent artworks. Others test approaches to the reading of specific artworks or genres (for example Manovich 2001, Bolter and Grusin 2000). Academic works by the likes of Stallabrass (2003) document how representatives of the traditional art world organisations such as contemporary art museums and galleries have been unable to absorb new media art within their traditional organizational and curatorial paradigms. Nascent media art worlds do, however, have significant organizations that support their activities (the scope of the following list does not include more commercially driven art worlds such as the video game industry or traditional media industries which have migrated some of their production to digital media forms. Returning to the challenge of locating culture within this research's theoretical framework, the term itself becomes a metaphorical extension of a process in which the individuals play only one part among many. The conceptual framework presented in section 2.5 balances, I suggest, the interplay between the rules brought to bear on, as well as the 'autonomous existence' of, the tools of cultural production and the artist's agency. The artist as a socially constructed role that enables the production, reproduction and contention of conventions related to the work of producing artworks. Section 2.3 and 2.4 weave together production of culture concepts developed in section 2.2 with theories of mediation. The combination of insights room both sets of theories generates a conceptualization of the technological and organizational network in order to build a model for understanding the mediation of ICTs for an art world network.

Research objective

1) To study how artists design and use digital information and communication framework for the production of artworks.
2) To study the role of the artist as a user of communication technology. Research Methodology The methodology for this study should be that it is necessary to take a more reflexive approach which is consistent with the research methodology itself. This is intended to provide some insight into my own situated role within the research context. The foregoing develops how the methodology for this study allowed an actor's and a technology's trajectories to define the boundaries of the framework. But this did not eliminate the need to seek a deeper understanding of the art world framework in which the actor and ICT trajectories were mapped.

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Analysis of communication framework for the production of artworks

Having established a framework for understanding how artists might go about appropriating ICTs for the production of artworks, it is time to develop an understanding of the properties of ICTs. In the case of this study, the interest lies in digitally interconnected information networks. To understand their properties, it is necessary to first consider the term network. The network's application as a concept in the social sciences raises certain conceptual and methodological challenges. Leaving methodological issues to the next chapter, this chapter turns to the theoretical implications of the term network. The term network is relatively consistently 2003:11-13). Networks have been used in many different ways to describe relationships in the production of cultural artefacts: in anthropology (Gell 1998), in aesthetic theory (Bourriaud 2002b), in the sociology of art (Becker 1982: 35, Crane 1989, Bourdieu 1993: 30). The concept is also employed more generally in sociology such as actor- used in the literature to describe a structure made up of links between nodes (Barabasi networks (Hennion 1989, Law and Hassard (Eds.) 1999), social networks (Wellman *et al*. 1996, Wellman 2001, Neff 2005) and network inspired social theories such as the network (or information) society (Castells 1996, 2000).

The concept can describe infrastructure such as international transportation networks (air travel, rail, etc.), telecommunication networks (Internet, phone, etc.). It has also been used to analyse various structures from biology (neural networks to computer sciences (network flow theory). What is clear is that the network metaphor has served many different disciplines, including the social sciences: "Networks seemed to hold the potential to combine the explanatory power of "culture" while being able to account for human agency in ways which structural-functional theories of social life were unable to do." (Knox *et al*. 2006: 124) Becker's approach (also see Crane (1987), White and White (1965), and Bourdieu (1993)) is to employ conceptual structures such as art worlds to examine and compare relationships In The Rise of the Network Society, Castells argues that the development and diffusion of ICTs are key ingredients for the development of what he calls the Network Society: "While the networking form of social organization has existed in other times and spaces, the new information technology paradigm provides the material basis for its pervasive expansion throughout the entire social structure." (Castells 2000: 500) These social organizations can therefore grow larger and more stable thanks to the rapid feedback loops (Castells Forthcoming: 51) enabled by ICTs. Castells goes on to include a multitude of networks from the "network of global financial flows" (2000: 501) to "television systems, entertainment studios, computer graphics milieus, news teams, and mobile devices generating, transmitting and receiving signals in the global network of the new media".

Such a broad and diverse classification at first provides little empirical direction. It does, however, support the notion that ICTs are not separate from socio-cultural processes but deeply embedded in them through a dialectical process of mediation (see section 2.3.5). Nevertheless, technologies have certain properties – what some call affordances (Gibson 1977, Norman 1999, Gaver 1991) – that shape the physical limits of how they can or cannot be designed or used. Digital information and communication networks are no different. Castells identifies "multi directionality and a continuous flow of interactive information processing" (Castells forthcoming: 52) as necessary but not sufficient preconditions for making digital ICT mediated networks a potent organizational form in contemporary society.

These ICT features enhance networks, he argues, because they combine with the network properties of flexibility, scalability and survivability. "Flexibility: the ability to reconfigure according to changing environments and retain goals while changing their components, sometimes bypassing blocking points of communication channels to find new connections. Scalability: the ability to expand or shrink in size with little disruption. Survivability: because they have no single centre, andno single centre, and can operate in a wide range of configurations, networks can withstand attacks to their nodes and codes because the codes of the network are contained in multiple nodes that can reproduce the instructions and find new ways to perform." (Castells Forthcoming: 52-53 Result and calculation: - Returning to the challenge of locating culture within this research's theoretical framework, the term itself becomes a metaphorical extension of a process in which the individuals play only one part among many.

The conceptual framework presented in section 2.5 balances, suggest, the interplay between the rules brought to bear on, as well as the 'autonomous existence' of, the tools of cultural production and the artist's agency. In this presented the production of culture perspective as a conceptual framework to examine the artist as a socially constructed role that enables the production, reproduction and contention of conventions related to the work of producing artworks.

Section 2.3 and 2.4 weave together production of culture concepts developed in section 2.2 with theories of mediation. The combination of insights from both sets of theories generates a conceptualization of the technological and organizational network in order to build a model for understanding the mediation of ICTs for an art world network.

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