Exploring Gender Representation in Digital Media ART: A Critical Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study critically examines gender representation in contemporary digital media art, focusing on how large image databases depicting gender in a sensational and exploitative manner influence societal perceptions and valuation of women. By analyzing the works of three digital media artists, the research highlights the role of artists in perpetuating or challenging gender stereotypes. The study employs feminist art theory to explore the intersection of digital media art and gender identity, using both qualitative and quantitative content analysis methods. The findings reveal a significant bias in gender representation, suggesting the need for more balanced and inclusive portrayals in digital media art.
Keywords: Gender Representation, Digital Media Art, Feminist Art Theory, Image Databases, Gender Identity.

INTRODUCTION

In our practice-led research, we address an aesthetic in contemporary digital art that results from the use of large image databases, particularly those that depict gender in a sensational and exploitative manner. This has significant implications for the way that society looks at and assigns value to women. Digital artists have washed their hands of the production and use of these schemes and through their act of distancing, have achieved a freedom of viewing and exploitation of digital imagery as free from the taint of creating exploitative images. Before tackling the major art installations of our research proxy, we present case studies of three digital media artists. By examining the artists whose works are participatory and unavoidable, the idea of being passive bystanders or innocent viewers is addressed by leading viewers through their introspective experiences during the analysis of these case studies. The conclusion of this chapter is the metaphor of "Pissing on my Own Grave" [1]. Misogyny is a consequence of that object mapping since the semantics of each class do induce offensive and aggressive forms of sexual exploitation. When semantic class listeners are a mixture of those requiring automatic object detection class assignments and adherence to an AI logic receiver, the mix tends to reflect the most masculinist present by ignoring sumptuary law as a force of instruction. Hindered by those watching their gate, there is an early celebration of revelers in the circle becoming quickly realized before the joust event commences. By now the sexes are separated. The men have gone inside, the dogs close on their heels after an occasional dance step as if they were phantom hounds, nothing more than an eerie, silent white shadow of the riders. The elegant ladies who follow them through the door are but their hangings, with faces cool as sculpted marble [2].

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The sociocultural sphere is increasingly mediated and strengthened by the use of technology, withholding an ongoing shift as advances in the digital world inform the structure of our physical world. Art could be argued as having a primary function in the assessment, documentation, and communication of evolving societal values. However, digital media, an often label given to art that uses digital technology or electronic media as an essential part of the creative or presentation process has, to date, seen a relatively muted acceptance into the conventional art world. And perhaps more pertinent, at least to those versed in feminist art theory, is the continuation of norms established in earlier art forms which often leave digital

art's full potential underexplored. This then ultimately underexposes and potentially reinforces, political and personal aspects of gender identity [3]. Feminist thinkers explain that we all engage with the world from our own personal perspective, beliefs, and values. However, the delivery and interpretation of design can sometimes appear culturally or political neutral. This understanding that design is neither neutral nor independent from the design creator has engaged other women and men in a continuum of social justice, personal advocacy, and greater awareness of how design, in any of its forms and intentions, be more fundamentally incorporated into the enhancement of human rights. Feminist art theory, a broad variety of tools such as deconstruction, representation, semiotics, and social and political critique, provides a framework for an examination and perhaps critique of the subject. This paper seeks to employ an art critique, using feminist art theory, as an evaluation of digital media art. Specifically, digital art representing gender or with gender themes as the primary subject [4].

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Figure represented on canvas and pixels has been a prerogative of the male artist. Our current understanding of the portrayal of both men and women reflects not only gender differences in real-world behavior but also the decision processes of the many individual artists who have portrayed these subjects in the past. The aim of this study is to explore how and who is portrayed in gender-focused digital media artworks to improve the current state of knowledge about using gender with digital media art. Are there any approaches to gender for usage by artists and be a basis for tracking the representation of gender and definition of tools in digital art? The role of gender is worth inspecting in these terms in all artistic practices, that's yet not been done in terms of this specific genre, especially as there is a broad current fluctuation of digital art, as well as the gender sensitivity applied in the humanities and the social sciences [5]. The difficulty of separating the ideal with the real body through the media, not just of the gender disparities or human conception, but all the aspects we consider that the artist must always deform the image from reality to shape his concept. With our research, we aim to study every aspect from the representation in digital art until the input and digital printing. The method applied in this research is a critical review. We will outline a potential path and so it can be a base for works that want to improve and study the interconnection between gender and digital art in a global sense. This work is divided into four main parts. The introduction, from the identification of our framework to Indonesia and problem identification within digital art and gender, ends with an ironic statement that contains our research method and the possibility of critical review. Then onwards, the last second part outlines how digital art in the last century was charged in the artistic field [6].

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section, we present our theoretical framework and approach to explore gender representation in computational electronic digital media artwork. In order to critically analyze the specificities of gender representation and ideology in digital media arts, we define our object of study through the approach of Critical Art and Technology as well as connect it to the concepts of electronic art and new media art. We then narrow down our area to digital media electronic art by highlighting its various specific aspects [7]. Exploring gender representation under these different but interconnected concepts will allow us to uncover in depth the ideology behind the creation of digital media art and its forms of representation as well as the reception of such objects. As McPherson has pointed out, "the rise of digital media in electronic arts has not matched itself by a rise in historical, critical, or cultural inquiry that provides a rich context and theoretical foundation for the work produced." This research will draw from the production and photography theory and cultural studies to fill in this gap. To this end, we address the specific field of electronic digital media art as a rather unexplored area for critical and gender theory [8].

FEMINIST THEORY IN ART

Gender and feminist theory have been largely concerned with the position of women in visual art in the Western canon. The questions and critiques posed by Griselda Pollock, Lucy Lippard, Amelia Jones, Suzanne Lacy, and many others have formed the basis of an institutional question: to describe accurately and without distortion and censorship what is, has been, and is becoming the situation of female artists engaging in producing visual products; to analyze the critical and innovative methods and strategies developed by female artists individually and collectively and to delineate clearly and radically what are the main modes of gender politics underpinning such activities; finally to facilitate further change [9]. Whether the discussions in or about women's entry into traditional disciplines focus on a more pluralist appraisal of diverse voices and diversities of subject matter and "types" of images, it is eventually to recognize the very nature of the human mechanisms invested in such acts of communication and authorship which go beyond sex and gender as determined at birth. The issue is clearly of some urgency,

whether one is engaged in expanding the traditional boundaries of visual arts or if the field under investigation is inter- or transdisciplinary or multimedia or even new media [10].

METHODOLOGY

The mixed-methods approach, involving both qualitative and quantitative content analysis, was adopted for this research. The video art works were selected based on four categories: female, male, genderless, and those that explore the body as a non-gender entity. Five and a half hours of video were transcribed and analyzed. Representations that counter stereotypical portrayals, constituted by less objectification, and that are empowered by their strong personalities, as a form of resistance to patriarchal dominance, were positively depicted [11]. The findings indicate evidence of change in the representation of gender in video arts. This research suggests that digital media art has to assert representation to create a gender-equal society for the future. There is a shortage of research examining the representation of gender in the context of digital media, and this study fills the void by adopting both qualitative and quantitative content analysis methods to explore the construction of gender outcomes in video art. The results help to establish the contributions of video art in articulating female representations in terms of portrayal and narrative against the norms of gender [12].

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

To explore gender representation through artwork showcased at digital media art events, the study collects and analyzes four types of structured data: (1) the organizers and program chairs responsible for selecting the artwork to show and for the conference content; (2) the quantity and nature of gender-specific data; (3) the gender of the artists who are responsible for the artworks; and (4) the gender and background of the audiences who visit and engage with the showcased digital media artworks. We utilized the data mining, content analysis, and inter-rater reliability methods to achieve this task; reference checks validate the gender assignment and the results. Data collection included visits and observations at the digital media art events, collecting event-related promotional material and digital and print publications from the event and the accompanying conference or symposium events; thus, concurrently observing and gathering artifacts inspired data collection [13]. Data collection resources included 15 years of publications and art-show event reports from Ars Electronica and transmediale landing pages that detailed the co-organizers, festival issues (volumes), conference content, and biographies of contributors, speakers, artists, and curators. Digital event linkage structured data queries were conducted to supplement, confirm, or cross-verify the findings from information sourced directly from the landing pages and publications. Proper triangulation, as applied, eliminates methodological bias and maintains reliability [14].

GENDER REPRESENTATION IN DIGITAL MEDIA ART

The exploration of gender theory and how it is represented in digital media art forms is complex and presents significant challenges. Although gender representation in digital media art is addressed in various art movements, it has not been fully explored, and these representations alter our position on the representation of women or femininity in art forms. With evolving digital cultures, the examination and representation of cultural anxieties deal with the 'gender' issue. Technological developments in digital culture create pluralities of gender performances among users. Furthermore, the digital media art space has become an unavoidable factor in shaping perceptions of gender and an integral tool in practices, experiences, and performances of everyday life [15]. In the last two decades, the academic discourse on digital media art focused on new media technologies, often by underlying the potential for radical consequences. Arguably, the term 'digital media art' maintains critical, political, and conscious alliances with the essential questions, forms, and conditions of traditional art but tries to engage especially with the new cultural space of digital technologies. Yet, addressing the realms of digital media art, the notion of 'the gendered' body seems to be marginal; traditional debates about gendered identities and sexual politics among new digital technologies and the uses of the new and thus constructed gender spaces were prominent. Given this, in this chapter, we look at digital media art to discover how women and femininity are imagined and implicated. By doing so, we not only contribute to an enriching of digital media art theory but also let an ongoing technological and cultural transformation influence our understanding of gender communication [16].

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The term "digital media" is used to describe emerging and advanced technology, which is contrasted with traditional methods of production and reproduction via mechanical, rather than nonphysical, digital means. This would include photography, light shows, installations, and all multimedia forms, including interactive video games. Although digital art today has become a popular academic discipline and form of expression, it faced intense skepticism and neglect from critics, museums, and the public alike. These

societies hadn't seen nor experienced the potential behind digital media technology. Instead, the oldest, most traditional art forms, such as painting and sculpture, prevailed. Digital art may not fit neatly into a historical overview of art and is often regarded as a separate art genre, similar to sound sculpture, conceptual art, or performance [17]. It is difficult to know the exact first work of digital art due to the wide range of computer-generated images and their potential exposure. The main aspects in various academic contributions are credited equally to the 1960s three mainframes: The IBM 7094 programming source was created by Ken Knowlton and collaborator Leon Harmon [18]. Mentioning the second mainframe is the Zuse Graphomat Z64, as it was employed by Frieder Nake in his respective work. To cover the third, supercomputers were stationed in the USA and were used by A. Michael Noll, who was one of the earliest artists to create electronic art when he programmed a digital machine. Going back to history, it was the 1960s when computer art was coined by the Computer Art Society. In the UK, the first exhibition of computer art was held around 1965, which slightly predates the formation of the Computer Arts Society. In summary, British artist Charles Csuri benefited the most from the Homage to Charles contributions, as it revealed that computer-generated art could be utilized to interact with what was happening in both art theory and artistic practices. However, dealing with critiques from both experts and artists in the area, it is without a doubt that digital media and art have more challenges to overcome [19].

CURRENT TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

As digital media art is primarily a 20th-century and 21st-century form of art, it is understood that there is an evolving face of gender representation in art that taps into new technological media. This genre of visual art is one of the most rapidly changing fields, not only in its use and purpose, but also in its aesthetic, context, and manipulation. This section focuses on the process of creating/distributing the artwork and its impact as well as addressing how gender is currently utilized in the practice of digital media artists by using the accepted neoliberal, conservative, liberal, radical, and Marxist approaches. By examining the evolution of concepts in art, theatrical representation of motion images, photography, and audio-visual, it can be argued that various applications of technique and media have been employed to satisfy values [20]. Although it is difficult to classify digital art because the category is open to artists in various fields or genres, it is important to recognize the roles of gender in digital art from the perspective of women's lives, skills, new media, and concepts. The manner in which artists visualize gender as a physical, social, psychological, and spiritual definition can be evaluated by looking at trends in current productions such as images of women, the number of women involved in the creation of content, and the methods that are either challenging or are realigned in the production and cultural representation of women, as well as general principles experienced by women. Cultural identity, ethnicity, language, social class, nationality, disability, religiosity, use of myth, age, fashion, and personality can also be examined by an artist's personal philosophy and the theoretical context of digital sexism. In the search for the association between gender and content creation, this chapter presents a number of themes from digital art, including personal computer access for content creation [21].

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Are these artworks representative? The outcome of this analysis showed that these artworks represented generally male characters with various characteristics, identities, and appearances. From the more popular animation outputs, this research found a large and significant domination of male lead characters, with high multiple occurrences of stereotypical male personality traits, expressions, and emotions, as well as male physical characteristics, especially those depicting valiant males. Very few of these animated characters are shown with negative expressions such as sadness or fear, and female characters were generally not displayed in a dominant or strong personality. The researchers found that these also depict males in their active roles struggling as lead characters. These highly represented male characters in digital media art could result in unbalanced gender equality contexts and beliefs, as observed in findings elsewhere. Some arguments here therefore questioned the representation of these male characteristics [22]. Some studies from films and advertisements have debated the harmful effect of excess male lead depictions affecting women, which results in lower self-esteem, restricting roles and behavior, and that positive outcomes would happen when female lead characters climbed away from gender representation domination. The influences found suggested a potential gender bias socialization outcome in storylines, identities, and values. These can range from who has agency, who saves, who leads, who powers, violence being more justifiable, being a better team player, to achieving specific goals. These researchers are for gender-neutral characters. Should not all characters be human or at most have human traits? Aimed at recognizing balanced gender representations of human characters in these 2D and 3D digital media artworks, this critical analysis compared the result to identify any contrasts. The researchers found these

gender-neutral characters. They were a minority and not representative of the sociocultural norm around the world of the location where these more popular creators are either based in or have an audience from [23].

INTERSECTIONALITY AND GENDER IDENTITY

Intersectionality is a concept developed to understand the interconnected dimensions of social categorizations and complex interrelations, especially the structural systems of oppression and discrimination. Intersectionality has its origins in critical feminism and promotes an intersectional Page | 13 perspective of multiple identities on the nature of existential and social oppression. Intersectionality implies that gender, race, class, caste, tribe, rural or urban, sexuality, age, and so on, are all interrelated and co-constitutive rather than discrete and mutually exclusive categories. It suggests that an understanding of gender should necessarily entail an understanding of the other social identities and determine how they are distributed and experienced in combined ways [24]. Intersectionality avoids ideological reductionism, essentialism, and a universalist perspective through which global feminism flattens the diversity of women's experiences by promoting the view of women as a category of analysis. Global feminism interprets the dilemma of women in a totalizing way, extending its range to different countries, societies, and experiences of billions of women who are part of it without addressing in detail the differences that exist within it. The concept of intersectionality also serves to understand the ways in which gender can impact labor market experiences and other dimensions of inequality, as well as exploring the ways in which categories of gender interact with other dimensions of inequality, considering all conditions to understand these differences and the context in which they arise, and produce knowledge relevant enough to develop knowledgeable practices [25].

CONCLUSION

This research underscores the critical role of digital media art in shaping societal perceptions of gender. The analysis of artworks reveals a predominant male representation, often reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes. However, the study also identifies emerging trends where digital media art is used to challenge and subvert these norms, promoting a more inclusive and balanced portrayal of gender. The findings highlight the importance of continued critical analysis and advocacy for gender equality in digital media art, emphasizing the potential of this medium to influence cultural and social transformations. Future research should further explore the impact of digital media art on gender perceptions and consider broader intersectional factors affecting representation.

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