Cinema Software and Audience as Instrument

In traditional cinema, the experience of meaning depends upon montage, a visceral closure completed by the viewer across the gaps between film shots and between film frames. With the screen-based software interface, the experience of meaning erupts out of a different set of gaps: the boundaries between and among simulacra, that is, between and among different representations – presented "in tandem" - of the same audio-visual event. This is made obvious in any computer game where the graphic interface controlling a player's stats/states/pov are displayed along with the narrative actions. These multiple displays, grouped within the same frame, graphically represent the same data in a different way.

In contrast, multiple representations of the same data are typically suppressed or split up in vjaying software. In other words, the vjay performer looks at one form of data representation embedded in an elaborate interface, while the audience "enjoys" a different visual representation of the same states/behaviors/data. This is why the aesthetic of the software demo genre has more in common with computer gameplay than it has with vjay improvisation performances. It is the viewers' "cross-referencing" among multiple audio-visual translations of the same code objects screened simultaneously that constitutes the experience of the software demo. It is the gaps between and among the variety of audio-visual representations of code that ground both the perceptions of the viewer and the performative interactions of the user.

One characteristic feature of my earlier cinema software was the visible manipulation of the interface, available for viewing alongside the improvised video montage ("HF Critical Mass", "EG Serene", "AMG Strain", etc.).   In contrast, my current software ("Unwriting" and "O.D.E.s" series) focuses on other strategies for this "cross-referential" mode of reception (and for the questions such strategies raise about reception itself). To that end, my current cinema software elaborates a different split: video improvisation that pings between "free jazz"/"free improvisation" traditions (the audience surrounds the performers as extension of the performers themselves... performing appears to be a matter of circulating roles where the audience and performers "take turns"), and an alternative condition in which video software, all alone, does its instrumental, generative working OF the audience, and simply ignores YOU.

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