

INTRODUCTION

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Storytelling, Art, and Digital Interactivity: The ICIDS Art Exhibition Journey

Story and Art. Over time, and across different groups of practitioners and theorists, the terms 'story' and 'art' have ranged in relationship from the nearly synonymous to emphatically separate. At one point in Western art history, representational storytelling was the most aspirational mission of painting. Armed only with canvas, brushes, and paint, artists sought to portray the grand drama of human existence. Today, the artist's toolbox has expanded to include not only pigment and surface, but also digital possibilities, extending expressive realms in ways that have encouraged a myriad of transformation, as well as continuation, in creative practice.

One effect of the digital in art at large is the accessibility of tools and distribution platforms, which while not as democratizing as was initially hoped perhaps, have resulted in an extraordinary number of creative events, objects, and artworks that can be shown, created, re-mixed, and shared. And with digital tools, as with previous analog innovations, new media continue to reference, borrow, and make new out of old, or "remediate" as media theorists Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin have described the process. For example, Frieder Nake's 1965 computer-generated artwork, "Homage a Paul Klee" makes use of this creative borrowing from the earlier medium of painting to explore new expressive possibilities afforded by the computer.

However, there is no "story" in the example from Nake --- which is reflective of some strands of contemporary art having turned away from narrative, following a Modernist tradition particularly associated with painting, but influential on many expressive forms, from the 1920s onwards. Art critic Clement Greenberg is cited as a major figure in the Modernist movement, which continues threads of influence even today, in deployment of a medium-centric lens for justifying art creation. Greenberg and others sought to delineate between high and low art, identifying engagement with mass culture and representationalism as 'kitsch', whereas abstract art that purported to exist only to exemplify the essential qualities of the medium was true art, or 'avant-garde.' While important in identifying an alternate path for artists, particularly for painters in the face of the rise of photography, Greenberg's and the Modernists' influence has reverberated across multiple mediums, creating a divide between high art (abstract) and low art (representational) that has in some ways marginalized storytelling. Nevertheless, storytelling as a communication means and an expressive art form persists, reinventing itself in each new medium that arises, taking on new forms and producing new genres, and new audiences, in recognition of the centrality of storytelling to human existence, and the new opportunities afforded to storytellers with interactive digital technology capabilities today. The International Conference on Interactive Digital Storytelling (ICIDS) is entering the start of its second decade. ICIDS brings together artists, engineers, scientists, theorists, and historians to explicitly focus on storytelling through a variety of interactive digital media and approaches. The conference has developed over the past decade to include not only a traditional conference paper track, with demos and posters (published as proceedings in Springer's Lecture Notes in Computer Science series) but also an Art Exhibition.

Since 2013, the ICIDS Art Exhibition has been chronicled online, as well as documented in a printed catalogue (links to previous exhibition websites are appended below). This volume documents the 2017 exhibition, held in conjunction with the

ICDS conference at M-III Madeira Interactive Technologies Institute, Funchal, Madeira, November 14-17, 2017. This volume represents the first time the ICDS Art-Exhibition catalogue has been published, and it is also the first time the catalogue has been expanded to not only document the work presented, but also collect textual scholarship from a subset of the artists involved - reflecting on a range of challenges and questions in the field. The blended nature of this volume, including contributions across traditional scholarship and theory as well as research-creation art practice helps to expand notions of knowledge production by highlighting and bringing together these multiple approaches in the interactive narrative field. In addition, the wide range of creative works exhibited here pushes the boundaries of what 'counts' as interactive narrative. These two moves toward expansion (expansion of what research means; expansion of what is defined as interactive narrative) are meant as productive and generative provocations for the field.

The 2017 exhibition's theme of Tempo encouraged artists to explore the time-based qualities of interactive narrative: user rhythms; and storytelling themes that incorporate history, time travel, and other playful engagements with time. 'Tempo' in Portuguese means 'time.' However, the word 'tempo' came into English by way of Italian, tracing all the way back to the Latin 'tempus' -- meaning 'time.' Initially used to describe the timing of music, 'tempo' is also used to refer to pace or speed in general. The 2017 exhibition documented here highlights the eleven selected works that engage the concepts of Time & Tempo across disciplines, languages, cultures, technologies, and histories.

To give an overview of the exhibition selection process, all submissions received were reviewed independently by three members of the selection jury, after which each submission received a meta-review analysis from the curators. Submissions were scored across the following categories: Creativity, Strength of Concept, Relevance to the Theme, Feasibility, and Durability. Scores were averaged across all reviewers for the meta-review and final decision. We are deeply indebted to our Jury Members for their invaluable assistance in this process:

- Maria Engberg – University of Mainz
- Arnau Girreu – University of Barcelona
- Hartmut Koentz – HKU University of the Arts Utrecht
- Alex Mitchell – National University of Singapore
- Ben Samuel – University of New Orleans
- Suzanne Scott – University of Texas at Austin

In developing the catalogue into the larger, published work presented here, artists from the exhibition were invited to submit longer, scholarly texts addressing current challenges and opportunities in the field of interactive narrative. We have grouped these texts, along with the catalogue entries describing the exhibited works, into three themed sections: Digital Poetics and Literature; Digital Cultural Heritage; and Urban Space and Politics. We provide a brief introduction at the start of each of the three sections to help contextualize the works for the reader, and the volume concludes with a postscript reflecting on the book design process from graphic designer and layout artist, Jana-Lina Berkenbusch.

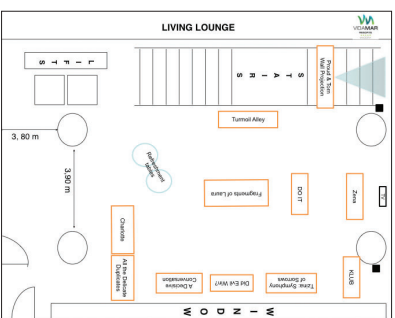
To provide some context for readers who were not present at the art exhibition in November 2017, we share here images from the exhibition event, as well as a layout diagram that illustrates the manner in which the artworks were displayed.



Exhibition space from above during opening reception.



Exhibition crowd during opening reception.



Layout diagram of exhibition space at Viduar resort, Funchal, Madeira.



Small group of exhibition attendees discussing work displayed.

In conclusion, as curators we have chosen to move in this new direction with publication of the catalogue and accompanying scholarly texts to not only enable a wider dissemination of the works, but also in recognition of the emergence over the past decade of ICIDS (and the Art Exhibition in particular) as a hybrid space, or generative platform for integrated art practice, new technology, scientific research, and critical reflection. This evolution of the ICIDS Art Exhibition is in step with a larger trend globally toward an understanding of artistic research creation as a set of deeply entangled, interdependent processes that combine art practice, scientific research, and critical scholarship (Gosselin 2006; Hirt 2008; Cisban 2014; Chapman et. al. 2015). We hope this new initiative in the form of published proceedings for the ICIDS Art Exhibition encourages artists, scholars, and curators who are facing the challenges of navigating this hybrid space by sharing examples of projects, lessons learned, and critical writing reflective of both the field's histories, and emerging directions for the future.

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Documentation of Previous ICIDS Art Exhibitions

- [ICIDS 2013] Art Exhibition Theme: Connecting Narrative Worlds**
URL: <http://gamesnarrative.net/icids2013/exhibition>
- [ICIDS 2014] Art Exhibition Theme: Remembering/Forgiving**
<http://narrativeandplay.org/icids2014/exhibition.html>
- [ICIDS 2015] Art Exhibition Theme: Fragmentation**
<http://icids2015.sau.dk/exhibition/>
- [ICIDS 2016] Art Exhibition Theme: Field of View**
<http://icids2016.cit.usc.edu/exhibition/>
- [ICIDS 2017] Art Exhibition Theme: Time & Tempo**
https://icids2017.m-hi.org/?page_id=865