

+ + READER

Marina Zerbarini

In 1998 I created my first Internet website with a programme that came with the electronic mail server. By the year 2000 I had my own website which I had designed using new programmes that allowed me to read the contents better, incorporate images, sound, the much talked-about interactivity and the possibility of hypertextual reading by visitors. Several works arose out of it.

In *L'atido* I worked the topics mentioned above. As a spectator, I could take different reading routes by relating images and sounds, the focal point being an attraction to the enjoyment of relating specially chosen and prepared images and sounds to demonstrate the novelty of the medium. Technically, I also found myself obliged to start studying programming languages like ActionScript.

Subsequently, fascinated with collaborative work, writer's crisis and specific designs for html, I did *Gemelos/no-gemelos* with the intention of creating, along with others, a tower of Babel where all of the words, images and sounds were mixed together without differentiating between authorship or ownership. It includes elements incorporated by me and many others sent in by Internet users. Windows that open, games that appear out of nowhere and the constant incorporation of material I received by email and subsequently added to the site.

Tejido de Memoria was a private project which combines social and personal themes with temporal and spatial ones. I tried to "recount" the political and social history of a country in a parallel way to my own personal life. To make reference to a memory that can be read "from memory" or as a fabric that is constructed and reconstructed in the present time. The historical account of the Mothers of May Square by María del Carmen de Berrocal (Mother of the May Square) accentuated the political nature of the work and the clarity of the message. A video which, despite the rupture of the linearity, did not destroy the meaning. Reader response was immediate, interesting and important. They are still sending me their opinions, which I post on the site. It should be noted, with regard to these voices, that they are not discourses but rather short texts written in an almost colloquial format and with much synthesis where different people who are not related to one another, who live in different countries, express their opinion and share a language. The ones who are expressing their

opinions are common people, not the ones we see on the television, accustomed to the media, to microphones and podiums. They are the voices of people who talk to their friends in small groups, over a cup of coffee. They are the unscheduled, unplanned, unorganised voices. They are not trying to sell the truth or pass judgment, but merely to express an opinion. They are the voices of those who do not speak.

In 2005 and in view of the different responses to the works mentioned above, I started to wonder about readers, how they interacted, how they read, who the spectators were. What contents I was providing them and how so that they could do a participative reading, how they could perceive and participate. With *Eveline, fragmentos de una respuesta* I asked readers to give their opinion, not about history, politics or social inequality, but rather about love. There were practically no responses on the weblog set up specifically for them to give their opinion on two stories by James Joyce which I cite in that work. Two stories that talk about romantic disagreements, obsessive repetition, fear and the lack of ideas to explain situations. As Italo Calvino writes:

“(...)- I speak, speak - says Marco -, but the one who listens to me only retains the words that he expects. One is the description of the world to which you pay attention with benevolent ears, another one will turn back to the huddles dockers and gondoliers in the wharves of my house the day I return, another one I could dictate being old, if I was taken prisoner by Genovese pirates and I was put the trap in the same dungeon in which an adventure novel writer owas. What commands the story is not the voice: it is the ear....”

And at that time hypertext was read and spoken about as:

“The advent of the digital culture, writing signs, electronic signs, are inscribed in a different space. Another narrative, mobile references in constant movement are some of the properties of this mode of non-sequential writing introduced by hypertext. The random access memories of computers, as non-linear storage devices, make it possible to recover the stored data interactively and enable the reading process to be completed as a journey defined by the reader-operator through a textual universe where all of the elements are given simultaneously.

All linear or two-dimensional text is always a provisional update of a series of possibilities. It is updated in multiple versions, translations and editions; the reader continues updating it by interpreting it, giving meaning in the here and now, always in an inventive and singular way.

Thought does not always progress sequentially when one reads or writes; the connections are more reticulated in form, beyond mere closeness. The reader's intelligence reconstructs the flat pages into a moving, particular image, replete with its own particular meanings. They are the unwritten words, the vacuums, the different connection times, the misunderstood fragments, the reading gaps, the disperse parts where the reader is reunited and redefined. It is not the unit of text which is at stake but rather the construction of its "I", always unfinished. The text will have served as an interface.

The hypertext which one tries to analyse is a matrix of potential texts, only some of which will be realised as a result of the interaction with the user. Through it, reading is transformed into a dynamic textual problem. Reading becomes writing, the feeling-producing occasions are multiplied, the reader not only interprets but also organises and structures at the very production level. The hypertextual devices on digital networks have exiled text, creating text without borders, without a defined inner world."

It is at this point where my not so new questions begin:

Is this meaning, this creativity achieved? Are we truly in the age of the enriched and enriching reader? A community reader and social subject who writes and constructs?

Are there really readers or only writers of scattered and disconnected monologues?

The ++ reader we expected is a generative reader which has thus far only been achieved by the computer with its mathematics and programming languages, although hypertext does not seem to have generated a *generative reader*, if you'll excuse the repetition.

After several years of uninterrupted work with artistic practices and collective participation, the question is what happened to that relationship everyone had dreamed of between the producer and the spectator, who together would create that feeling, that authorship, that communication between the artist, the work and spectators on the network? The social communication, the changes and the

dynamics introduced into life? What happened to the spectator who was supposed to listen, read, relate, choose, understand, interpret, propose, do?

The cinema talked of the movement, the magic, the subject of the enunciation, identification, the character, the illusion/simulation. And so it was that history gave us marvellous directors who exploited the medium in all its richness and specificity, attracting the masses who were just as fascinated by it as they were.

New rules of play, the same players. Has the complicity between writer/reader perhaps been broken?

Could it be that all that will be left of hypertextual reading and/production is the seduction of a technical tool that empties and replaces itself rapidly?

Information is only bits, isolated and without combination there is no meaning, only numbers. Electronic text is not located in any real place, an electrical signal that contains transitory and unstable bits of information all along the network at any given time, along with all of the modifications and updates made by the different users who've had access to it. Digital text is a group of coded values in a binary system which are generally gathered together using magnetic means in a storage device. It is a unit of information, not of meaning.

The reader is called to travel over arid and complex roads: the originality of the graphic interface design, dynamic texts, hyperimages, movement, generative codes, technological and formal concepts, real time sounds. The spectator is paralysed in a *shopping* centre that offers him much more than what he asked for, work in a living state, even more alive than the spectator himself. Incapable of deciding in the face of such an excessive offering, he opts for anorexia, apathy and in the best case scenario he chooses to write his own weblog.

Random access memories respond to our will. We access the contents we are seeking in direct response to our desire for very short periods of time. We know where to look. We do not open boxes, drawers and shelves just out of curiosity but only because we know that the elements we are interested in are stored there. The need to select contents after reading them for better cataloguing, the combination of contents, their interpretation, etc. involves a time of interest, concentration and desire. Some that is achieved in minimum percentages and by highly specialised publics.

As artists, we waive authorship, meaning and discursive linearity. We leave the reader alone and disoriented in a jungle of binary values without any meaning in and of themselves. The reader, in exile, is then obliged to recreate the meaning.

Apparently, one needs to be much more of an artist to read than to write:

“(...) the Book, in its traditional format, is coming to an end” and “the plague of scriptural locusts which today blocks the sun of the spirit of the citizens of large cities will become even thicker in the years to come (...) Before a contemporary opens a book, a thick whirlwind of letters will fall upon his eyes that will be so changeable, colourful and conflicting that the possibility of penetrating the archaic tranquillity of the book will be minimal.” (...) “We can assume that new systems with more versatile writing forms will become increasingly necessary. They will replace the malleability of the hand with the nervousness of the fingers that operate the commands”.

Benjamín, Walter. *“Reflections: Essays, Aphorismos, Autobiographical Writing”*. Nueva York. Helen & Kart Wolf, 1978. pp 77-79

The Reader to come will be the one who, having been exiled from meaning and linearity, fought against the arbitrariness of hypertext and managed to build his own meaning, make his own writing, and was transformed into an artist, i.e., a ++ reader. The quantity and diversity of the different voices, the generalised deafness, the loss of feeling the technological invasion, the individual voices have given rise to a reader without aggregate signs. A text that is not yet deterritorialised and a reader that has not yet been added, I would venture to say has been removed.

TEXT AND INTERFACE

In my pervious work entitled *“Hiperimágen, imágen de síntesis, imagen generativa. Una aproximación desde la Interfaz”*, I wrote that:

“.....An interface can be defined as a set of physical and/or virtual devices that make it possible to interact with a system. The mouse, the keyboard or the monitor are the physical interfaces with which graphic interfaces usually work:

The interface is a form of operating, of producing and of thinking. The perspective was the application of geometric principles, the application of

mathematics to space and it modified the world of images. The interface and the mathematical form of producing diametrically modifies our concepts of image-text/hyperimage-hypertext.

The interface guides through information clusters, providing an interpretation or point of view which leaves impressions on the perceiving systems of what is happening in the world. By presenting the information in a specific way or using a specific medium, the interface design defines the meaning with which that interface constructs the points of view.

As P. Weibel says: "The world changes as the interface changes."

The property of allowing for multiple trajectories, the nature of the links, their ramifications and interconnections also influence the trajectory and inevitably change the way in which the sensibility captures the contents.

The numerical is a turning point in the history of the image-text, transforming and constructing another paradigm. We have gone from the analogue image-text to the digital image-text, artificially created.

Just as one can consider perspective a symbolic form, the binary image-text which is in essence pure information, is also articulated from language to its symbolic form".....

The reader is a subject of the interface. The latter is the meeting point between the artist and reader or co-author, Hence the importance of the inclusion or exclusion of meaning. His collaboration, participation and interaction are an interface subject. Artistic proposals as models of alternative communicative practices in the new digital networks and the design of new media and tools for digital community action are intimately crossed by the interface concept.

The ++reader continues in a latent state, a pending account; culture continues to be shot through with a renaissance, hierarchical and exclusive logic that persists and is concealed behind the greatest technological advances. Giving space to this heartbeat is perhaps the greatest challenge faced by artists today.

Bibliography

- A.A.V.V. *Hiperimágen, imágen de síntesis, imagen generative. Una aproximación desde la Interfaz V Jornadas 2007*
IUNA
- A.A.V.V. *La simulación, hipótesis política y comportamientos del arte*. III Jornadas 2005
- A.A.V.V. *Modelo de verdad única. Visión Viva del Infierno*. II Jornadas . 2004
- A.A.V.V. *Videoculturas de fin de siglo*. Madrid, Cátedra. 1990
- Amerika, Mark. *Poéticas de la agitación digital: Un concepto expandido de escritura*. Publicación de a.mínima:.,
Publicación de arte actual. Número 8. Espacio Publicaciones. España, 2004.
- Baudrillard, J. *El crimen perfecto*, Barcelona, Anagrama, 1996
- Baudrillard, J. "Duelo", *Fractal* n° 7, octubre-diciembre, 1997, año 2, volumen II, pp. 91-110.
- Baudrillard, J. *Cultura y simulacro*. Barcelona, Kairós. 1984
- Benjamín, Walter. *Reflexions: Essays, Aphorismos, Autobiographical Writing*. Nueva York.Helen & Kart Wolf, 1978.
pp 77-79
- Borges, Jorge L. *Funes, El memorioso, Obras Completas, Emece Editores, Buenos Aires, 1974*.
- Brea, José Luis. *El Tercer Umbral, Estatuto de las Prácticas Artísticas en la era del Capitalismo Cultural*. Cendeac,
Centro de Documentación y Estudios Avanzados de Arte Contemporáneo de la Ciudad de Murcia. 2003
- Brea, José Luis. *La Era PostMedia*. Editado en formato PDF. 2002
- Calvino, Italo. *Las Ciudades Invisibles* Minotauro. Barcelona 1995
- Contreras Medina, Fernando R. *Sistemas Audiovisuales orientados a la simulación en el siglo XX*. Universidad
Católica de Murcia. 2004
- Cortazar, Julio. *Rayuela*. Alfaguara. Madrid. 2002
- Debray, Régis, *Vida y muerte de la imagen. Historia de la mirada en occidente*. Paidós, Barcelona 1998.
- Drelichman, Raúl Carlos. *Hipertexto, lectores o navegantes?*
- Eco, Umberto. *Obra abierta*. Barcelona. Editorial Ariel. 1992. Primer Capitulo
- Gache, Belén. *El libro del fin del mundo*. Fin del Mundo Ediciones. Buenos Aires. 2002
- Gache, Belén. *Escrituras Nómades. Del libro perdido al hipertexto*. Limbo. Buenos Aires. 2004
- Gubert, Román. *Del bisonte a la realidad virtual* .Taurus. Madrid. 2000
- Gubert, Román. *El eros electrónico*.Taurus. Madrid. 2000
- Krämer, Sibille. *Interacción Lúdica. Reflexiones acerca de nuestra relación con las máquinas*. En: Giannetti, Claudia
(ed): *Arte Facto & Ciencia*. Madrid: Fundación Telefónica, 1999.
- La Ferla, Jorge. *Algunas consideraciones sobre el diseño en multimedia. Sobre el Cd Rom El Medio es el Diseño*.
- La Ferla, Jorge. *Cine, video y multimedia - Híbridez de tecnologías y discursos*
- La Sociéte Anonyme. Redefinición de las prácticas artísticas s.21 www.aleph-arts.org 1.11.2000
- Levy, Pierre, *¿Que es lo virtual?* Paidós Multimedia, Barcelona 1999.
- Machado, Arlindo. *El advenimiento de los medios interactivos*. Publicado en El medio es el Diseño, Estudios sobre
la problemática del Diseño y su relación con los Medios de Comunicación, Jorge La Ferla/Martín Groisman comp.,
Eudeba/Libros del Rojas, Publicaciones del C.B.C./Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2000; y en El paisaje Mediático.
Sobre el desafío de las poéticas tecnológicas, Arlindo Machado, Libros del Rojas, Buenos Aires, 2000.
- Machado, Arlindo. *Ensayos en forma de hipermedia*.
- Tiselli,Eugenio. *Arte Electrónico, Interfases*. Seminario On Line, UNESCO, Mecad, 2004
- Weibel, Peter. *La imagen inteligente, ¿Neurocinema o cinema cuántico?* Média Art, Prospect UNESCO, Digi Arts y
Mecad/Media Center d'art y Disseny de ESDI, Barcelona España. 2004
- Zerbarini, Marina. *La dinámica hipertextual*. Revista Arte al Día. Buenos Aires. 2004
- Zunzunegui, Santos. *Pensar la imagen*. Madrid, Cátedra. 1992