TRANSITIONAL AREAS OF DIGITAL GAME ART

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ABSTRACT

Digital games, which constitute a part of new media studies, offer different reality experiences and new expressive environments to a player with multimodal interactions and hybrid reality practices offered by game engines. The alternative environments offered by digital game art create a kind of 'transitional space' in the participant's experience process with ambiguous structures such as reality-fiction. The phenomenon of the transitional area, discussed by Donald W. Winnicott, is the cultural manoeuvring space in which the subject experiences both internal and external reality while constructing the initial fiction of the self, and is closely related to Jean Baudrillard's concept of simulation in which fiction and reality are mixed. In contemporary art, where the artistic image becomes a virtual reality, phantasmagoria, in which meaning and reality are reconstructed and staged in new media works referencing digital game practices, takes place in the transitional areas that Winnicott sees as a dynamic and experiential playground. This research focuses on digital game art works of different artists such as Olafur Eliasson, Hesam Jalili, Theo Triantafyllidis, Ian Cheng, and Joon Yong Moon, who create a transitional space in their work with practices such as 'gamification of space' and 'counter gaming'.

Keywords: *Digital game art, Hybrid-reality, Simulation, Transitional space.*

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DİGİTAL OYUN SANATININ GEÇİŞ ALANLARI

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ÖZET

Yeni medya çalışmalarının bir parçasını oluşturan dijital oyunlar, oyun motorlarının sunduğu çoklu mod etkileşimleri ve hibrit gerçeklik uygulamaları ile oyuncuya farklı gerçeklik deneyimleri ve yeni ifadesel ortamlar sunmaktadır. Dijital oyun sanatının sunduğu alternatif ortamlar, gerçeklik-kurgu gibi belirsizleşen yapılar ile katılımcının deneyim sürecinde bir tür 'geçiş alanı' yaratır. Donald D. Winnicott tarafından ele alınan geçiş alanı fenomeni, öznenin ilk benlik kurgusunu inşa ederken hem iç hem de dış gerçekliği deneyimlediği kültürel manevra alanıdır. Geçiş alanı, Jean Baudrillard'ın kurgu ve gerçekliğin birbirine karıştığı simülasyon kavramı ile yakın ilişkiler kurmaktadır. Sanatsal imgenin sanal gerçeklik halini aldığı çağdaş sanatta, dijital oyun pratiklerinden referans alan yeni medya çalışmalarında anlamın ve gerçekliğin yeniden kurgulandığı ve sahnelendiği fantazmagoriler, Winnicott'ın dinamik ve deneyimsel oyun alanı olarak gördüğü geçiş alanında yer edinir. Bu araştırma 'mekanı oyunsallaştırma', 'karşıt-oyun' gibi pratiklerle çalışmalarında bir çeşit geçiş alanı yaratan Olafur Eliasson, Hesam Jalili, Theo Triantafyllidis, Ian Cheng ve Joon Yong Moon gibi farklı sanatçıların dijital oyun sanatı çalışmalarını merkeze almaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Dijital oyun sanatı, Hibrit-gerçeklik, Simülasyon, Geçiş alanı.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this research, the issue of transitional spaces in digital game art will be discussed. At the theoretical centter of these discussions are the mutual evaluations of Donald D. Winnicott's theory of psychoanalysis based on Freud and Lacan's views on "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena" for children and Baudrillard's simulation theory. In the literature on games and new media art, which provides a ground for these evaluations: Winnicott's transitional field literature and art studies related to Winnicott's transitional field literature and Baudrillard's simulation theory within the framework of art studies, there is no research that covers them and addresses their connections with digital game art through contemporary art studies. Today, a field study that enriches the ideological basis of digital game art, which is revealed in the contact of digital games, which offer more realistic experiences than ever before with the interaction power of new technologies such as virtual reality and augmented reality, with contemporary art understanding, is required, so that it will enable the diversification of future discussions, intertextual readings, the development of digital game art, new media studies and the understanding of the changing cultural reserve. In this research, the works of artists producing digital images such as Olafur Eliasson, Hesam Jalili (HSM), Theo Triantafyllidis, Ian Cheng and Joon Yong Moon will be analyzed within the framework of Baudrillard's theory of hyper-reality and simulacra and Winnicott's concepts of 'transitional space'.

Digital games, which are considered as 'complex socio-technical systems' due to their specific technical features such as code, interface, game engines and aesthetic-creative qualities that come to the fore with aesthetic visuals, different avatar-space-theme designs, are the products of the joint work of disciplines with different areas of expertise such as engineering, technology, design, art and management, and have an interdisciplinary character (Sakman, 2021; Sicart, 2015; Chia, 2022a, p. 195; Mäyrä, 2009). Therefore, the boundaries of digital game studies, which have become a high-yielding part of the media and entertainment industry and the digital economy, are ambiguous and complex. Due to this heterogeneous structure, digital game experiences, defined as 'part of the social intertextual field of meaning', create a kind of 'dynamic space of possibility and transitivity' through multimedia and multimodal interactions (Jones, 2008, pp. 8-15; Saklofske, 2023). Another element that creates this space is the reorganisation options offered by digital game engines. These reorganization applications are considered as another 'remaking' of the game. The open code seeds of game engines that enable this remaking can provide new ways of play, create new audiovisual environments, and be used for expressive-fictional purposes such as 'future building' (acts of imagining the future) in a more creative process (Paul et al., 2012, p. 245).

As in the case of the game Second Life (2003), the boundaries of the game are shaped by the unlimited imagination of the players thanks to the open source code (Baransanseli Arslan, 2023). Like the practices of "editing the interface" where they focus on reworking and creating the interface, and the code seeds shared with player-participants, game engines such as Unreal and Unity operate in Roland Barthes' "fluid text" or Gérard Genette's (1997) "paratext" or Gilles Deleuze's (2005) "rhizomatic thought" flow (Canizares, 2020). The seeds of code, which transform the infinitely postponed signifier into a playable-modifiable network that cannot be reduced to a single mode but must be activated in plural, transform game systems from static resources into fluid, dynamic, living data networks that are not fully shaped or structured (Saklofske, 2023). This transformation, which is enabled by the interaction between the player and the game software, overlaps with artworks which correspond to Umberto Eco's (2001) concept of 'open work' which turns into a non-final product that replaces a completed work of art in the contemporary art axis. Apart from the dynamics added by the artist to the work, the open work, which takes on various forms/variations, becomes indeterminate and becomes a kind of performance by being influenced by the unique experiences, social-cultural-aesthetic accumulations of the player-participants, corresponds to game systems that function as decentralised, abstract, semi-structured, para-textual 'transition and transaction thresholds' thanks to the multi-modal interactive features of game engines (Saklofske, 2023, p. 5).

Digital games, which are an active part of new media art, are to create the "game art" movement and "digital game art", which we will hear more frequently in the coming processes. Although game art works are not considered as examples where the medium-specific expressive possibilities of digital games are explored due to the deformation of the playability features specific to the digital game environment, they are pioneering in terms of the intersection of digital games with political activism (Sezen, 2022, p.174). Therefore, digital game works, which constitute a part of contemporary digital interactive artworks, appear as a communication tool for socialisation as well as a procedural representational expression and criticism tool for the creation of original artistic expressions. When we look at the works of contemporary artists who use procedural and audiovisual systems, which are the means of representational expression and criticism in digital game works that form a part of contemporary digital interactive artworks, as a creative medium for the creation of original, new, artistic expressions, it can be seen

that practices such as the gamification of space, 'counter-gaming'[1] practices, avant-garde games, poetry games, independent games that make use of the expressive possibilities of games are used (Sezen, 2022). In addition, can be observed that they use various themes and different methods, such as abstraction, coding, binary coding, mixed media, augmented reality, virtual reality, interactivity, installation, cyber space, contextual design, and artificial intelligence (Toptaş, 2022).

Spaces structured by the interaction of digital media and physical space can be used under various names, such as 'augmented space', 'immersive space', 'digiplace' and 'hybrid space'. The concept of 'mixed reality', which refers to situations where it is not clear which of the 'real' and 'virtual' elements are dominant and the boundaries between digital and physical spaces are blurred, is also closely related to Metaverse technologies, which offer a two-way connection environment between the virtual and physical (digital/physical) worlds with its hybrid feature, and currently has a wide usage area in the digital game art sector. "When it comes to the relationship between the Metaverse and art, it overlaps with the concept of gaming, one of the important actors that created and developed digital culture in the early days of new media technologies" (Baranseli Arslan, 2023, p.137). Digital immersive spaces, which are more common especially in the 2020s with Vr or Ar technologies and which encompass the space 360 degrees, take the individual into a simulation game, a hyper-reality experience that surrounds the individual from all sides (Karaca, 2023, p.27). Augmented reality and hybrid reality experiences of metaverse areas, which offer a simulation of the natural world, cause the perception of reality in a different way. Reality and fiction/fantasy are intertwined, and the classical symbolisation system arranged as signifier-signified is deconstructed with a completely realistic moment of illusion.

In the view of Jean Baudrillard (2005), a French philosopher known for his theory of simulation, this hyper-reality refers to a situation in which the distinction between real-original and unreal (virtual-fictional-fictive) is blurred and the contrasts between dynamics, such as past-future, mind-body, subject-other, individual-society, audience-stage, and author-reader, lose their meaning. In the world of simulation, art ceases to be art and loses its meaning, becoming more of a technological activity. This means the end of art. However, has the end of art really come or does the definition of art continue to transform with new media technologies, with the possibilities offered by digital game

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[1] The concept of 'counter-gaming', coined by media researcher Alexander Galloway (2006), encompasses studies that take a critical approach by addressing the intensely violent elements and storylines used in classic-commercial game narratives. There is a similarity between Galloway's concept of 'counter-gaming' and Grace's (2014) concept of 'critical gaming' (Sayılgan, 2019). Critical games, like counter-gaming practices, criticise the traditional gameplay systems of games, and stereotype player expectations and the many elements and relationships that define digital games.

engines, with new expression environments and creative experiences, and with its participatory-player nature? In other words, are Baudrillard's images that have lost their meaning recreated in the transitional space described by Winnicott as 'the intermediate space of experiencing' as they encounter different realities offered by digital game art? At this point, Baudrillard's criticism of 'representation' in the perspective of simulation theory, which he describes as 'theoretical violence', can be examined in more detail in the contexts of culture-art-game, reality-fiction.

2. HYBRID REALITY EXPERIENCES: REALITY AND FICTION/FANTASY

Beginning in the mid- twentieth century, and especially after the 1980s, with the widespread use of digital-based digital programs and the great impact of developments in data visualization and imaging technologies, the process of the disappearance of the objective source of reality has been faced with a situation that is very difficult to explain. The transformation of everything into the virtual by today's imaging technologies has led to the disappearance of the image's connection with reality, which is seen as one of its anthropologically insignificant details. There is something that disappears behind every image one looks at. This is what fascinates people. All forms of virtual reality have caused the disappearance of "telematic, informatic, digital" reality, reality no longer needs to exist and the image has taken the form of a virtual reality (Baudrillard, 2012, p. 17-23). This situation has also evolved into a phenomenon that is both interesting and unsettling for many people. As in the comparison between light and darkness, one cannot speak of a thought, emptiness, silence, contradiction that is undecided between illusion and reality. Therefore, it has become impossible for human beings to even dream of such a vital 'illusion/fantasy' feeling caused by the image, labelling it as unreal. In this way, it has become impossible for humans to even imagine and characterize as unreal the vital "illusion/fantasy" feeling caused by the image and the image.

Baudrillard states that there is no longer a distinction between reality and fiction, and emphasises that because of the dissolution of reality into a fictional structure independent of the model and an infinite multiplicity of the image, the subject evaluates the world in a phantasmagoria. For Baudrillard, phantasm has become a state of feeling in which reality is completely lost and replaced by an imaginary world (Baudrillard, 1998; Baudrillard, 2021). According to Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, 'phantasm/fantasy' corresponds to the 'impossible' relationship that the subject establishes with 'a' (objet petit a), the object-cause of its desire, and resides in an undetermined space (Han, 2022, p.43). Fantasy is often conceived as a scenario (play) that realises the subject's desire. In

this scenario, the experience, which turns into something other than the realisation of the symbolic and reveals the subject's own imaginary reference (hic et nunc), is inscribed by the subject's attempts to include the other in its own play scene and is built on the theory of resistance (Lacan, 2017, p.32). "The staging of fantasy is not a stage on which our desire is realized and fully satisfied, but on the contrary, it is a stage that realizes and stages desire itself" (Žižek, 2019, p. 19-20). Fiction is the freedom to stage reality. Displaying this free attitude requires a certain point of view. First, we cooperate with the things we see and the content of a subjective experience, and then with the things we are conditioned to see in parallel to our worldview (Ergüven, 2003, p. 9). Therefore, the staging of reality by transforming it through fiction is reduced to the metaphor of play and intertwined with phantasm. Similarly, in art practices, the phenomenon of reality means being out of the world in conceptual terms with play, magic and dream, and stands at a certain distance from the reality of the world (Danto 2012).

According to Farnsworth (2021), the phenomenon of paradoxical reality, which Baudrillard includes in his work on hyper-reality and simulacrum theory, and the 'transition phenomenon' put forward by Donald D. Winnicott, although different from each other, offer complementary perspectives. This is because both of them investigate the difficulties of grasping reality and making sense of the object. In contrast to Baudrillard's (1990) inanimate and static objects of consumption and signifiers that have lost their desire and lack autonomisation fantasies, Winnicott's transitional space, which is considered as a potential creativity and playground, is dynamic, variable, and experiential. It appears as the shaper of the cultural process and offers the idea that reality is not only 'real'. Dr Cole (2010) also states that Baudrillard's resistance to the simulated image of consumption, which has lost its meaning and desire, and the transformation of this resistance in the field of game art are related to Winnicott's transitional phenomena from the beginning. In this respect, the paradoxical perception of reality and the illusory comprehension of reality created by hyper-real and simulacra, which are forms of de-realisation, are already present in Winnicott's transitional space, where reality is ambiguously structured together with symbolic and fantasy. At this point, Winnicott's transitional space can be defined in more detail.

3. GAME ART IN WINNICOTT'S TRANSITIONAL SPACE RELATIONSHIP

Winnicott, one of the post-Freudian object theorists, conceptualised the infant's separation of self and non-self, the inner world and outer world, and the relationship between the structure of the self and the other with the phenomenon of the transitional. The

transitional space refers to an area of transitivity that is 'neither one nor the other' between the dual psychic dynamics[2] that occur between the infant and the mother (in advanced stages, the whole environment). In Winnicott's object relations theory, the infant-subject creates and identifies the object presented to it (the non-self, the other) with the outside world, with reality. According to Winnicott (1989), reality needs to be reimagined to be real. Reality is paradoxically 'part of the doll and not at the same time'. Playing as an 'intensely real' experience is considered a therapeutic action that cannot be separated from creativity and promotes self-healing (Lenormand, 2018, p.82).

According to Winnicott (2021), the process of the separation of the world of objects from the structure of the self is minimally traumatic. In the absence of the mother, the infant experiences a moment of illusion, an experience of omnipotence. The gradual breaking of this illusion by the other prepares the subject's transition to the principle of reality; the subject (the baby) separates the non-self (the other) and the seeds of separation-dissociation-individuation processes are sown. In this process, the re-discovery/recreation of the object (the mother) gives the baby the message that destructiveness does not actually occur. In fact, the operation of this process shows overlapping similarities with the Mirror Phase (identification-alienation) of the French psychiatrist Jacques Lacan. The concept of destructiveness here is important because from the beginning of life, the subject's destructive orientation towards the object and his/her efforts to cope with it affect many aspects of his/her psychic and symbolic world, identity structure, sexual identity orientation, and play.

According to the psychoanalyst Wilfred Ruprecht Bion (1959), destructiveness is destructive attacks on bonds. Creativity is to make reconstructions between these destroyed bonds and connexions to establish more developed bonds and to produce meaning. Other terms that we can examine in parallel with destructiveness are negation and absence (Green, 1997). The experience of absence (absence of the object - absence of the mother)

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[2] In addition, in this research, there are various definitions of space that are related to the transitional space addressed by Winnicott and which are explained by different theories: David Harvey's (1991) concept of 'flexible space' as 'time-space compression', Manuel Castells' (1999) concept of 'space of flows', Jean-François Lyotard's (1991) concept of 'immanent space' in Megalopolis, Jean Baudrillard's (1989) definition of 'anti-utopia' in America, Michel Foucault's (1998) heterotopias, the 'interrupted space' depicted in Paul Virilio's (1998) narrative Overexposed City, Anthony Vidler's (2000) 'distorted space', Downey, Kinane and Parker's (2018) 'heterogeneous space' phenomenon in 'liminal spaces', referring to the concept of ambivalence in Homi Bhabha's (1994) cultural theory, "neither One . ... neither the One ... nor the Other ... but something else, the concept of a 'third field' that emerges in the re-articulation of elements that contest the terms and fields of both, the concept of 'any-space-whatever' linked to Gilles Deleuze's (2014) 'movement-image'/'time-image', Deleuze and Guattari's (2005) 'smooth space' / 'striated space' and Edward Soja's (1996) 'third space' have in common that they emphasise heterogeneity, threshold and relationality and pursue a strategy that challenges fixed, definite, limited identities, spaces, borders and narratives. They imply a constantly changing and transforming spatial phenomenon of ideas, events, appearances and meanings, including fractal geometry and chaos, which emerged with the disappearance of Euclidean and Cartesian geometry.

or negation is symbolized by the subject's ability to cope with uncertainty. Entering the world of representations opens creative exit channels for the subject in the uncertain predicaments of the psyche.

The relationship established with the transitional area affects the subject's imaginative potential in the playground in the later stages of developmental stages and forms the infrastructure of artistic creativity. What makes creative life different is the strengthening of the individual's sense of self through experiences that feel real. As reality is experienced externally, it becomes "a place where objects appear and disappear" (Winnicott, 1988, p.106). This place is a dynamic, transitional space that makes life feel 'real', where the inside and the outside are anchored to each other, containing parts of both fiction/fantasy and reality, encompassing opposing dualities-paradoxes, and where symbols and culture emerge (Goldman, 2012). By creating a kind of transitional space in digital game art works, this description can be better grasped when we look at the examples of contemporary artists who create structures in which opposites, such as subject-other, female-male, society-individual, and harmony-violence become indistinct, transformed (trans-form), in addition to the real-fantasy/fictional bivalence, and offer a hybrid reality experience.

4. TRANSITION AREAS OF DIGITAL GAME ART

We can examine the phenomenon of the transitional space that emerges in hybrid reality installations, where associations are made with concrete spaces rather than just fictional fantasy, through different examples of works by a number of contemporary artists who work with various concepts, such as shadows, avatars, and other-subjects in their digital game art works.

In 'Your Uncertain Shadow (colour)' by the Danish artist Olafur Eliasson, who has a wide range of material and content (2010), the viewer-participants are invited to participate in the game experience in a different way by watching their colourful silhouettes reflected on a wall; they are invited to move or dance (Figure 1). The viewer's movements and gestures, the way they interact with the installation, constitute the artwork itself. The more people participate, the more dynamic the effect of the overlapping shadows becomes and the more illusionary visual images are captured. The images of child-adult, subject-other mingle and take on different appearances within each other.

Figure 1. *Olafur Eliasson, "Your Uncertain Shadow (Colour)", 2010, HMI lamps (green, orange, blue, magenta), glass, aluminium, transformers, Installation view: Tate Modern, London. Photo: Anders Sune Berg, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary Collection, Vienna © 2010 Olafur Eliasson*

As a single silhouette, the subject participates in the psychic and symbolic world of the object with these intertwined body reflections and actions. The intensity of the reflected shadows varies depending on the position of the viewer-participant in the space (Spartinou, 2022, p.29). Eliasson, who utilises and plays with the environmental components of space, processes the individual-collective clues and codes of the psycho-physical experience of the perceptual space in the subject on the phenomena of transitivity, uncertainty and contact. The participant's psychic spatial practice, which intensifies in the optical-kinesthetic sense, turns into an inter-sensory, inter-subjective space sharing, subject-other unity, which is a kind of collective play experience and points to Winnicott's transitional space.

In his installation 'Evanescent Trace', Hesam Jalili (HSM), a young Iranian digital artist, deconstructs the landscape of resonant coloured silhouettes in Eliasson's 'Your Uncertain Shadow (Colour)', revealing the shadow-movement reflections of the participants in different layers and time planes (Figure 2). In 'Evanescent Trace', each participant occurs in the first layer as himself, in the next layer as a silhouette, and in the last layer as a reflection of his previous movement. Therefore, the participant's past, present, and future connected to the present are experienced in a single moment and on a single stage. The

colourful trace and abstract figure patterns in the digital reflections of these three different moment frames of the viewer-participants evoke the impression of a painting with a glitch effect at first glance.
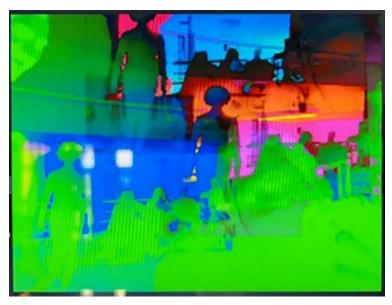

Figure 2. *Hesam Jalili, "Evanescent Trace", 2023, Turkey. Photo: Rıdvan Coskun (from the artist's personal archive)*

The glitch feature, which appears in today's art practices as a practice of manipulating the media by producing unexpected images and sounds, new ways of relating (Shabbar, 2018), can be explained by the layers of mystery, uncertainty and complexity of the object of desire 'a' (objet petit a), which, in Baudrillard's terms, is seduced by the artist's "inner power of deflection" (Baudrillard and Nouvel, 2011), rather than an aim of manipulation in the work 'Evanescent Trace'. Because during the hybrid experience, the participant tries to reach the structure of the self, the deconstructed multiple mirror image and the comprehension of the other, both in his/her own subject becoming-movement states and within and beyond the triple silhouettes of the other. The work encourages the participant, who makes him/herself more recognisable as they moves, to physical movement and is structured in this movement. The subject can recognise itself as it moves because each individual and the layer of space shared by each individual is reflected on the surface of the space as the same colour. This situation ensures that regulative, discriminative, and exclusionary features, such as age, gender, and race, become uniform and indistinct. The complex structuring in this ambiguous and transparent intricate fiction breaks the subject's single, regular, hierarchical point of view and homogeneous thought

patterns. The movement-image opens the subject to different duration sequences and spatial scenes, offering a much more complex experience of a playful space and an illusionistic transitional space.

Here, 'gamified space' differs from the use of 'gamification of art spaces', where games aim to transform art spaces and increase the possibilities of experiencing art spaces (Sezen, 2022, p.172). Gamification processes involve creating experiences based on game-gamey elements (Koivisto and Hamari, 2014). The hybrid space created in Eliasson's and Jalili's works encourages playful movements and physical motion, where the works are based on the physical actions performed by the participant and express improvised dance/game movements reflected in the virtual environment. As the participant's playful actions (as well as the work itself) are reflected in the art space and occupy its space, they can be considered as practices of 'gamification of space'.

The Greek artist Theo Triantafyllidis is an active participant in online digital games and gaming groups, which is the context of his work. Triantafyllidis' software design entitled 'Pastoral' (2019) and his carpet work entitled 'Self Portrait (Reclining Orc)', which can be considered as a source of inspiration from the digital game wheel, are parts of a space installation that offers the viewer a hybrid-reality experience. 'Pastoral' is a kind of game software consisting of avatar and interface design (Figure 3).

Figure 3. *Theo Triantafyllidis, "Pastoral (Video Game)", 2019, Software 10 + 2AP (Courtesy of the artist and the Breeder Gallery, Athens. (Triantafyllidis, 2019)*

Avatar design functions as the primary identity in online games; it is both a 'habitable hero' and a 'prosthetic body' that combines the humorous and fictional-fantastic parts of the game. It allows the player to explore alternative worlds through the game and alternative selves through the avatar (Isbister, 2016, p.11; Assunção, 2016, p.49). Even a slight change in the avatar's appearance or interface software can significantly affect how the player identifies themselves in that environment and can be explained by the 'proteus effect'[3] (Yee and Bailenson 2007, p. 274). In addition, the lack of character diversity for female or male gendered game characters and avatars in line with the policies of game producers expresses an attitude of segregation due to gender policies. There have even been even remarkable campaigns initiated by gamers as a result of this and it shows the shaping of game characters and avatars for the cultural policy of game producers and the target group of game systems. Therefore, digital media, digital culture, and digital game culture are defined as socially, economically, and politically interconnected instruments (Canizares, 2020, p.237). In 'Pastoral', Triantafyllidis directs the phenomenon of 'negation', which is prioritised in the theory of object relations and in the space of transition, to body politics through avatar design, to the game canon through game interface design, and to the stereotypical action expectations of the player. The body of the Orc, the avatar of 'Pastoral', is itself expressive and "what we see is the body of the other as a field expressive of his or her experiences" (Zahavi, 2008, p. 518). The virtual other breaks down the hierarchical gender codes of the self and the not-self (the Other created by representations) and instead makes the gender fluid, the mutant body visible. An androgynous image has been created as a result of the fusion of the inflated body musculature of masculine patterns, in which the patriarchal power dominant in digital culture and media is carried to the extremes, and exaggerated feminine fetish body presentations. Due to the exaggerated body presentation, the Orc character evokes an anachronistic impression in the viewer, as if they had jumped out of the 'League of Legends' game and accidentally fallen into the pastoral area. The aimlessness of the Orc character, except for 'wandering in nature', creates a moment of illusion for the audience regarding the expectation-result, fantasy-reality dynamics of the visual image and action of the avatar. It deprives the player of dramatic violence and action-packed interaction, offering a kind of 'counter-gaming' experience.

Ian Cheng is another digital artist who transforms the popular game development software Unity, which Theo uses to create the Orc character, into a tool for artistic

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[3] The 'Proteus Effect' refers to a process in which an individual starts to identify himself/herself according to his/her profile and avatars in the virtual environment. When the Proteus Effect occurs, the person develops a personality and a set of attitudes and beliefs towards the appearance of the avatar that does not resemble his/her physical characteristics rather than his/her real appearance (Fox, Bailenson and Tricase, 2013).

expression through avatar and character designs (Holland, 2021). Describing the process of designing avatars and environments from the numerous components in Unity as 'world building', Cheng's work entitled 'Life After BOB (Bag of Beliefs)' was created in the Unity game engine and, at the same time, the character(s) and storyline created in the work were transformed into an anime series consisting of episodes presented live. The story of 'Life After BOB', which resembles the dystopian scenarios of the television series 'Black Mirror' (2011), begins with the development of an experimental artificial intelligence system named BOB by Dr Wong, an engineer, using the nervous system of his 10-year-old daughter Chalice (Figure 4). Although BOB is designed with the idea of guiding Chalice through the difficulties and contradictory realities she will face in the world and to live her life better, after a while BOB causes Chalice to turn into a character who runs away from reality and threatens her own existence (http-1). BOB, a simulation of Chalice, points to the power of the despotic signifier (the Other) in Lacan's sign system. The story plot, which is processed through the character of BOB, opens the state of being human, the processes of being good, and being a subject to ethical questioning within the framework of concepts such as post-humanism, transhumanism, cyber-human relationship, and cyber-bullying perpetrated by capitalism/paternalism. It harbours the common future concerns of the audience in real life and relational paradoxes, such as subject-other and reality-fiction, which Winnicott points out in the transitional space. Moreover, although Cheng's work seems to be based on a story, it is unfinished and not completely structured, it can be organized and edited again. The factor that gives the project this quality is that after the screening, the audience has the chance to re-watch and experience different versions of the film using their smartphones through the interactive mode 'World Watching', which can re-enter the film, story, and characters (Figure 4). In this contact phase, where the participant turns into a director, an interaction network where they can pause the story at any time, rotate the cameras, focus on different objects and scenes, and a technology map that can infinitely diversify the existence of the work are woven. The various formation options of the anime series are recreated through the individual deformation of each participating subject. Therefore, the project, which transcends being just a film or anime, turns into "self-playing video games... an existential fighting game" (http-2).

Figure 4. *Ian Cheng, "Life After BOB", 2022, 9 September-6 November 2022 at Halle am Berghain, Berlin. © 2022 Ian Cheng. Presented by LAS (Light Art Space). © Andrea Rossetti (Image credit: TBC) (http-2)*

Korean artist and computer engineer Joon Yong Moon's 'Augmented Shadow' Project, is similar to the 'Life After BOB' project with its shadow characters preserving anime cartoon flavour, and consists of augmented reality experience and interactive installation variations structured through a concrete interface. In one of these augmented variations, 'Augmented Shadow-Inside', the artist connects the real world through light and objects to the virtual world through shadow and fantasy. Viewers are invited to the game of exploring the boundaries of the virtual and real worlds (Spartinou, 2022, p.31). Objects, such as windows, chairs and walls in the interactive installation, do not only exist as the shadows of these objects in the second virtual scene when light is shone on them by the participant, but also open to the fantastic realm of virtual shadows (Figure 5). The viewer's light creates a world of shadows and shadow characters within the distortion effect of the silhouettes of real objects. After a while, the viewer finds him/herself in an alternative living space where these virtual shadow characters enter between the shadows of organic objects, such as doors, tables and chairs, climb imaginary stairs and run around.
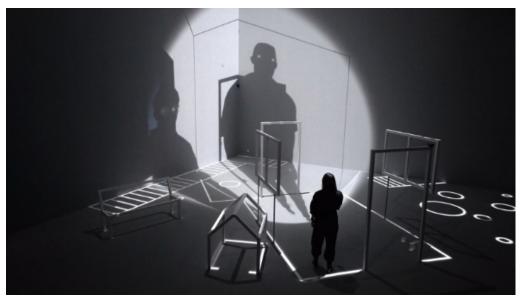
Figure 5. *Joon Yong Moon, "Augmented Shadow-Inside", 2020, interactive installation (http-3)*

Shadow characters have an ambiguity that reflects their silhouette status, with only subtle hints describing obvious characteristic features, such as eyes and mouth. In addition, these clues, the uncanny and familiarity of shadows, are imbued with a sense of sympathy that anime style adds. Subverting the laws physics and the traditional 'camera obscura' concept and going beyond the meditative system illuminated by the images projected from outside in the dark room, the shadow creatures construct a dynamic transitional space around the phantasmagoria enriched with different reality-virtual layers and audio-visual effects. This space is filled with threshold experiences in which real objects coexist, influence, and intersect with virtual shadow characters.

CONCLUSION

The interactive experience of in-betweenness that emerges in contemporary new media productions and hybrid reality spaces that disrupt the canonical game format of digital game art and create a new playground within the scope of the Art game movement fuelled by digital games, challenges Baudrillard's hyper-reality productions and hierarchical representation images that lose their reality, meaning and desire. In the structuring of fantasy, which preserves the magic of the game and the mystery of the ritual, with reality, the game with technology, the subject with the other, and the individual with culture (including negation processes) in a kind of transition portal, the field of the digital game art is entered. This portal is explained through the transparency and obscuration of the

dominant language of the other, identity and body politics in the avatar, character and story designs in the hybrid-reality installations of the artists analysed in the research, and its diversification and transformation on the axis of each viewer. New media art works that adopt the language of digital games create new forms, different spaces and experiences, alternative realities, fantasy realms, and utopias, both as the material of the work to be produced and as content open to critical transformation. These phantasmagories, accompanied by interactive developer modes, offer the participant/player subject a kind of transitional space experience and enrich critical expressive practices by drawing on playful elements. In addition, within the scope of this review, the belief that the contemporary artist is born into the world of simulation as a subject and recreates this world in the following processes and rediscovers the flexibility and transparency of the transitional space, which positions itself as an 'open code', in the individual's own internal structure and in relations with the other, is the belief in breaking the despotic discourse that is the source of obsessive ideals and exploitative acts of violence. In line with this idea, which creates different spaces, uncertainties and transitionalities through which the reality established through the other is filtered, the 'anti' approaches of digital game art such as 'counter-gaming' that opens air holes in the deadlock wall of Cartesian dualism and the concept of transitional space within different psycho-social and cultural parameters should be examined in more detail. This research has been able to orientate discussions exclusively towards digital game art and has paved the way for the establishment of specific contacts of rhizomes of critical approaches.

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