"VR"_the simulacrum of a personal Imaginary

Anabela Costa
Visual Artist, Independent Filmmaker
www.anabelacosta.com
translation to english by: Francisca Salgueiro
e-mail: anabelacosta@msn.com

"VIRTUAL WORLDS"

Imaginary Worlds – Imaginary Realities

Imagination is an essential human characteristic which has been expressed through many different forms. We have seen it applied in all cultures over the centuries, through visual or literary forms. Related to religion, fiction or mythology it is definitely present in our daily lives, since the beginning.

We have many examples of artwork that put on view the ability that people have to create virtual worlds that distance themselves from the reality of the time in which they were created. Those pieces launch us to parallel and alternative realities: virtual realities which, somehow, we share with its author. Such as in science fiction, since the genre is defined by the projection of the narrative in the future. The fictitious reality of the piece remains a personal conjecture of the author, considered an unthinkable realty of implementation. Its contemporaries perceive this reality as a creative delusion, impossible to attest.

Virtual worlds, whatever the creative form may be (text, painting, sculpture, drama, cinema etc…), have always existed. They can be shared or individual and they have always put together a brief imaginary universe that communicates with our own personal or collective reality. Creating foreign worlds gives us the opportunity to be transported and freed, in some way, we are offered a chance to learn and recreate ourselves.

Imagination is an open process, a work in progress, constant and dynamic. It turns reality into something imaginary but more real all together 1 (pp.29). This new reality is where all sorts of trades may come about, allowing new alternatives in a featured and boundless space. **It is a place of "becoming", where yesterday leaves a mark of a past which leaves knowledge for the present, while this learning process shapes the future which belongs to tomorrow that turns into today, it is no longer the same as yesterday's today.**

The human kind has this ability to adapt, lead, and to transcend through the acquisition of knowledge of multiple order. The area of the imaginary is a place of latency. In this process, this space with which we live on a daily basis performs an overlap of different levels and types of realities, which inter-communicate and inter-depend.

We are used to relate the term "virtual" to the absence of existence, precluding the veracity of it because it is not part of the tangible world. The same connotation is

given to "virtual worlds", considered unrealistic and therefore lacking of existence; they are usually exclusively connected to technology. For my part, I find it an erroneous conclusion. In this case, the definition of a virtual world, as opposed to an actual world, would be the most proper one, seeing that the virtual character comes from its fictitious nature. However, the propriety of a virtual unit is precisely its propensity to be updated, which brings on a shift to the actual present even if only by a few minimum elements.

Instead of opposing the two notions, we should add to the concept of "real world" the idea of "possible worlds" where, unlike in those virtual worlds, **experience can be possible**. Therefore, its contribution to our- personal or collective – knowledge is also real and it is assimilated and integrated to our daily lives, since they allow the establishment of **psychological experiences** which cannot be eluded by the human conscience.

Image, Imagination, Experimentation, Interaction

A virtual world ends up being a world of "imagining", allowing a "possible world" that gives us some sort of freedom. A **world of "imagining", a**"possible world" **is a freedom place** and **imagining** is a **measure of freedom**. Films are one of the many means of representing virtual worlds: they tell us stories, imagined realities like any other literary or pictorial support; they create imaginary worlds where they cross imageries, worlds that stand as places of unlimited possibilities. We notice that the development of *virtuality*, nowadays goes together with technical development. Cinema provides a realistic quality to the representation because it employs movement or time, taking on a more organic representation of concrete elements like people, animals or objects which move through the projection of light on the surface of the screen. Its moving image has a crucial importance in the development of what we call today *Virtual Reality*. The scientific and technological developments allowed the creation of images that flood our daily lives, and systems that lead us to the illusion of movement, by taking advantage of scientific data. Thus, the moving image culture can be regarded as essential to the contemporary expression.

In this day and age, we have pictures everywhere to the point that it has become a common place; the ordinary man sees himself surrounded by images which he can easily use and produce. We have it continuously on our computer screens, on our television, pictures overrun the commercial items from the bags given to us in shops to the yogurt packages in the supermarket. Nevertheless, despite the several calls for attention, as in the famous –almost *cliché*- painting of Magritte ***Ceci n'est pas une Pipe***, we still take the image for the object itself. This is a notion which has been the center of discussion since the time of ancient Greece in Plato's philosophy, in particular. The representation has yet again obtained this dimension of a real element; it has once more been reified. We notice that if often people instinctively deem that the representation is the real object, the fact that we add motion to it only emphasizes that illusion, though usually the purpose of the utilization of images

today, and particularly the image in motion, seems precisely to be deceiving the viewer and leading him to believe in the actual veracity of the representation. This concerns mostly the contemporary television programs where the success of a show can significantly depend on a true involvement of the viewer with the reality of it.

The worlds of technological expression, called *virtual worlds*, rely on image and imagination which allow and implicate experimentation and interaction. The need for the visual component in our worlds, including the virtual ones, has given rise to different and increasingly complex environments. These environments are only possible with the development of *softwares*, the 3D representation for example, which are very much necessary. This turns the virtual environment into a world whose representation acquires a realistic character, where concrete details of the physical world may be integrated such as mass, acceleration, friction, light or time.

New fields of investigation have emerged, saving the same image support, which may be used by artist as well: *augmented Reality* or *immersive Virtual Reality*, where the user gets immersed in a visual environment totally generated by the computer which may be a complete sham, a fantastic world. The environment will always be artificially generated by the machine, and you will feel as a component of the universe of immersion, where you can interact. The interaction may be an action as common as clicking the mouse or the keyboard of our computer, giving instructions to which the machine responds.

Interaction is a flow; therefore it can be used in the most diverse forms as means of artistic expression. In the artistic field, the main function of interactivity is the relation between the public and the artwork whose content they should be able to transform; hence, the public contributes to the construction of the art piece. This is made possible and easier, with the introduction of **new technologies** that will ultimately lead to the raising of new issues such as the participation of each individual in the work in question. In short, there will ultimately be a need to **reposition the artist, the work and the public**, giving the work a more dramatic side, risking in some cases the reduction of the piece to just that- a show, empty of substance. In Immersive Virtual Reality, interaction is an essential feature to the concept of immersion, achieved by projecting the 3D image inducting the space-time unit such as the surround system. The experience is visual and sonorous; real / imaginary and objective / subjective, physical and mental. Immersive reality makes the imaginary even more real by adding a sensory perception. Within these new contexts, the notions of public and private space, interior space, and outer space comes eventually to a significant change.

ANIMATION CINEMA_ MY APPROACH

Interior space, Experimentalism

Thoughts are full with movement since dynamism makes an essential part of life we always live between the expected and the uncertain. It is natural that the creative process will take place in that dynamism since it consists on a mental process: a swing that connects experience and conscience and, also because the dynamic nature of the construction of a mental image, like plastic expression of language itself, necessarily triggers a kind of movement of the spirit. If "To look is to seize myriad movements at once." 2 (pp 53), then the fruition of the artistic object is also movement when it opens a space of "multiple possibility" " 3 (pp. 299). In a work said of experimental artistic research, the purpose of the creative course resides in the definition of the concept -giving shape to it- as well as in the construction path itself via the absence of a pre-determined. That creative process is only possible inside each creator's interior space. It is a space of high energetic potential; it is a site of more or less conscious dreaming, of intuition and emotion: an area of an inner being dimension- vast and mysterious. It is consequently a place of interaction where everything is at stake. That is the place where all thoughts and dreams are born and where they see themselves convert into imaged, virtual ideas. Logically, their origin is located in the inner and psychic reality, and they are developed by dint of a mental desire of creating those imaged ideas. That same desire allows us to navigate between our interior space and the world around us, operating the symbolic that the image reflects and suggest itself. On the way of creation, we are given a succession on multiple chances and choices that eventually will turn into final goals. The key is then to recognize and transform them; transformation is the raw material. It is as if somehow the product under construction would grow through the gain of its independence, growing in self-construction.

Art, Science and Technology

If the artist dwells integrated in society, in constant observation, he ultimately ends up being a reflection of it. We live in a moment of human evolution where mobility is of crucial importance in the context of a globalized world. It determines the human survival today; this is a fact that has been made evident by the global financial crisis. This mobility and an irreversible adaptability permit individual and social changes, letting us see the singularity of what is created during the process of transformation: a new possible .

The effervescence of the mental process often leads to a crossing of information from different areas. If we instinctively perform a crossing of information and knowledge from several areas, within the contemporary context of the understanding of the world and its evolution, the isolation of the arts and sciences, knowledge in general, would be a considerable loss. More willingly will this fusion of knowledge lead to new discoveries and other understandings. Transdisciplinarity is an old

necessity of the human kind, seen on Leonardo DA VINCI for instance. It requires a fusion of knowledge but also of content. It is necessarily a creative practice itself, and naturally rich in these areas of expression, where we use a lot of information, from a technological background to a conceptual one. In my practice, science and plastic expression are closely linked, in various ways and for many reasons. The creative process- fluid, flexible and random- and irreversibility are central and crucial factors for its development; including change, which is the engine of the creative process, while the connection between consciousness and experience, between the conscious and unconscious, and awareness of the creative process give articulation that leads to cohesion of expression.

A few years ago I felt the need to add motion to my practice; it led me directly to film animation. However, my expression is not figurative, and the construction of movement through the systematic repetition of previously made designs, such as in classical animation, seemed quite limiting and not very interesting to me. In an attempt to resolve this restriction, I was drawn to the new technologies related to digital animation: 3D representation, special effects and editing. At this time of my artistic journey I am, almost exclusively, linked to the use of digital technologies to give shape to my thoughts. I rarely use the manual gesture for my plastic creations. Representation in 3D has always been familiar to me as I had an academic sculpture education. I have always thought it obvious to see it evolve along with new technologies. Today it is a scantling tool of unlimited possibility. The times of Fine Arts, where many sketches were needed to define the 360 degrees of the object we had imagined, seem very distant now.

From that necessity, I sensed right ahead, in my first work, the power of the relation between space, movement and time that had not been tried out until then. I was immediately captivated by the prospect of working the different changes of space-time scale.

Time-Movement

Scientific research has significantly contributed to the systematic redefinition of what is REAL and what is not, with the discovery of new adjusting and constructing REALs. The "scientific real", which is constantly changed by the succession of scientific discoveries, brings in new concepts of several areas. It is the process of adjustment that is carried out through the construction of new realities, ranging from the infinitely large to the infinitely small. The great questioning of "time" has been at the heart of the scientific thinking since Newton. We see it all over, from the illusory nature of time suggested by Einstein with the theory of relativity, to quantum physics in the Theory of Chaos, where concepts like time, substance and energy are analyzed. To science, some philosophical thinking can be summed up; such as KANT's idea of time like an inner/outer space or BERGSON's where we have"(...) the difference between the duration of the mental phenomenon and/or the time of the projection of this duration in space (...)"4. Or even as recently as António DAMÂSIO's study of the brain, of conscience, emotion ("which is related to movement"5(pp. 93). and of how we understand Time. Time has been, since antiquity, a recurring theme in several areas of knowledge.

When changing our notion of space we are also altering our conception of time. Speaking of Time, of its irreversibility, is to talk about existence and change: about becoming. The time we feel and conceive, as a result of this physic relation we have with space, is very individual and has a lot of biological features- the time of existence between life and death, the time of memory, of perception and the time of expectation (cf. ST.AGUSTIN). It also has an emotional dimension, subjective and psychological. The moving image that represents time reflects the space, the light, the color, and the soul. Images of Time, as false movement, because we have an aberrant illusion, are pure optical and sound situations that use and take advantage of our psychological memory for their own production.

Once again, we come into contact with an extraordinarily complex system, which adds sensations, emotions, perceptions, etc. in brief, a psychological whole. As in any work of art, its communication and perception is possible in a system procedure of forces between conscious and unconscious: a threshold phenomenon. 6

Therefore, what should we have when "the illusory motion ceases to match the laws of natural motion, and it purely destroys the illusion of prosaic imitative movement concepts?" 7 If "to conceive poetically is to feel by thinking" 8 and "the process of thinking is the mechanism of cinema" 9, only the personal interpretation of the unreality of motion, as construction of poetic representation of time, can make sense. The use of the quantity of movement, of the fullness and emptiness, of the continuity and discontinuity of rhythm, make possible the visualization of time on the screen, which is the structure of cinema. Today, due to the electronic construction instruments of image and sound, cinema can do with no use of images of the past, even the "design after design" of the traditional animation cinema had a prior body. The electronic procedures have also democratized the technical access "making it

accessible to the great majority of people, which allows the creation of new records, part of other technical, formal and conceptual universes. Today, cinema may not even be considered as cinema as it does not necessarily have to make use of cameras, nor film, not even a screen. The distinctions and borders between genres are blurring and disciplines are starting to merge but they have also been recreated.

The electronic media have given other chances to editing and dubbing. From the need of the film industry to create simulated realities, increasingly relevant to the collective imagination, we have seen the surfacing of tools such as special effects, which may be used for artistic purposes. Personally, entertainment as a show, does not interest me at all. I do not entertain. However I use the same tools that are proven to be very powerful, equally intense as a white canvas and paint brushes or a block of stone. They bring us to new other possibilities in representation, either for the montage or in the construction and enrichment of the environments where simulated fantastic settings can be fully built, mixed with real images, with time and motion manipulations. There are many variants and their combinations create a difficult world, impossible to cover.

The new possibilities of tools to create and view images, "without employing images from the past" (cf. Manuel DE OLIVEIRA), without employing previously made representations , develop a whole lot more possibilities that are multiplied when we cross softwares. Also, the interaction of the various artistic disciplines (plastic, visual and sound) allows and promotes, on the one hand, the formation of increasingly complex structures, but also of structures of great subtlety, if that is the artist's motivation. In my case, it has provided many playful interactions only made possible thanks to electronics. The Imaging, Modeling, Visualization of the new media is essential. They represent the imperative necessity of enlargement, and store a great potential, an energy that could give soul and shape to the needs of the contemporary mental universe, allowing artists to go on with their work, reflecting the mystery of spirit.

Human beings, in their fundamental characteristics, which are the transforming dimension and their ability to renew, invent and make an extension of themselves through electronic processors, which ultimately do what the mind considers fastidious. As a result of technological changes, the contemporary world is a place of multiple relationships and interactions. Photography, cinema, recording, all began as mere technical resorts, made possible by considerable advances in science and technology, which have ended up exceeding this first nature, earning an Art status. It is undeniable that this same thing is happening with technological expression that we find today, and that could naturally lead us to another new artistic expression.

In general, the use of the moving image by the artists requires a manipulation that in some way reflects and questions existence, as in any other artistic expression. New artists, with new techniques, have to perform the transformation of the image giving it the necessary autonomy to the fruition experience. Its transcendence makes us question the "existing" and the "being". This new sign uses non static image and sound as a reflection of our contemporaneity, these are the expressions of the new temporalities, the expression of flow. Our machines are felt as extensions of man,

they have made possible the extension of our horizon and therefore I believe that human kind is not at stake, as some may fear. I also believe that if that would come to be the case, societies as living networks have the ability to self-regulate and to reorganize themselves. We should not forget that desire, poetry and pleasure are very difficult to synthesize and so they will always set us apart from the machines.
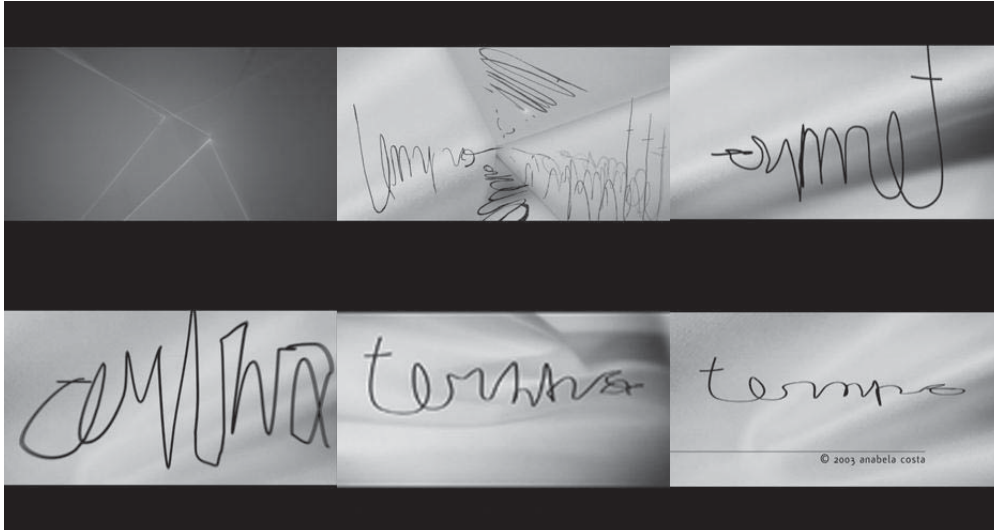
Imagery and Poetic

The representative power of images, as a symbol of knowledge and identity, resides in the ability to describe "actuality". Art is the expression of a virtual world, which should question actuality's complexity in its essence. Today, it has gained new meanings since it is built-in within this process of change, in which we live, the culture of the moving image which, as a mass culture, has trivialized art. I personally think that this transforming dimension can only been attained through metaphor.

We have seen that virtual reality is a sort of space, a territory of new posts. The abstract form, open the mystery of the intimate observation of things, it is the place of the spirit's thinking where it is forced to self-reflect and to try to make the synthesis of the world in human creation. By using pure visual images, not figurative, and adding the descriptive power of color, we manage to capture the attention of the spirit.

The creation of an imagery involves the guided use of imagination. This is the method to transform dreamed-thoughts into imaged-objects which go beyond reality, which are as personal and as poetic as its creator's imagination.

The poetic imagination, since it is dynamic, open, inventive and creative, is an opportunity to have the freedom to create fantastic worlds for an experience of discovery. Therefore the poetic potency resides in metamorphosis.

The poetic creation gives expression to a multitude of equally complex spaces and of multiple dimensions. Thoughts become ideas, which acquire expression of emotion, displayed in a game of rhythms. From thought to thought, idea to idea, emotion to emotion we witness poetic and subtle movement, a game between idea and emotion. It is a movement which extends on itself, giving rise to the poetic emotion: the expression of the movement of life. My dreamed thoughts, imaged-thoughts, are converted into images by a direct consequence of the machine's mathematical calculations and its processing.

Imagery cannot be said true or false, it simply is. My imagery is my reference, my REAL, which allows the restructuring of the imaged-thought into visual form and noise, which falls within the continuity of illusion even when it becomes real, it stands as reality, if we see it as "the product of the universal process of entropy" 10 (cf. BAUDRILLARD). My imaginary reality or the simulation of it, which is not material, since it has never belonged to some point of a past time, is let to be part of Time when it poetically flows through the screen's area. The sound, whether or not it has a structure in common with the image, whether it is musical or not, defines and depicts emotions, draws the area and interacts with the image, reinforcing the poetic space. The sound punctuates the rhythms, conferring cohesion and unity to the movement / time, transformed into an altogether. Through the change, the becoming and the moment where time is enhanced, we try to get a perception from the timing to the dream.

But, if before it was said that the cinema gave the illusion of the world: this new cinema, which kind of illusion does it handle?

CONCLUSION

Until a few centuries ago Beauty and Knowledge were immutable concepts, we do not live in that time anymore; today "the world is made of change." Without any doubt, we live in a time where the notion of space has changed, where real, actual, material and virtual inter-depend. Therefore new forms, new behaviors and new cultural values are offered to us.

I am lucky to live in a technological world which, for the first time in the history of cinema, allows us not to make use of images of the past, but lets it to be built using exclusively the imagery of our non figurative imaginary, that thereby leaves the virtual-latent nature to enroll in actuality. This transformation, surprising and unique, is as important as it is revolutionary and I honestly think that it may end up creating significant changes, new readings and new interpretations in the relations between space, time and image. My imaginary reality gains body, it becomes concrete and material. In the particular case I wanted to show, this latent-virtual becomes concrete

through electronic technologies, which in turn become powerful tools, allowing giving shape to my thoughts. Artists have tried precisely over the centuries and through several techniques, to give shape to their imaginary reality. This technologic performance as a simulation, like we know it in disciplines as diverse as cosmology, bio-sciences or meteorology for instance, let me create simulacra from my own fantasy and reality, with a range of endless possibilities and variations, and subsequently to create images for my thoughts, from my own imagistic universe, with all the richness inherent to the limitless possibilities that are allowed now for the same "virtual object", trough a mixture of several disciplines: photography, drawing, painting, movement, sound, music etc.., resulting in very subtle changes, which were impossible to achieve until today.

If you define the concept of virtual (such as BERGSON and DELEUZE) in the sense of the concept of a non-sensitive world that, in a complex dynamic process becomes reality and is a part of the phenomenally world given by infinite multiple sensitive things; or (like LEVY) as a virtual set of pre-determined options, which lack of existence; then when we speak of virtual, we talk about latency, of becoming, that is to say of motion. If we think of the virtual as the immaterial and unexpressed speed of time or, if we consider virtual reality as a technologic performance of speed of the digital multi-linear flows; what we have left, in both conceptions, is the flow/movement as an expression of time. I obviously work with the representation of movement, we are not before the movement in real time, and I am not concerned by the force of gravity. I also do not extend to the perception of movement by the binomial eye/brain issues or to the reading of motion - in its illusion - the same as we do when we watch TV or go to the movies. The suggestion of movement depends on our imperfect perception of speed which confuses the object and trajectory.

There is a feature that seems crucial and transversal to the overall staff of the universe, the virtual the imaginary - the inconstancy. This observation leads me always the same question: What is reality? Means, like the extension of a desire for representing thoughts, imaginary reality, representation of feeling or emotion for the abstract reality, end up intersecting; the imaginary and virtual realities become closer. Transience remains a constant feature.

Life exists as a movement with rhythms and cadences. Movement is the nature of life in its non-linearity and poetic emergence. In a universe as unique and singular as the one I have been offered to live in, I always work to understand what the key should be. Imagery-dream, poetry and movement/time are without doubt the three points of my vision. The generic quality of poetry is at the heart of what art is. Because, if "Poetry is an imaginative awareness of experience expressed through meaning, sound, and rhythmic language choices so as to evoke an emotional response.[and]The main ingredients are movement and sound.[if] Poetry is about movement and expression. Poetry expressed the way we feel about a certain subject through imagery and other senses. ", as can be read in a dictionary, then 'the essence of art is poetry'' as stated Heidegger.

My last film, Vortex Room (2008), is an essay, an exercise on such complex issues as these ones, and it does not intend to be more than a trial as I state in its

synopsis: "Vortex is an essay on movement. What's left from movement in animation? Is it illusion? The animated movement of all is its poetry. Vortex Room is a journey towards an aesthetic and Poetic vertigo. "

In those fields of illusion, imaginary, dream poetry and all these elements in co-relation in a continuous motion, I do not entail myself any barriers.
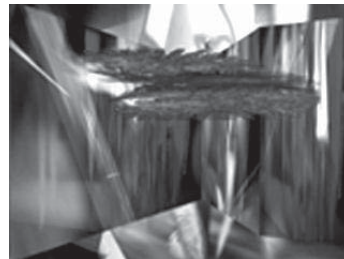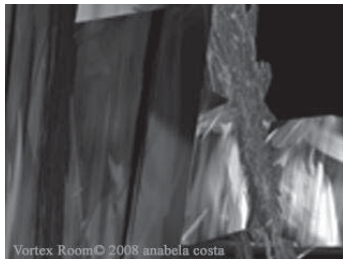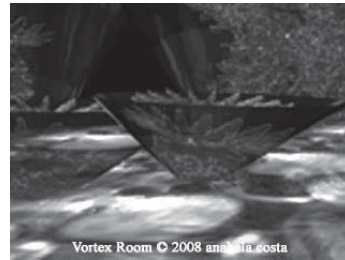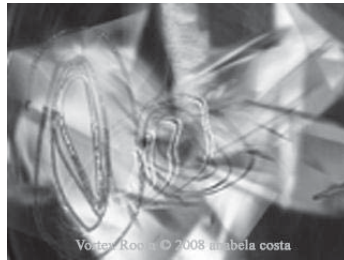
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