Multimedia Semiotics of two works of art

Lin Pey Chwen – Clemencia Echeverri Cultural accents, natives and digital immigrants

SUSANA PÉREZ TORT
Primavera 2010

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INTRODUCTION

This paper proposes to approach to two Multimedia works of art. It also intends to understand if it is possible to gaze a gap between native and immigrants digital creators/ spectators of a Multimedia piece of art, considering that there is a digital citizenship conformed by these two communities.

We understand that, given the diversity of approaches that coined the concept of art trough history and different cultures, it is important to clarify what we propose an art concept: *a device created by an individual artist or group, in order to establish an aesthetic link with a spectator.*

We propose New Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) as means that enable the arise of a new paradigm, which also managed to build a new aesthetic field, consequently impacting on art creation and realization, assuming that ICT and New Technologies (NT) makes possible a new Image criteria.

Andrada (2010 p.139) defines New Technologies as "electronic-based developments that have gone through in recent decades, impacting all areas of human activity[i]." The category of "digital natives" was created by Prensky (2001) in his article "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants, a new way to look at ourselves and our kinds"[ii] referring to people born in the electronic age. Therefore, adults born in pre digital age are defined as immigrants.

We will refer to Prensky's category in order to seek a turn in the way digital natives and immigrants create and produce their art work. As a subject allowing us to understand their digital citizenship's approach to art, we choose two well experienced artists in this particular field, and select two Multimedia works by these artists: "Play" by Lyn Pey Chewn (Taiwan) and "Heritage Game" by Clemencia Echeverri (Colombia). It is our intention to analyze in these Multimedia what Gubern (1996) defined as "iconological fields", and we propose It can be found and read in these works of art performed *by* New Technologies. These two artists are here *c*onsidered as digital immigrant and are taken into account out of their body of technological art and particularly out of their singular way of working on meaningful fields and narratives, which are thought, produced and exhibited *trough* technology and because of

technology . We also intend to analyze if their digital immigrant status condition is actually present in the narratives and semantic fields of their works. At the same time, we propose to understand how their work is considered and understood by natives. These cited art works were chosen in the context of the theoretical proposals of both artists, also considering a reference to this issue by art critics and philosophers and finally the analysis of other art proposals within the Multimedia discipline, performed by the selected artists.

I

1. Immigrants and Digital Natives. A question of "accent".

As we are here considering a an issue as "digital citizenship", we need to expose what is understood by this subjective term: natives are people who are born in the ICT society, where they are supposed to have built their criteria, believing ICT had influenced upon them in a particular way. We share Virilio's warning about globalization and connectivity, considering understanding that in the so called map of global integration to ICT, there are communities who are actually foreigners, and excluded of any digital citizenship. Once having considered this issue, we now say, along with Prensky, that immigrants may bear an "accent" in their "speech" (in processing thinking and actions), which is different from we shall call native's *dialect*.

It is here proposed that immigrants – immigrants who are familiar to Western educational practices – are integrating themselves to digital citizenship after having been educated within the "Guttenberg era", within the printed book paradigm, which enabled a linear construction of thinking. These immigrants community, as art creators, have experienced their work on or *with* analogical supports and materials. They traversed important years of their lives outside the ICT culture. When producing art, immigrants have been familiar to analogue art disciplines such as painting, drawing, sculpture and engraving, and have exhibited their work on tangible isometric supports. The immigrant art producer has move, whether with joy or disgust, to a new social consolidated paradigm, which also shows a threshold to a new art field.

On the contrary it is here understood that digital natives are born when ICTs are already developed and legitimized as a defining identity of contemporary times. Digital native's lives would be then, traversed by the use of virtual environments, personal electronic devices and instant connectivity. We then consider that dealing with virtuality may have imprinted on natives a multifocal way of thinking, which consequently would enable them to perform actions, criteria, and furthermore, understanding "reality" with their own singular criterion developing their own aptitudes, which are considered in this paper as their *dialect*. We understand that the daily contact with virtual reality, interaction, proximity, connectivity

phenomena, would imprint on their thinking and actions, singular manners of instrumental construction of "meaning", consequently distinguishing digital native from digital immigrants, although sharing the same citizenship. "The appropriation of ICT promotes citizens a sense of mutation, innovation, change, evolution, development, crisis, renewal and reform" [iii](Andrada 2010:140), these attitudes and skills of the digital natives have been extensively analyzed by experts in the field of education who have concluded that it is necessary to rethink practices and ideas for this new social subject. Dussel (2010), refers to digital natives abilities and their multifocal way of thinking and understands that "Kids today can use simulation games and manipulate media content, opt for multi-tasking, and understand that knowledge may be constructed in a way that provides them the possibility of performing different tasks at a same time, and move from a film to a book or videogame, with astonishing easiness." [IV] According with these ideas, this paper intends to consider the digital natives' practices of ICT, enable them to construct new ways of thinking and performances, which have already developed a new social paradigm, and consequently, a new regard towards art created by New Technologies.

At the same time, Gubern (1996 a: 27) understands that what historically remains as permanent in the Image concept is its *meaning*, and warns about meaning understanding which has "varied significance, so varied that they may be indecipherable to subjects belonging to different cultures." We believe that the works of art built by the use of New Technologies might be undecipherable for "foreigners" to digital citizenship. And we also propose that even sharing a same "digital culture" there might be a measurable distance between natives, immigrants and foreigners, when thinking and performing art criteria. Therefore, we here propose that practices developed with the imprint of digital native's dialect would process narratives with an accent on technical instrumental devices, when performing their New Technology art products and in consequence digital natives   might also have become a new type of art receptor.

II

A POSSIBLE DIGITAL ART ARCHAEOLOGY

1. Digital Archaeology. From tangible art surfaces, to image as *data*.

Gubern (1987) refers to the moment when - when viewing his reflection in the surface of a lake - the hominids recognized themselves as subjects, and he refers to this moment s as "stellar". Gubern's idea of self awareness was inspired by Lacan's notion of a mirror stage.

Then, this stellar moment is meant to be the engine of an "iconic impulse" which would lead to the sketching of the first iconic image, considered the origin of *art*. From its beginnings in pre-corporate cultures, the iconic image would be executed on various surfaces and tools for also various purposes. Gubern (1996 b: 21) proposes as a singular attribute of mankind, the iconic "human visual appetite." [iv] This author also believes that "the iconic image is a perceptual and cognitive category, a representational category, which provides information about perception of the world, perception that is differently coded by each culture" (...) and understands that there is "a particular art dialect for each human culture" [v] This paper does not intend to draw a taxonomy of different cultural art dialects - diachronically understood - but intends to take into consideration digital natives' dialect and digital immigrants' dialect, in relation to creating or interacting with a Multimedia piece of art.

We will now try to point out some purposes that have followed men as performing art in different cultural dialects. The iconic image is understood by Gubern as a "*social* artifact"[vi], following his idea we may say that each culture, in any time, would imprint its work of art with a singular meaning and purpose. Art has been considered for certain *dialects*, a magical intermediary, a mediator between human weakness and Nature forces or God's will. Meanwhile, Modern Europe developed a new approach to art– which was extended by European hegemonic power over its colonies – as an Eurocentric art view, understanding art criterion as an iconic secular image, neither religious nor utilitarian, expressed by a representational system, capable of reproducing (in act of *mimesis*) an image identical to the phenomenological model, as a duplicate of what is perceived by means of the eye and then structured by the brain. In opposing this paradigm, Modern Europe contemporary cultures share a different vision of art, and understand painting, sculpture or whatever objects are done with an aesthetic purpose, as imaginary creations, submitted to the standards imposed by religious or sovereign's requiring.

 Western European culture has built in the Eastern culture an hegemonic idea of art, understood as a synonym of a tangible object created to be contemplated and provide delight to an spectator. "Art" (Moderns Eastern European) is also supposed to bear no useful purpose or shall be condemned to be labeled as "minor art". This biased point of view is still admitted today in western culture, reducing art universe to limited terms, yet and still legitimized. This simplification of aesthetic diversity of art languages and dialects limits the diversity of art phenomenon to be understood as an image created on a surface or a three dimensional

volume, with the purpose of delighting bourgeois taste and to be admired, hanging on a wall or as an sculpture on its pedestal.

Within the first decades of the twentieth century, Modernism and the avant-garde movements of western art (time when "isms" are developed) put an end to five hundred years-a vision of art claimed as *mimesis*. The *avant garde* movements (the so called "isms") would recognize visual elements as being able to be independent from reality, unrelated to classical art mirror mission. Although art had become abstract, there is still continuity with the paradigm established in Modernity. Western art is, no matter what is painted or shaped, is during these years understood, as an image created on a surface or a three dimensional artifact to be *contemplated* and *still*. *Avant garde* movements actually performed a turn of the syntax of the art work, but we propose this change as mere cosmetic, unbound a paradigm shift.

As sketching this minimal archeology of digital art, we propose that during the decades of western Modernism, there can be find some significant pieces of artwork, examples of germinal intentions to build a new art paradigm. This new paradigm might have been consolidated with the arrival of digital image. Mexican poet and writer, Octavio Paz (1998) refers to the work of Pablo Picasso and Marcel Duchamp, and quotes that Picasso's paintings are images, and Duchamp's are a way to think about the meaning of an image. He refers to Duchamp's *ready- made* as a "not smelling art"[vii], as Duchamp did not use oil paint neither painted his or modeled his art proposals. Paz also believes that this artist highlighted the uselessness of manufacturing a work of art as creating his *ready- made* works of art. Paz criterion on Duchamp's work may now serve as an adjective to certain properties of the digital image. Duchamp's early rupture with art representative tradition - when proposing his "Bicycle Wheel" [viii](1913) as a work of art - might be understood as the first sign of discomfort with former modernist art. We propose that in the sixties, modernism was already exhausted as a novelty within the avant-garde movement, and in consequence, a "crisis of representation" began.

We propose The "Bicycle Wheel", even analogical, as a precedent of a new art paradigm, believing that it might coincide with some of the items that build the status of digital art. Duchamp's intention to end with the "uniqueness" of a work of art, for several versions of the same piece were produced by the artist and neither was the "original". Duchamp's Bicycle" also questions the representational historical system, as it brings up the idea that *re-*

presenting (iconic representation) could be substituted by supplanting the iconic *re-presentation*, for everyday objects already manufactured (*ready-made*) could be used to devise a work of art which he legitimizes, nevertheless, as Art . The first decades of the twentieth century were years of different art *dialects* and we propose that *avant garde* movements are exhausted in the sixties. Weibel (2004), in his seminar named"Art algorithmic. From Cézanne to the computer" argues that "the sixties forced a radical revision of the conditions and conventions of society and European history ", and Danto (2003) refers to those years as"[ix] a time that much of what was considered integral to the concept of art, simply disappeared from the map. Not just beauty or mimesis: almost everything that had occupied a place of relief in the life of art was removed by the roots, and points "A crisis seams to fall on the western avant-garde movement"[x].

Nevertheless, during the same years, new art proposals might be observed, showing the intention to deconstruct the idea of art as a synonym of a tangible, static and isomorphic artifact. Mechanical movement is imposed to sculpture. Projected light on a wall or space starts to be considered as a new art language. The newness of these art experiences legitimatizes the work of art as a non tangible device. We understand that these innovations could be considered signs of a paradigm shift. The actual turn in art status arrives with the possibility of constructing images out of a binary system enabling the creation of bitmaps as digital images. Digital image is *data,* information. Concerning the upcoming of digital image, we do not attend to a cosmetic dialectal change, but the arrival of a new language, a new way of understanding Image: image consequently moves from being an analogical artifact, to the new status of image as data.

In the sixties it also upraises the first experiences of computer graphics[xi] and we attend a germinal digital art criterion. The experimental primary digital aesthetics[xii] are produced during the critical "crisis of representation." With the expansion of the New Technologies and a new image criterion, we may "save" images as data in a minimum material gadget: the tangible device which stores information and that is not certainly the aesthetic device itself. Digital image is created to be multiplied by different canals, viewed in different sizes, with diverse qualities and, as data, globally shared by technological procedures and technologies. Digital image upraises a new image paradigm consequently impacting on art creation.

II

TWO MULTIMEDIA WORKS. "TECHNOLOGICAL SEMIOTICS"

1.   Two   artists,   Lin   Pey   Chwen   and   Clemencia   Echeverri.

It is here proposed to analyze the work of art of two artists belonging to different cultures, such as Asian and American (Taiwan and Colombia). It is actually risky to generalize the profile of these or any particular artist, considering their lives and art subjectivities. They have been chosen, however, considering that their particularities will help to identify what we here intend to highlight. As the purpose of this paper is to refer to native and immigrants citizens, we propose to consider these two artists as integrating the immigrant community, sharing a digital citizenship, and being impacted by ICT, bearing nevertheless an immigrant "accent" in their art language. These two artists propose works of art devised with New Technologies. We assume the risk of considering a parallel between their Multimedia, because we find in both works of art a common language and accent that may be referred to as "semiotics technology".   We assume that cited artists are creators of pieces of art which are possible *only* out of the existence of the technologies they apply in their works. We also mean that their narrative proposals and semantic fields of their art work are linked to philosophical and cultural issues. We certainly believe that despite the uniqueness of any personal story, the narratives of these artists might concur, and their art works show a critical panorama of the human condition, society and gender issues. Both works of art selected in this paper, coincide in their focusing on society, myths, traditions, and beliefs.

1.2 The Selected Works of art are "Play" (2007- Taiwan) by Lin Pey Chwen, performed with members of the Taiwan University Digital Art Lab and "Heritage Games" (2009/2010- Colombia) by Clemencia Echeverri. As a frame work to contextualize their art corpus we here consider their personal profiles, art critics and philosophical references to their work. Both artists have also been interviewed so as to confirm criteria about them.

Proposed matches between artists and the selected Multimedia pieces:

a-Both works are digital Multimedia / Video Installation, devised by technology and both works of art are understood as a synonym of "semiotic technology."

b-The works selected might concur in being devised, designed and exhibited with New Technologies, understood as *techné* as mediator of *poiesis.* Both artists might prioritize technology anthropological issues, over technical instrumental practices.

c- They both refer to local rites which are proposed in their works with a critical point of view, seeking re-signification and repair.

d- As an oxymoron, their works evoke the past, implemented nevertheless by New Technologies.

e-The titles of both works include the word "game", that we assume bears an ironical twist.

f-Both artists were trained in foreign Academic forums: Lin Pey Chwen, is graduated in Australia and USA, meanwhile Clemencia Echeverri, is graduated in England, both have post graduated studies in their native countries.

G-"Play" and "Heritage Game" might be considered *spoken* with the digital immigrant "accent" proposed in this paper

<div align="center">PLAY</div>

1.1. "Play". Interactive Multimedia.

Author: Lin Pey Chwen with Taiwan National University Digital Art Lab, collective integrated by Chen Jyun Yu, Lee Chih-Min, Tsai Chi-Wei, Lee Pei-Ling, Wu Yein-Zu, and Chen Wei-Kung. Origin: Taiwán. Año: 2007. Exhibited in Shangai Internacional Arts Festival, Taipei International Digital Art Festival (2007) and 404 Post Electronic Art Festival Festival – Trieste, Italia (2008).

"Art statement: The work, attempting to discuss the phenomenon how the Terra Cotta Soldiers are being manipulated by commercialism with a humorous take, has thus put the Terra Cotta Soldiers center stage in a Western theatre setting that not only aim to highlight the conflicting nature of the Westerns and Eastern cultures, but also to ridicule the ludicrousness of putting the Terra Cotta Soldiers on show like actors. The work not only attempts to highlight the aesthetics of the contemporary artistic digital games, but also attempts to reflect the significance of artificial life that technology has embodied virtual figures.

  The work – "Play" has devised three distinctive virtual Terra Cotta Soldier's figurine imagery by utilizing the computer 3D animation software, which is converted into digital interactive control interface, as inspired by the Chinese traditional puppetry, together with utilizing the Virtools program, Arduino electronic circuit board, WiiRemote, to manipulate the Terra Cotta Soldiers' movement.

On the next page we can see spectators interacting with "Play" (Phograhp provided by Lin Pey Chwen.

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A video recording of the Installation assembly and interaction with the audience, where it is possible to attend both the attitudes, actions and reactions of spectators, is published on line in:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=opOTdm2eN7U (access: August 2010)

1.3.   Analysis

This Multimedia assumes in English language the name "Play . Translated to Spanish - the original language of this paper – *play* is a synonym of "game"; "turn on a device"; "execute a musical instrument". The three denotations of the title invite the spectator to *operate*, to *play* with "Play" and put it in action, to play "*on*" the art device. The photograph above, shows the behavior of young spectators as confronting "Play". They might be considered as eastern digital natives, acting and interacting with the interfaces which are proposed to them by the authors. We understand that digital natives would respond to the art proposal, assuming an active performance and disposing themselves to use the interfaces, to act and perceive the simultaneous and immediate reaction of the vicar images in front of them.   The native spectator would also respond to "Play", *playing*, *turn on* the work of art, and exhibiting their skill in commanding the interfaces, in order to imprint movement on the projected images of the Soldiers. The warriors are viewed inside a western theatre. The warriors are devised digital images whose movements and animation is possible due to the *ad hoc* software devised,

which enables the procedures that are seen "inside" the also virtual theatre stage.   The *soldiers* will then act as a response to the actions operated by the interaction commands, operated by the *spectator/generator.* Without the impulse operated on the interfaces commands, the warriors cannot move. Any puppet stays still until a human hand – trough a set of threads, allows the figurine movements – and like puppets these virtual images are also moved by virtual and analogical threads devised by the authors. This resemblance between "Play" and puppetry tradition was intentionally devised by the team, as expressed in the "art statement" (v. supra p: 8). "Play" has been devised with the resemblance between the virtual images of the warriors and the passive puppetry figurines, in order to highlight the ironical human power, impressing action to the Soldiers. Consequently, the historical and powerful resemblance of the original Terra Cotta Soldiers, guard of the Chinese Emperor, reduced to the ludicrousness of a game offered to the spectator.

   We propose that there is also a close relationship between the way these spectators interact with the images, and the videogame proposals, because they show the power to impress actions and move the digital images. We shall consider however, that who acts in front of a videogame must be calleld *user,* meanwhile who interacts with an art proposal, must be considered a spectator. We need to remark the distance between an industrial entertainment product and an art devise with an aesthetic purpose. On one hand there is a commercial product, and in the other hand a cultural anthropological proposal of a so called "game", named "Play". We then suggest that digital native's community, when acting and interacting with a Multimedia might experience art in relationship with their former practice in videogame technological fields. Skills developed in entertainment are actually translated to art practices as an instrumental experience. The relationship between "Play" and a videogame, as pointed above, has been certainly premeditated by the authors, and propose that in order to avoid the resemblance between the traditional computer or TV screen, support of traditional videogame set, the vicar Soldiers devised for "Play" are instead projected in a magnified sized image. As devising the semiotic technology of this art work, the authors also propose interfaces far from traditional formats. The projected images (the Soldiers) are driven by also vicar threads quoting Chinese puppetry tradition, and as pointed by the artist's statement (*v.supra*). This art proposal invites the spectator to act, they must however look for the commands within the space of the Installation, "hidden" inside bamboo canes shaped forms, consequently referring to Chinese culture and taking the place of technological morphologies.

We might attend to digital native's community spontaneously acting and interacting with this art proposal, and at the same time wondering about the engineering of this piece of art. Meanwhile it might be observed that the digital immigrant community might manage a different behavior when facing "Play": a thoughtful attitude leading them to question about the semantic field proposed by the authors, and only then, grab the material devices disposed to interact with the work of art, in order to interact with the images, nevertheless highlighting semiotic criteria to technological field itself.

It is proposed that, from the digital immigrant condition point of view, the meaning of "Play" stands on a triad comprised of: the projected Warriors' virtual images, the set of interfaces offered to the spectators, and finally, as a sign to be also interpreted as part of the semantic field provided by the installation: the actions and reactions of the spectator/generator. From an immigrant condition, then, the spectacle of the spectator in the act of interaction with the projection might also integrate the significance field proposed by Lin Pey Chwen – an immigrant herself – attending to see humans acting as puppet- players, pretending (or acting as) if they actually conducted the sacred national memoir represented by the historical Soldiers. On the contrary we believe that digital native's community - who have been impacted by ICT in the process of building their reality criterion –might highlight technology itself, acting immediately, taking the interfaces in their hands, deftly interacting with the threads which connect the interfaces to the system, and enables to command the vicar warriors' actions. Highlighted the interfaces and the skill of the spectator as the principal instance of the devised semantic field, the projected images as a substitute of the videogame screen and finally excluding them as a part of the system. Natives might probably not share the immigrant's intention to perform a between the lines reading of the art proposal as they do not practice hermeneutical interpretations . Their community dialect induces the native to *act* and wait for an immediate *reaction*. It is certainly not proposed by this paper to evaluate these communities' criteria or attitudes, prioritizing one conduct or appreciation over the other one. Natives' or immigrant's criterions must be identified as a part of a singular *dialect baggage* of each member of digital citizenship. Digital native's community was educated in perceiving and understanding images by new means, supports and practices. This community is then capable of performing new behaviors which might have been yet, not sufficiently considered or valuated.

On the next page: detail of spectators interacting with the interfaces. Photograph provided by Lin Pey Chwen.

1.4. From technological support to semantic field.

"Play" is devised by the use of a set of technologies: 3D simulation technologies in order to create the illusion that the spectator is attending to a theater where three Soldiers are on stage; these projected digitally devised images are a replica of the historical Emperor Guard Terracotta Soldiers. Motion sensor software digitally translates the physical movements which the spectator performs on the interfaces, so that the Warriors are *played* and they move, due to the skill of each spectator, fighting between them. As it has been said, remote controls do assume the traditional morphology of a technological devise, such as joystick, mouse keyboard or tactile screen. Commands are hidden, and as a part of the art proposal, there is no sign within the Installation of any digital engineering.

As can be seen in the photograph above, the hidden remotes assuming the shape of decorated cylinders with a Chinese cultural accent are connected to a set of threads linked to a set of points demarcated by brass studs, pretending that these physical connections actually move the Soldiers - as any puppet is moved by threads - when the images and virtual threads are actually moved by digital binary system. We understand that the strategy of the Installation provides the illusion that the physical threads, linked to the remotes, do actually move the images, as in the analogical puppetry tradition, when in fact the spectator's/generator's movement is devised to be translated from physical impulses to digital language. The semiotic field proposal devised for "Play" is to pretend that the is an analogical field made of actions, spaces and beings - the Soldiers– when the piece of art is devised with digital engineering, integrating a system. It is consequently necessary to highlight the detailed net and thoughtful semiotic proposition of "Play".

It may be supposed that digital native's community might not *need* to read the semiotic code proposed by Lin Pey Chwen in this work of art, and on the contrary highlight the instrumental devisal of this proposal.

It is not actually proposed that this community is unaware of the cultural significance of the

work. On the contrary we propose that, due to their dialect they would highlight as an

instance of the narrative the instrumental procedure, the prowess electronic devisal of "Play".

The photograph above shows "Play" in action. Photograph provided by Lin Pey Chwen.

We may also observe from one side, the binomial conformed by the Warriors and the western theatre (as digital images) and on the other side the human "puppet players" (the spectators interacting with the system) This art proposal, procures the illusion that the skill of the spectator may in fact command all the possible movements when - as in any software of this kind - all possibilities have been already foreseen and programmed. The illusion that only the spectator's skill in the interaction with the Soldiers is what actually allows the digital figures to overcome the opponent is only partially true, for the movements in a system like this are scheduled, and the "puppet player" cannot perform what has not been digitally programmed. According to Darley (2002) the freedom of the user – the author does not refer to art but videogames – is not only determined by the actual guidelines of the player but, in this particular case, by the creators of the software: Lin Pey Chwen and her team.   As considering the attitude of either spectators, we understand that digital immigrants have been trained in the pre-digital times to act as passive contemplators of analog and static works of art, and they might consequently be not so utterly prepared to experience an interactive Multimedia work of art, where action is requested. Therefore this community might tend to

seek the significance of the art proposal in the exercise of a hermeneutic interpretation, either *below* or *within* the surface of the work, assuming that the gnosis capital of the immigrant status is a *sine qua non* of the immigrant spectator, responding to the "accent" of his dialect. From one hand we conclude that the immigrant community might attend to the art devise "Play" understanding its narrative as an entirety which would include the spectator/action generator. And on the other hand the native we propose that native's community would

spontaneously handle the commands – probably no wondering about their morphology - and move the threads to confront skills with others spectators/action generators, assuming the "game" as inherited by their community dialect, and translating to the exhibition room their "citizenship" conducts.   Therefore we believe that digital natives are not trained for interpretative exegesis. In consequence there would not be a *behind* neither an *inside*, the surface if the art work. Natives are pragmatic; this community acts, far from wondering about the whys and the wherefores. This seems to be their dialectal condition, as active members of ICT Society.

 We understand that it is necessary to consider that it would be reductionist to consider that *all* digital natives would read the same signification field in this or any other work of art. Gubern also lets us know that "re-cognizing presumes a knowledge capital based on the

subject experience", and in consequence in this particular Multimedia, whoever is stranger to Chinese culture and ignore the meaning of the Terra Cotta Soldiers might not so clearly be able to read the irony and re- signification of this Multimedia work of art proposal.

1.5 Lin Pey Chwen

Lin Pey Chwen and Digital Art Lab team have created an electronic *textile* , an "electronic ts semiotics "[xiii] referring to past and present, analogy and virtuality opposition. "Play" highlights the past, and its narrative is nevertheless – out of a thoughtful decision of her author - devised on the contrary by an interactive digital system.

We can read about Lin Pey Chwen's work of art: "In 1999, the catastrophic earthquake of September 21st and the guidance of her spiritual mentor Prophet Elijah Hong, have led Lin to dedicate her creativity to a new subject "Back to Nature" series. This series reveal the technology-driven civilization and the abnormality of artificial creatures by mocking men's folly in their desire to play the role as the Creator through the use of technological semiotics, digital images and interactive interfaces" (see http://ma.ntua.edu.tw/labs/dalab/director-cv-en). Confronting these words with Lin Pey Chwen's art proposals from then on, we attend to a set of digital art work devised with a complex digital engineering, and at the same time expressing a narrative related to the collapse of the natural, pitting nature with an artificial instrument as technology. This idea is actually a literature Oxymoron, a paradox. We believe that this body of ideas is possible, because Lin Pey Chwen belongs to the immigrant community and is able to perform a design process, where technology challenges technology.

<div align="center">

IV

"JUEGOS DE HERENCIA".

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Multimedia -Video Installation.

Technical data: Multi- channel construction divided onto eight screens; four screens in front of four others. Video images are then able to open fractions of the sequences at a same time. On the floor a nineth video image, – rounded shape – is projected. Sound field: Dolby 5.1 distributed with three audio canals in one side, one on the other, and the subwofer on a side of the exhibition room. Author: Clemencia Echeverri. (Colombia).Echeverri's specialists and collaborators Nicolás Guarín, Andrés Guzmán, Diego León, Camilo Echeverri, Daniel Prieto, Víctor Garcés[xiv]. Year: 2008/2011.

"Heritage Games" was presented as a work in progress in the "IX Festival de la Imagen", Manizales, Colombia (2010) organized by Colombian National University of Caldas. It is programmed to be exhibited in Galería Alonso Garcés. Bogotá on April -March 2011

"Heritage Games". Photograph provided by Clemencia Echeverri.

1. Heritage games. Analysis

Register of the action: The so called "Party of the rooster" is a ritual that is performed annually in the Pacific coast, in the Colombian Valle del Chocó. The artist is present in the ceremony and the sacrifice field where a rooster will be killed. She attends the ceremony / game / ritual, and captures - with audio sensors, video and photography - the humiliation that the victim (the rooster) will be subjected to .It will be buried with his head pocking out of the ground, then tortured and finally slaughtered as a communal manhood ritual. The artist captures the members of the community gestures and actions and, focuses on the "machete" which is prepared for the sacrifice. This spectacle is performed in the coast of the magnificence of the Pacific Ocean. The very moment the ceremony begins, Echeverri starts the process of devising her Video Installation titled "Heritage Games".

Recording of the performance: The artist and her team return to the site to record

On next page: Photograph of the vicar ceremony. Photograph provided by Clemencia Echeverri.

Video scenes and taking photographs of a performance which reproduces the ceremony,

personified by members of the community who perform sequences of the" Party of the rooster ", an a second issue of the ritual; the artist, then records and photographs sequences directed by her and performed by members of the same community.

Devising of the Project: Once image and sound have been captured, Echeverri starts a process which she calls "unfolding" the rite, where she "cracks" the linear narrative of the original recorded scenes and develops independent micro-narratives. It is inside the ritual where she finds the ideas that will complete the set of procedures and images that will become "Heritage Games". She then devises the syntaxes of her work of art, the space strategies and technologies that she will provide the spectator in order to a delineate a signification field and a new narrative. As in other pieces of her art work, sound is as important as the iconological field. When coming back to the ritual scenario with the purpose of recording the performance of the "feast of the rooster", he actually composes a new event – a simulation of the original scenes that will substitute the actual performing of the ritual - as a vicar performance, conceived to avoid braking in the original ceremony, and also in order to create a new set of still images which will become segments of her new art narrative, with the language of a Video Installation. As in other works of art done by this artist, sound devising is highlighted as an important iconic sign of her art proposals. "Heritage Games" is at a same time a registration of an action, an acting of a vicar performance that replaces the original

ritual performed every year in Valle del Chocó. There is a trace of the eye and intentions of a journalistic documentation in the act of recording the rite; however whatever is captured is done with the perspective of an artist.

The Installation: "Heritage games" is devised as a multi-channel construction, allowing opening fractions of the original image of a singular culture. Sequences are selected and divided as to be projected on nine screens simultaneously and shown on two walls in a darkened room, one of them is conceived to be projected on the floor. The Installation is surrounded by the edited sound, becoming a three dimensional
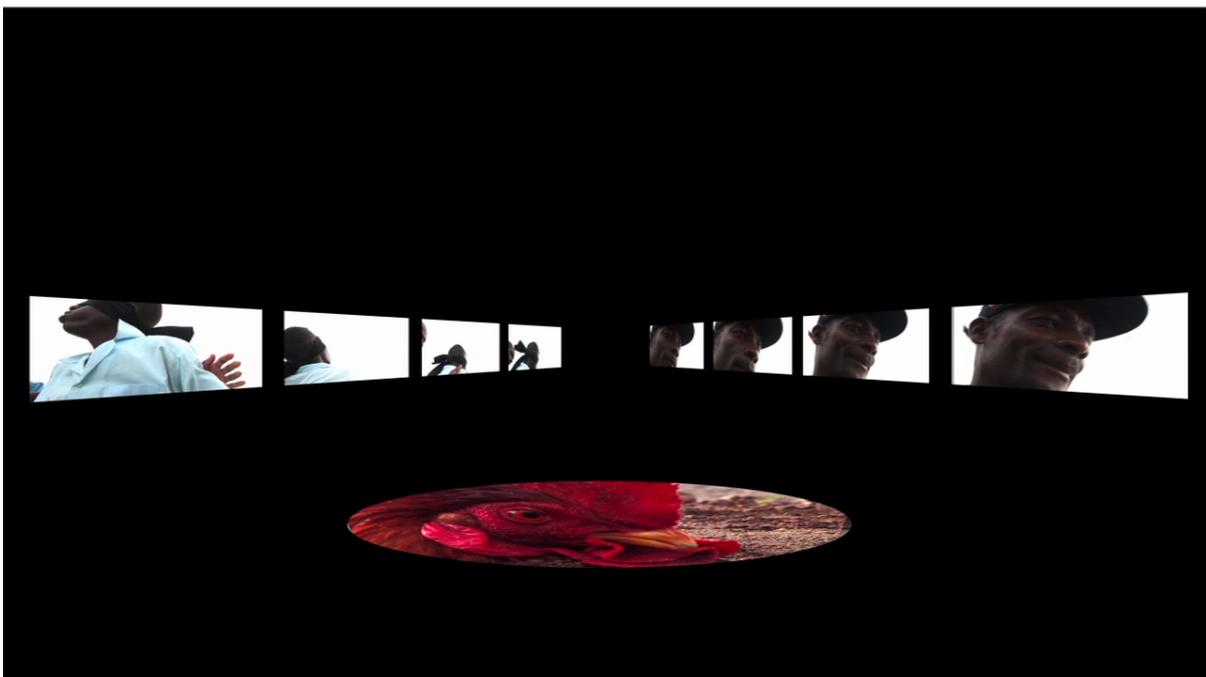
experience. Once inside the Installation the spectator cannot modify the device, this work of art is not proposed to be interactive. The circular shaped image projected on the floor focuses the drama which is translated to the exhibition room. The micro-narratives emitted by the screens are the result of a careful and accurate image selection and editing process.

1.2. Image and sound construction

The sacrifice ceremony is not offered to the spectator to be read in a linear narrative. Image selection and editing does not intend to be explicit. We propose to understand that a linear narrative *informs*, but not necessarily *communicates*. Consequently we believe that in "Heritage Games" the fragment has taken the place of the masked original scene of the rite. We also believe that the absence of the sequence of the slaughter of the rooster, that the

artist has intentionally avoided, is as powerful as its presence. Meanwhile, the circular projection on the floor concentrates a powerful visual field, showing sequences where the victim – the rooster -is emphasized. Whoever focuses its vision on one screen, will be unable to watch another one at the same time, and will then require a simultaneous multifocal perception. This fragmented and simultaneous narrative is consciously redundant, as an accurate proposal of the meaning field which is offered to the spectator.

   Four screens emit fragments of a sequence, the remaining four issue another frame with a former or subsequent image. As it has been suggested, this art proposal procures a redundant

language, which provides order to the perceptive and comprehension field, bearing a symmetrical disposal of the screens, and the resemblance between them, showing similar frames of the recorded image in simultaneous. We propose that this singular way of image

devising raises the information level, offering the spectator an experience where the artist aims to "draw space and tighten the spectator's gaze". The tense atmosphere that was present in the sacrifice field is also present in the exhibition room where the spectator is confronted with the death ritual: the "Party of the rooster".

   The Installation requires screens emitting video on two walls and a projected video image on the floor, in the environment a surrounded sound field enables the visitor to perform the experience which the artist defines as being capable of "transmitting shock and emotion from

micro- narratives: a form of what is hidden and almost imperceptible that structures fragments typical of the culture"[xv] . The powerful dark head of a man whose eyes are blindfolded, are shown in a close up on the screens, he is the member of the community who has been chosen to wield the machete. In another close up, the image of the machete is shown, and also the foreground of the hand holding that holds it. Meanwhile the emphasized projected image on the floor shows sequences where the red eye and red peak of the rooster are seen. Predominating and amplified the visitor can see the cock's head emerging at ground level while his body is buried. Its crest is useless to seduce the female, his peak a useless weapon in order to defend itself from Men and their machetes. The rooster's head will fall after the metal hit, but the scene is not displayed on the screens, the artist points out: "It is on these scene of drowning and torturing the animal that I focus the camera as a witness" [xvi]. Yet death is only present within its invisibility.

Echeverri's Installation proposes fragments and omissions, amplifying an utter tension affecting the consciousness of the visitor/spectator and irritates the ones who would likely see the act of execution in the foreground. Death and violence are involved yet, offstage. The sound field is a fruitful factor in this artist's work. She highlights sound constructions in her
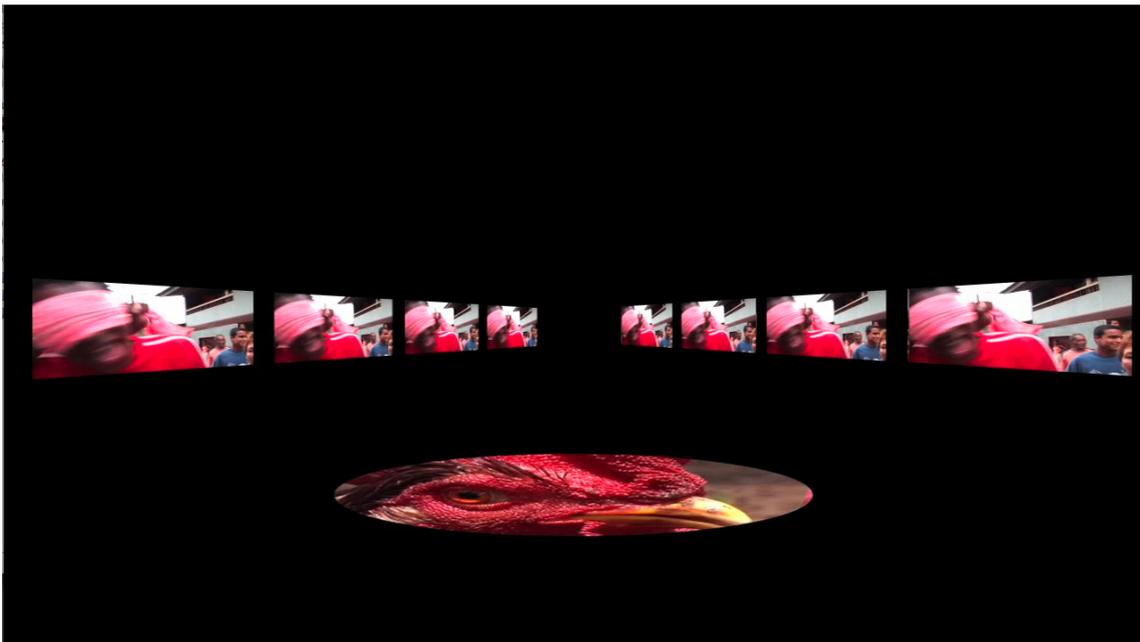

Multimedia "Voice" or "Treno" (2009) where human voices are a significant instrument of the semantic field proposed, forwarded in this piece of art, to oppose the absence.

2. "Heritage games". Its semantic field

"Heritage Games" highlights a powerful hermeneutical dimension devised with a complex set of technologies. This narrative proposal has been devised *for* and *with* technology, as required by a Multimedia Installation. This work of art creates a surrounding environment where the germinal intellectual procedure is displayed and made visible and audible due to a set of digital technologies. We understand that the dialectal accent of a digital immigrant, as the artist is, is clearly audible in this specific Multimedia. Therefore, "Heritage Games" would be devised for a spectator who would pierce the technical support, favoring a subjective appreciation and enabling its subjectivity to face the semantic field. If acknowledging is to identifying whatever one already knows, and "presupposes an accumulated gnosis capital " [xvii] the spectator may not be aware of the existence of the rite performed by a particular human community - such as the ceremony performed in the Colombian Chocó Valley - but we understand that the Multimedia would anyway and necessarily impact on every visitor of this Installation, even no recognizing the specific signs chosen by the artist. The spectator would attend a semantic field where he or she might interpret death, victim, victimizer, impotence, masculinity, derision.

"Heritage Game" does not show any visible interface. It does not interact with the spectator who cannot turn off the screens, nor lower the sound, neither completes the missing fragments. Seeing and not seeing, as decided by the artist is actually an instrument of the narrative decided for this work of art. "Heritage Game" is not proposed then to be interactive; there is neither a gadget allowing the visitor to save the animal nor another one to defend it from the machete. The spectator assists the Multimedia disarmed as the rooster.
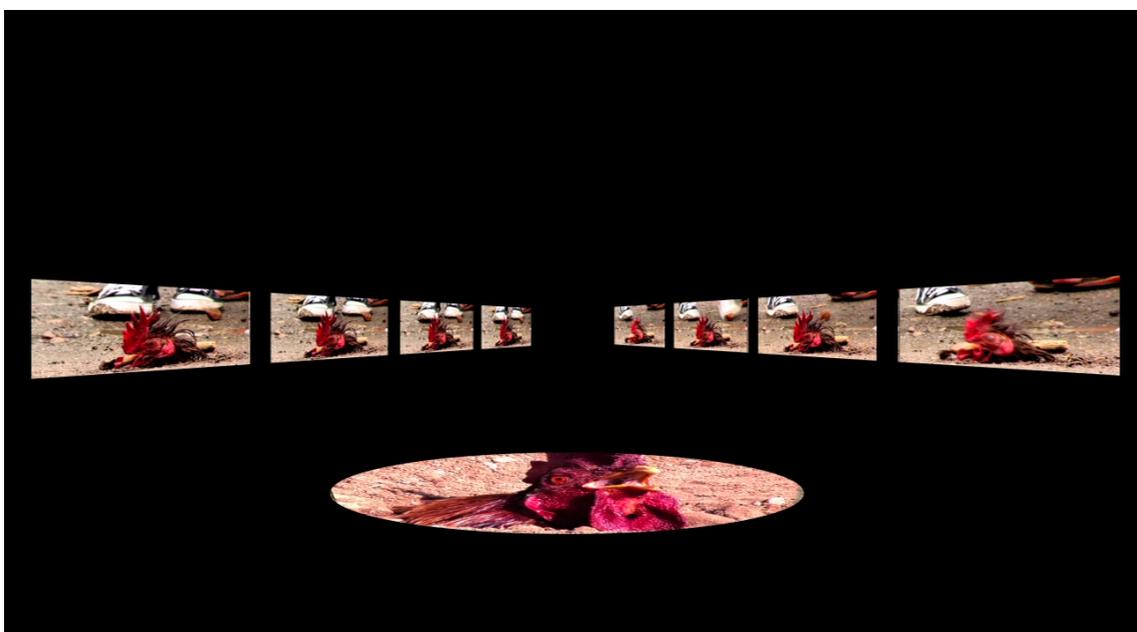
Photograph provided by Clemencia Echeverri.

The voice "heritage" cited in the title necessarily refers to the one who inherits, and consequently and somehow he who assumes a past time as a legacy, is able to inherit . The word "game" which completes the title would be then, an ironic substitute for "ritual" or "feast" as it is actually called this tradition in the Chocó Valley.

The image showed above , immediately evoke a parallel: one of the sequences projected on the nine screens shows the head of the defenseless rooster beside human feet. In the "Guernica" (Pablo Picasso 1937) the head of a warrior (also fallen on the floor) is separated from his torso and is like the rooster's head, close to the leg and horse shoe of a wounded horse, in both images we can see the widely opened eyes of the hero, as we can see the terror of both animals. Horse and rooster are a universal way to cite victims of a violence performed by Men.

  "Heritage Games" is a Video Installation devised and made possible due to New Technologies which do not blind but highlight its narrative, allowing us to propose this work of art as a palimpsest, as the rewriting of a ritual, which was scribed in the collective memory in the past, and is still visible in the present. Present time as a surface, where the artist rewrites, with a new calligraphy and a different dialect, the dialect of New Technologies.

IV

A NON- EMPHATIC CONCLUSION

1. Digital natives facing the rooster's sacrifice.

    We conclude that digital natives, in correlation with their dialectal pursuit of "mutation, innovation, change, evolution, development, crisis, renewal and reform" (v.*supra* p: 2) might be prepared to enjoy this Multimedia, as it proposes an environment surrounded by screens, images and sounds. This work of art might transport the spectator to its familiar scenario of digital devises, simultaneity and multitask. "Heritage Games" will probably confront the native spectator with an unknown ritual or an unknown purpose for the ritual. Nevertheless, he might feel willingly and actively experiencing a work of art, devised with technology, familiar to his cultural dialect. A native spectator could possibly feel transported to a scenario which does

not propose action, but proposes feeling. We may also conclude that natives might not inquire about hidden meanings that might be deducted by inquiring *under* or *within* the Installation *surface*. Whatever is to be understood or felt will objectively be supported by what is actually seen or heard when visiting the exhibition room.

On the other hand, in the process of wondering about immigrant community's behavior in relationship with "Heritage Games", we propose they might wonder about whatever captured the artist's interest towards an ancestral rite, focusing on a singular ceremony, to work on it as an art proposal. We believe immigrants might inquire about the process of recording and selecting scenes or the procedures required for recording sounds, the accurate decisions taken by the artist in order to select sounds and voices, captured during the performance of a "party", performed by the Pacific Ocean on Colombian ground. Immigrants might also wonder about the vicar ceremony which the artist invited the community to perform for a second time, in order to record and photograph the performers who, this time behaved as actors in front of Echeverri's cameras, so as to create a simulated scene, proposed to integrate the tidy devising of this work of art which enables the immigrant spectator to interrogate himself and reason about reality criterions, and probably also gender criterion.

The time spent by the artist in devising the narrative – attending the ceremony on the field, sound recording , selecting characters for the performance, analyzing, recording and photographing, selecting, editing , in order to make possible the Installation - might be evaluated by the immigrant as a relevant working process, as important as the time destined to technological fields in order to device this Multimedia Video Installation. We might conclude that the digital immigrant community would focus attention on the narrative issues and its necessary technological support, impossible to be separated from the semantic field proposed, however highlighting the multiple connotations which this narrative might alight.

2. Re-cognize

Gubern (1996 c: p 15) [xvii]quotes that the process of recognition requires identification; re-cognizing assumes a knowledge capital accumulated by the subject in its past, then once confronting each new act of perception with what is known, recognition is possible. It is certainly impossible to speculate about the past and the knowledge capital accumulated by the digital native when being surrounded by the device "Heritage Games" or being in front of "Play" but it is possible to suspect that they might highlight the technological performance of a Multimedia art work, understanding the technological device as the narrative itself.

Meanwhile the immigrant's accent might be put, in both art proposals, on rituals, cultures, history, meanings, prioritizing the narrative as a subject expressed *through* technology.

At the same time we understand with Eco (1962) and Barthes (1968) that the work of art, whatever is its medium, destination or form, would be completed by the subjectivity of the spectator, regardless their dialect, either as a semantic field which is expressed *inside* or *underneath* the surface of a work of art.

The issue we are finally proposing is the existence of a different regard towards both works of art proposals, synonym of "electronic semiotics". Digital natives might underline the engineering of a Multimedia piece of art. Born within the digital era, technology is for this community, significant itself. Its knowledge capital allow the native to re-cognize the technologic dialect, and understand interaction, screens, interfaces and wiring, as familiar items of its epochal context. Meanwhile we cannot say digital immigrants also devise their art work *because of* the existence of a singular technology. On the contrary, they have embraced these items to their art language, however highlighting the devising and reading of narratives from a perspective, where the emphasis is put on understanding technology as a cultural and anthropological value.

We understand that either spectator will actually feel the impact of "Play's" Soldiers being playfully manipulated by the puppet players. At the same time every spectator will be aware of a community deriding a harmless victim, regardless that the victim is "but" a rooster. These narratives proposed by both Multimedia, "Play" or "Heritage Games", will actually impact on either spectator.

2.1. Art Dialects

The difficult intent to compare capacities between both collectives shows as a result that it is impossible; it is impossible and useless as measuring water with a yard scale. We propose that natives build their intellectual process and behaviors within ICT society they have become familiar with, since they were born, so they emphasize technology's instrumental practices assuming them naturally. New Technologies and virtual environments are incorporated into their lives as a skeleton, not as a skin. Virtuality actually becomes their identity. They show a practical behavior that they are able to translate to their art work. So this paper does not intend assessment criteria. Natives and immigrants generate ideas and behaviors out of their own life experience, which builds up their dialect. Art is a dialectal response to the artist's context, a "social artifact". We would like to put an end to this paper by estimating, neither

affirming nor concluding and, along with Baudrillard (1996) propose that "in the heart of video cultures there may be a screen but not necessarily a regard"

Susana Pérez Tort. Spring 2010

NOTES:

[i] Andrada, A.. *Nuevas Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación / NTICX*. Editorial Maipue, Buenos Aires. 2010

[ii] Prensky, M. *A new way to look at our kids*. On The Horizon MCB University Press, Vol. 9 No. 5, October 2001

[iii] Andrada, A. Ibidem

[iv] http://www.lanacion.com.ar/nota.asp?nota_id=1285503 Artículo "De nativos digitales a náufragos en la red". San Martín, R. domingo 18 julio 2010.

[v] http://www.flacso.org.ar/educacion/en-los-medios/logicas-en-juego-por-ines-dussel
Lógicas en juego. Dusserl, I.FLACSO, Directora del Proyecto de Educación y Nuevas Tecnologías. 7 julio 2010.

[vi] Gubern, R. *Del bisonte a la realidad virtual. La escena y el laberinto*. Anagrama. Barcelona. 1996.
Gubern, R. *El simio informatizado*. http://www.scribd.com/doc/4063666/El-simio-informatizado.

[vii] Paz, O. *"Apariencia desnuda. La obra de Marcel Duchamp"* Editorial ERA. México, 1979.

[viii] "Bicycle Wheel" is a paradigmatic work of modern art, which is considered one of the first reactions to the narrative proposed by the twentieth century avant garde tendencies. Wajcman (2001) has baptized this piece as "the object of the century".

[ix] Weibel, P. *Arte algorítmico. De Cézanne a la computadora*. Seminario. Plataforma Minad de UNESCO. 2004.

[x] Danto, A. *El abuso de la belleza. La estética y el concepto del arte.* Editorial Paidós. Buenos Aires .2003.

[xi] We refer here to experiments carried out by Moholy Nagy at the Bauhaus (1919/1933), which explored the possibility of performing art with projected lights, he creates a "light modulator" which is no longer an "artifact". These experiences were consolidated in the late forties an fifties with the introduction of kinetic art and sculpture.

[xii] A taxonomy of digital design and first art experiences performed with the use of a computer there is an article (in Spanish language) :"Art and computers" (*"El arte y el ordenador"*)
http://descargas.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/12593400880143731865846/003162_4.pdf

[xiii] This term is mentioned to refer to Lin Pey Chwen technological works of art. See www.digiarts.org.tw

[xiv] Clemencia Echeverri's team: Sound by Nicolás Guarín and Clemencia Echeverri. First camera: Andrés Guzmán. Second camera: Diego león. Photography: Clemencia Echeverri – Camilo Echeverri. Sound Design: Daniel Prieto. General edition by Diego León. Edition assistant: Víctor Garcés. Interactivity (Projected and not finally executed): Martha Patricia Niño.

[xv] Cited by Clemencia Echeverri p: 38. Published in *"Clemencia Echeverri-Sin respuesta"* "Clemencia Echeverri- Un unsered" bilingual edition (Spanich/English) .Universidad Nacional de Colombia. Bogotá 2008.

[xvi] Cited by clemencia Echeverri p: 34. *Ibidem*

[xvii] Gubern, R. *"Del bisonte a la realidad virtual. La escena y el laberinto"*. Anagrama. Barcelona. 1996.

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