

Abstract

Critical analysis requires the ability to think beyond simplistic dichotomies. This project investigates dichotomies that usually impoverish debates and proposals in media art –including material-immaterial, organic and machinic, theory and practice. Through the analysis of the appropriation of photosensitive elements in media devices and artworks, a critical discussion about media art aesthetics through its very materiality is developed. The methodology combines a historical and analytical approach, through new materialism, media archaeology, cultural techniques and second-order cybernetics. The examination also generates a brief genealogy of photosensitivity in relation to media art.

Each of the aforementioned dichotomies is respectively addressed in three chapters. In the first chapter, *Photosensitivity: materialities and operations*, photosensitivity is unfolded through the investigation of light-matter interaction from the atomic level to selected technical ensembles and operations. The project explores the notion of active matter, a relational perspective of materiality, which is also the fundament of the very notion of 'media' and, by extension, media art and its informational aesthetics. Chapter two, *Photosensitivity shaping hybrid systems*, focuses on the dichotomy organic-machinic. Since organic and machinic photosensitive elements have been used indistinctively in media artworks as creative sources, the analysis elucidates a circular, continuous and mutual influence between organic and machinic elements. The third chapter, *Light-to-sound translations*, focuses on the analysis of media devices and artworks based on light-to-sound translations, including a performance, *Self-portrait of an absence*, developed by the author. Articulating Flusser's perspective on the zero-dimensionality of electronic and digital media, the chapter unfolds the notion of translation of materialities, indicating the multiple roles of absence as a potent element in the creation of media artworks.

Several known media stories are reframed from an alternative perspective – that of photosensitivity. The reframing elucidates specific elements and implications of photosensitive qualities of media artworks as a metonymy to provide general and crucial guiding criteria for the media art production, criticism, education and

diffusion. Addressed to art students, artists, curators and theoreticians, this investigation contributes to a critical perspective of scientific and technological knowledge in aesthetic experimentations.