

Narrative Environments Using Game Design Mechanism in Immersive Theatre & VR

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HYPOTHESIS:

Both in VR and immersive theatre space has similar characteristics as in video games

DEFINITIONS:

VR:

I use the concept of virtual reality based on P. Brooks Jr.' definition:

"I define a virtual reality experience as any in which the user is effectively immersed in a responsive virtual world. This implies user dynamic control of viewpoint." (1999, p.16)

IMMERSIVE THEATRE:

According to Mandell (2016), immersive theatre has 5 characteristics:

1. Immersive theatre tends to stimulate all five senses—sight and sound, as with conventional theatre pieces, but also touch, and frequently taste and even smell.
2. These shows double as an art installation and hands-on museum.
3. Immersive shows make individual audience members feel as if they have had a uniquely personal experience, that they are not just part of the crowd.
4. Emphasizes the social, through playful interaction or inexplicable tasks, often in small groups.
5. The show has to have a story to tell and it has to have respect for that story."

COMPUTER GAME SPACE&NARRATIVE:

The use of spatial reduction, according to Aarseth: "[...] the difference between the spatial representation and real space is what makes gameplay by automatic rules possible. In real space, there would be no automatic rules, only social rules and physical laws." (2001, p.163)

CASE Study – Immersive Theatre

SIGNA Das Heuvolk
(2017 Mannheim – Schillertage Festival)

CHARACTERISTICS:

- limited space, but hyperrealistic
- the actors are setting the rules
- emergent narrative

RESEARCH METHODS

1. Audience survey

- 263 completed surveys

Result: the audience mainly didn't feel that their experience could be compared to video game playing

- several mentioned that is nevertheless felt like in a virtual reality

-several mentioned that they have tried VR-games, but only a very few could have felt that these experiences are comparable to SIGNA's performance/performance installation

2. In-depth interview with the co-creator, Arthur Köstler (Zip-Scene 2017)

"in this show it is impossible to visit every room in one evening."

"you can start to get deeper into all the relationships between the Himmelfahrers. The more you get there, the more you get involved. You can also befriend some of the characters. Of course at some point this escalation will stop, but we improvise."

"nothing real can happen to you in a video game. Yet. In our shows you cannot die but you can be more emotional, as you are personally involved and you are physically there. You are much more vulnerable."



SIGNA Das Heuvolk. Photo by: Erich Goldmann (Mannheim, 2017)

Case Study – VR

Mona el Gammal/ARTE360 VR – RhizomatVR
(2017 Berliner Festspiele)

CHARACTERISTICS:

- limited space, not possibility to move
- the technique is setting the rules
- embedded narrative

FURTHER RESEARCH TO BE CONDUCTED

1. Audience survey

How the viewers/users felt their body?

How the viewers/users felt the space?

How the users experienced the interactivity?



RHIZOMAT VR © Torben Otten

2. In-depth interview about telling a story by using the right environment. Conversation with the creator Mona el Gammal (Expected date 30 November 2017)

Hypothesis: VR technology is not ready yet for stories, therefore for now it can only operate with narrative environments.

VR&Immersive Theatre: "Player-representation integrated in the gameworld"

VR: By enabling us to "rehears" a gesture or a fraction of a story, the user will be caught by the "empathy machine".

Immersive Theatre: The participant is surrounded by the narrative environment and the unfolding story. The story is embedded, as the single "player" has to decipher it.

Where is your body in the virtual reality environment to "live" the narration?

No matter how technology of virtual reality headsets is developing, your limbs are in a different world. In immersive theatre you are completely "owning" the timing of your gestures

Suggestions: Immersive performance installations can enhance artistically intended research and production made for VR's medium

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