Reflection Assignment Proposal.

McLuhan and the Metaverse.

I am very much interested in the use of technology for creative purposes. The rise of web 3.0 and the Metaverse sparks my interest. I want to understand it better and reflect on how the medium is being used and on its potential. I wonder how this will get embedded in everyday life.

Looking for a theoretical framework, the media theory proposed by Marshall McLuhan is one of the standards in the field. Even though his work is from before the internet era, or the information explosion of the beginning of the century, his reflections remain very up to date with contemporary media.

In this reflection work, I want to combine those (Mc Luhan’s theory and the Metaverse) and analyze the Metaverse as a medium to clarify the underlying message.

The relevance of this reflection for my practice is to go beyond buzzwords.

Although McLuhan is considered a standard in media theory, some of his statements as “the global village,” “the medium is the message,” or “the electric age” are often uttered very lightly and divorced from the theoretical and practical context that McLuhan presented them in. In any case, having a solid grasp of McLuhan’s theory is a must for any (serious) artist working with (new) media.

A similar situation takes place with the Metaverse and web 3.0. Most of the “creative uses” I have seen of the Metaverse as a medium come from the commercial field and seem more a pathological FOMO. Is that really art?

Nevertheless, I firmly believe that web 3.0, and its current speculations, will have a tremendous influence on the media of the future and my practice. Therefore, investigating how the existing theoretical frameworks fit – or misfit – these new technological developments is vital to any artist involved in the field.

On the practical side, I intend to follow McLuhan’s comparison with television and radio but for the Metaverse. I will use his well known books, “Understanding Media” and “the Medium is the Massage,” together with material made available by the McLuhan Estate. To provide a technical perspective on the subject, I will use articles and blogs from web 3.0 and Metaverse advocates. I will take the original blog by Zeldman on web 3.0 and the introduction of the Metaverse by Zuckerberg as a base for this. I will relativize this with other analyses and critics, mainly from the web, that explain the Metaverse and speculate on its future.

The main questions I would like to answer are:

What is the message of McLuhan?

What is the Metaverse beyond a buzzword?

How does McLuhan’s theory apply to the Metaverse?

I intend to describe the Metaverse as a medium and summarize the current definitions of it. What it can and cannot do, from a functional point of view, is its content. Following McLuhan, I want to relativize it against other mediums like television, radio, web 2.0 pages, and social media (Facebook, Instagram).

Given that web 3.0 is still in its early years, it gives room to speculate about its adoption. Here I would like to consider the scenario where the Metaverse becomes the standard.

References:

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