

Group 6-Marc, Sjoerd, John

Respond to Group 4 on Rokeby-Stelarc

Marc Stumpel

Group 4 provided a very clear overview of Rokeby's paper, *Transforming Mirrors*. It explains the different models of interaction that he describes in a clear way; not only by telling what they are, but also by giving good examples, and therefore placing them into context. In addition to their examples I'd like to refer to 'Project Natal's Milo' which maybe applies to all the different models of interaction that Rokeby describes: http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x9gxyk_e32009-project-natal-demo-milo-xbox_videogames. Group 4 does a good job mentioning Krueger's VIDEOPLACE. They clearly describe the difference between Stelarc's work and the interactive artwork that Rokeby's writes about. Though, they could have mentioned that Stelarc's work applies to the last paragraph before the conclusion 'Automata': "Artists create artworks that are not intended to be an extension of the interactor; their creations are essentially self-motivated and autonomous. These automata survey and manoeuvre through their environment, of which the spectators are only one aspect." We might add to the discussion: is Stelarc's work 'Automata' or does it only resemble it?

Sjoerd Tuinema

Group 4 wrote a extensive analysis of Rokeby's vision on the nature of media art, naming a lot of relevant and modern-day cases. In this way, the text feels very complete and comprehensive. They clearly outline how the reflections could be seen back in both mainstream media and media art. What I did miss in the text was some clear descriptions about the status of the 'control' (as the participant is always desirable in a given environment) and 'suprises' (ironically described as 'bad design' by the author) properties as the author outlines this as factors from a creators but also public's point of view. I'm really missing how this relates to the given examples, as they approach the control- or surprise-factor.

When it comes to the comparison of Stelarc and Rokeby, I don't clearly see how this externalised consciousness concept is opposed to Rokeby's take on intelligent and organic systems. I also don't think Stelarc does really claim enough about consciousness to really defend it genuinely, it's not all that apparant if the author sees the (directed) cyborg as a ideal, as it seems to be more a conceptual experiment. Rokeby does oppose this concept, but it's a bold claim to state if this concept is totally rejected only by presenting different concepts of interaction. Thus, the one side doesn't exclude another.

John Haltiwanger

I don't understand the brushing off of Stelarc's work as unimportant. While I admit that his presentations are neither overwhelmingly impressive nor my taste in "interactive" art, the philosophical grounding of his work as expressed in "Parasitic Visions" seems extremely important. To answer the third discussion point first: if cyborg means an assemblage of sub-assemblages of flesh and machine codependent on each other for survival, than of course humanity is already a cyborg *species*. (Race being an altogether different distinction; it is obvious that some human "races" are more cyborg-ized than others, but our interdependence grows every day). Even from the oldest times we are inseperable from our tools, dependent on them for survival. As they evolve, so do social structures. The extent to which current social structures depend on machines defines us as cybernetic--the social structure would

collapse, and whatever came after would no longer resemble "us" as we are today.

This inseparability is precisely the domain of Stelarc's experiments. You are telling me that remote control of human limbs is only a stunt, carrying no implications of philosophical import? Or the telematic projected presence of self into a robot, or many robots at once, is insignificant? (This is not demonstrated as far as I know in his artwork, but is mentioned in the text.) Stelarc extrudes his subjectivity over distances and into improbable "bodies" to better understand that subjectivity, to better define where traditional bodies end and "self" (selves?) begins. His is the opposite of an invisible interface such as this SixthSense. By desiring to design "a body with more adequate inputs and outputs for performance and awareness," Stelarc's approach aims for nothing less than an evolutionary change to enable us to actually handle the informatic flows that threaten to overwhelm us. This "outdated steampunk" style (I'd love to contest your word choice from a literary/aesthetic point of view, by the way) of flesh and metal is simply a less subtle form of the man-machine confluence attendant to the emerging mind-computer interfaces, and yes, even the SixthSense.

As to its utility, I personally wonder how much of Stelarc's work has informed the re-assembling of wounded Iraq war veterans. Not to mention the billions the US government is pouring into exoskeleton development. Perhaps very little, which would be a shame, considering these are important expressions of the extent of how "cyborg" humanity has become in the United States.