

Video as an Object-to-Think-With

Introduction

"Music had its wunderkinder – why not cinema? Cinema, too, needs its Mozarts."

Jonas Mekas

Writing in the 1960's, Mekas astutely points out the paucity of opportunities for children to creatively engage and explore with the process of filmmaking [Mekas 1963]. This situation is perhaps not entirely surprising given the expensive and specialized nature of equipment up until this time. However, Mekas' Village Voice article was published on the cusp of a wave of tremendous changes in the field of moviemaking as the advent of the home-movie dawned. He predicted that "films will soon be made as easily as written poems, and almost as cheaply." Writing in 1997, Seymour Papert uses cinema as an example of how it takes time for "a new culture to emerge with new categories of people – in the case of cinema, the great directors, stars, and special-effects wizards – performing functions that were unimagined and largely unimaginable" [Papert 1997]. Where are Mekas' "moviemaking for everyone" sentiments here? In Papert's invocation, cinema is still a big-industry enterprise where highly specialized people perform breathtaking tasks, thus placing moviemaking outside the realm of ordinary folk. Perhaps it is time to reevaluate and enlarge our understanding of the categories and functions of people engaged in moviemaking given the developments within this field not included in Papert's description?

Ricky Leacock describes moviemaking as an "integrated process" where there is no such thing as a 'cameraman', or a 'director' or an 'editor', only film-makers [Macdonald 1996]. When I first picked up a camera in my late teens, I was uncomfortable with the assignment of any particular named role to what it was I was doing. Director sounded too grandiose, I had no formal training as a cameraperson so that felt like a misnomer, and I didn't even know how to go about editing. However, the term filmmaker appeared to comfortably encapsulate my function in the entire messy enterprise and I accepted it easily. In thinking further about my

initial forays into the world of moviemaking, I was struck by the tremendous resonance between this type of learning experience and the bricolage experience of learning described by Papert, where the student is “guided by the work as it proceeds rather than staying with a pre-established plan” [Papert 1991]. In further considering the comparison between the tenets of Constructionism as espoused by Papert et al, and the tenets of moviemaking as championed by Leacock and Co., I became interested in delving deeper and exploring this emerging and enticing relationship between the two domains. In bringing the two together, and with my own moviemaking learning experience in mind, I wondered, in the vein of Mitchell Resnick and his “computational construction kits that... enable people to express themselves in ever-more complex ways”, what a construction kit for video would look like? [Resnick 1996].

In designing such kits, Resnick emphasizes two key principles – *personal connections*, whereby the kit and activities connect with users interests and passions, and *epistemological connections*, meaning that the kit and activities “should connect to important domains of knowledge—and, more significantly, encourage new ways of thinking” [Resnick 1996]. Designing construction kits raises a number of questions – what tools are necessary for this process, what are suitable activities, what is the role of the teacher/mentor and how will the entire endeavor be evaluated, both from the learner’s and the designer’s perspective? This paper aims to explore these design principles and address the questions raised by positing a range of possible activities and tools to be included in a video construction kit.

Jim Garrison, in discussing Dewey’s notion of “selective emphasis”, draws attention to the fact that “how researchers define, classify, and determine the essence of a situation depends on their purpose” [Garrison 2001] In the case of this exercise, I am aware that my preference for documentary filmmaking, particularly using a cinèma vèritè style, influences and guides my understanding of any situation. Edith Ackerman, describes the type of “children” that Seymour Papert and Jean Piaget depict in their theories, as being very “much in tune with the researchers’ personal styles and scientific interests” [Ackerman 1990]. Following from that, I feel I too must acknowledge that the activities suggested in this paper and the type of learning wished to derive from them, are influenced by my own personal filmmaking style and research interests. I hope however, that I have left considerable scope within each

activity for a wide range of filmmaking styles and preferences. The thought of producing multiple “mini-me” filmmakers leaves me shuddering otherwise!

Theoretical Background

Constructionism and Cinéma vérité

Constructionism contains the constructivist suggestion of learning “as building knowledge structures”, but adds to it the notion that this learning circumstance is greatly enhanced when it occurs in a context “where the learner is consciously engaged in constructing a public entity” [Papert 1991]. Constructionism has been described in very humane terms which serves to presents this theoretical concept using readily understandable and identifiable analogies. In *Mindstorms*, Papert states that “scientific knowledge is more similar to knowing a person than similar to knowing a fact or having a skill” [Papert 1980]. Aaron Falbel elaborates on this description even further by declaring “learning has more to do with falling in love than with systems of pedagogy and methods of instruction” [Falbel 1989]. This notion of deeply engaging on a meaningful, intimate and personal level with the learning process is very appealing. Making a movie can provide the impetus for a similar type of relationship between the filmmaker and his subject, as described by one of the founders of cinéma vérité, Ricky Leacock – “These human people (filmmakers)...work in a very, very intimate way, in a delicate relationship with the person whom they are filming, who is involved in doing something that is more important to him than the fact that he is being filmed” [Macconald 19996].

Cinéma vérité strives for film objectivity and non-interventionism, allowing the action and events to play-out unhindered by direction or interruption from the film crew. For the filmmaker working in this vein, the significance and narrative thrust of the movie may only slowly become apparent, in a process that is unhurried, thoughtful and openly improvisational. This approach to filmmaking resonates with the concept of bricolage as described by Papert, where the maker/programmer “is guided by the work as it proceeds rather than staying with a pre-established plan” [Papert 1991]. Both the domains of constructionist learning and filmmaking exemplify a willingness to adapt and a reliance on intuition, a knowledge concept that Papert defines further with his notion of “syntonic knowledge”. This concept is a powerful one, whereby the understanding and knowledge that the learner has gained feels in many ways self

generated, and endowed with a sense of personal power that is "absent from the use of knowledge that is experienced as coming from the outside" [Papert 1991].

This learning process incorporates the development of both internal and external intelligence models, in a complex intertwined and mutually influencing relationship. Both Papert and his predecessor Jean Piaget understood intelligence as adaptation, or "the ability to maintain a balance between stability and change" [Ackerman 1990]. Paulo Freire postulates his liberation praxis in a way that lends itself further to our understanding of the scope of this whole learning endeavor – "This discovery cannot be purely intellectual but must involve action; nor can it be limited to mere activism, but must include serious reflection" [Freire 1972]. It involves a constant, cyclical and multi-layered reexamination of a situation, where prior experience, intuition and imagination combine and inform one another. Falbel, building on Papert's dictum that "learning is not separate from reality", declares that indeed "learning is living" and a "natural consequence of being alive and in touch with the world [Falbel 1990]. This emphasis on the experiential was previously evidenced in the writings of John Dewey, who espoused a philosophy of education based on experience, which would have the principle of ideas as its foundational core [Dewey 1938]. Papert built further on that when he rounded on the bias of formal schooling towards teaching just skills and facts, and declared instead that we should create learning environments for rich idea work [Papert 2000]. In formulating a series of moviemaking activities for children, I am interested in adhering to the experiential model of learning, where kids will not only be exposed to cinematic conventions and video editing tools, but also to ideas about storytelling, the nature of mass media and distance collaboration

In connecting with their world around them, learners engage in a social process that has a fundamental effect on their cognitive, social and cultural development. Ideas emerge and evolve by sharing them in conversations and narratives, and flourish particularly well in social environments where interaction and discussion is encouraged [Brown 1989]. Barbara Rogoff's community of learner's model follows on this, based as it is on the assumption that learning is a process of transforming participation in shared sociocultural endeavors [Rogoff 1994]. The roles undertaken by individuals in a group can change, be asymmetrical, and vary from one situation or one community to the next. This fluid undertaking of multiple roles is an important

part of the filmmaking process also, where skills and responsibilities within a production are highly interchangeable. John Seely Brown describes the ability of a person to play multiple roles in an authentic activity and reflect productively on his or her performance to be one of the “monumental tasks of education” [Brown 1989].

So who are the people trying to deal with the monumental tasks of education and what is their role in the entire learning process? Brown posits educators in the role of mentors working with apprentice learners. The role of mentor places on honus on the teacher/leader to find the right balance between allowing space for individual growth and knowing when direction or suggestion is needed [Silberman]. Drawing on his own experience, Aaron Falbel describes the complex contradiction inherent in feeling responsible for another’s development, but in a learning environment where the central belief is that it is only the learner who can be responsible for his or her development [Falbel 1989]. I believe that Mitchell Resnick strikes the right chord in “Pianos not Stereos” when he states that educational designers and mentors “need to adopt a relaxed sense of “control””, where the objective is “to create “spaces” of possible activities and experiences” and to make “those spaces dense with personal and epistemological connections” [Resnick 1996].

The process of evaluation is a controversial subject for both constructionist based education and filmmaking. Ivan Illich posits learning as “immeasurable recreation”, a statement that clashes with formal schooling models of examining and measuring student abilities according to standardized tests [Illich 1970]. Filmmaking is a creative and expressive endeavor, difficult to quantifiably measure, particularly given statements such as the following from the late Sol Worth, renowned film maker and theorist, who once declared that “he’d never seen a film he didn’t like” [Hampe1997]. Barry Hampe interprets this statement as meaning that Worth had never seen a film he couldn’t learn from, a re-phrasal that would appear more appropriate to our discussion here!

The activities I describe in the following section aim to incorporate the tenets of constructionist learning in a (hopefully) lively and engaging manner. They demonstrate a progression from rudimentary filmmaking using just the camera, through explorations of time, space and architecture and culminate with a large scale documentary project. Working alone, in small clusters or as an entire group, this

society of learners will produce a body of diverse work that reflects upon what is most important to them. The descriptions of the nature of the projects, possible explorations and broader learning concepts borrows from the model used by Mitchell Resnick in "Adventures in Modeling", which outlines learning activities and challenges for use with StarLogo [Resnick 2001].

Activities

1) Project: Representation and Detail

There are many vantage points from which to tell a story – as an outside observer, as an in-the-know insider, as an investigator, as an explorer or perhaps as an expressive artist. Some of the differences between these approaches can be seen in the event and location details that the moviemaker chooses to focus on. Does she let the camera linger and examine minute details quietly and in depth, or does she let the freeflowing movement of an always-active camera expose the excitement and dynamic vibrancy of a space? Does she use her camera to probe and discover or allow the images and sounds simply reveal themselves? Does her movie examine a theme or event, create a portrait of a person or group of people, or is it an abstract meditation of the color, texture and sound of a location?

Project Description:

Go as a whole group to a nearby park. Spend some time conducting a "recce" of the space by examining it for suitable shoot locations or identifying interesting objects or activities to capture. Break up into smaller groups and develop a strategy and approach for filming what about the park interests and excites you most. Think about the range of shots you want and in which order. You will be "editing in camera", that is you use the camera by turning it on and off to break up your shots in a sequence. Each group will complete a sequence not longer than 2 minutes, made up of as many or as few shots as they like. The final sequences will be viewed together as a continuous single movie by the whole group.

Possible Explorations:

- ✍️ Pick a specific object or section of the park and film it from multiple angles and distances. Think about the proportion, size and scale of the object/place and compare and contrast it to its surroundings.

- ✍✍ Investigate how the park is used by people and animals by documenting the activities going on in different places and at different times. Think about how the movement of the camera can be used to reflect and comment on the dynamic nature of the activities.
- ✍✍ Map out an adventurous journey through the park. Think about the nature of this journey and use your camera to portray this – are you being chased or trying to catch someone, are you on a treasure trail, are you a small animal?
- ✍✍ Create a collection of shots demonstrating the colors, textures and sounds of the park. Think about this sequence as a kaleidoscope of images and sounds that will flood the viewer's senses.

Moviemaking Concepts:

This activity provides an opportunity for children to explore the functions and capabilities of the camera. It also seeks to familiarize them with holding the camera and beginning to see it as both an extension of their eye and their body. Cinematic techniques such as the close up, angle, depth of field, zooming, panning and indeed, running with the camera can all be investigated in a playful manner. Editing in camera helps focus the activity by encouraging the children to think about the shots they would like to capture, in what order and how long or short they should be. Viewing all the sequences in one run through as a single movie introduces issues of juxtaposition and montage as a naturally occurring editing technique in the overall production.

Tools:

This activity only requires the use of a digital video camera.

Broader Philosophy:

Multiple possible representations of various granularities for depicting the same thing
Meaning as derived from a group of creators

Project: Movie Diaries

For centuries, people have used diaries and journals to record the events of the day, interesting anecdotes, their thoughts and their hopes for the future. Writing in diaries helps people reflect and make sense of their lives, by allowing them to

document initial observations and feelings about an event that they can subsequently revisit and review at a later date. This chronological method of recording methodology was incorporated by the film and video world in the early 1970's as evidenced by the work of moviemakers such as Andy Warhol and broadcasting corporations such as the Film Board of Canada and the BBC. Today, online journals in the form of weblogs offer an easy to use public form of diary keeping, where the blog owner can post thoughts, opinions, favorite links, photos, or stories and invite commentary from site visitors. This 'scrapbook' format provides a novel framework for the collection and display of snippets of video that additionally invites feedback from viewers, useful for generating discussion.

Project Description:

Each moviemaker sets up an individual profile on the group weblog. She can provide some background information about herself, her interests, her family and friends. The group weblog is a place of experimentation and idea development, where participants can upload their thoughts, snippets of movies, inspiring photographs, text descriptions of problems they are having or links to work that they like. Other group members can then post possible solutions to problems, comments on work or suggestions for further projects or collaborations. Participants are encouraged to think of their weblog not only as a video-ideas journal, but also as a useful framework for developing serial based projects. Throughout the course of the moviemaking workshop series, the group weblog will be a developing showcase of ideas, both incomplete and fully fleshed out.

Possible Explorations:

- ☞☞ Use your weblog to catalogue what inspires and fascinates you on a daily basis. Add newspaper clippings, links to online stories, photographs you like, information about people you admire, books you are reading and songs and jokes you have heard. Observe over the weeks how your day-to-day life impacts upon your moviemaking process.
- ☞☞ Pick a subject close to your heart (a favorite person, hobby, or place) and follow that theme throughout the workshop series, creating at least one shot or sequence every week about it. Consider
- ☞☞ Think of stories suitable for telling in chronological or serial form – soap operas, mystery shows, cookery shows. What about a how-to series of

movies, where each day a new step in the process is posted to the weblog?

Moviemaking Concepts:

The video weblog provides a useful framework for introducing participants to the concepts of story sketching and idea development in an open and interactive format. This form of sequentially and regularly publishing content provides an opportunity to examine subjects and stories repeatedly and often, where each moviemaking experience will hopefully build on the last. Shooting and producing content for serial distribution necessitates engaging with a form of narrative construction where suspense and 'leaving your audience wanting more' becomes an important part of the storytelling process.

Tools:

Weblog Software – MovableType, Blogger, Greymatter

Video Capturing/Editing Software – iMovie, Premiere

Broader Philosophy:

Video as a "collectable" media – resonance with scrapbooks, journals and other recording devices

Video as a tool for reflection – portrait developing over time

Publishing unfinished material and snippets of ideas to solicit feedback

Project: Movies and Time

We are all familiar with and fascinated by time-lapse footage of flowers spectacularly blooming at speed, the sun rising and setting over a city in a matter of seconds and the tide endlessly racing and retreating from the shore in a fast repetitive cycle. Jean Luc Godard once said that movies were "the truth 24 frames a second". However, this truth is an extremely slippery one, given the malleable nature of the relationship between moviemaking and time. In films, "real" time can be stretched and compressed, reversed and skipped through, using a combination of shooting, editing and playback techniques. A regular two-hour movie can bring viewers on an adventure through centuries of time (The X-Files Movie), can loop entirely backwards in time (Memento) or can represent exactly each viewing minute with one screen minute (TimeCode).

Project Description:

Working in groups, produce a series of movies, both long and short-term, that investigate how time can be manipulated and played with.

Possible Explorations:

- ✍✍ Use a webcam or a camera fitted with a time-lapse function to regularly capture images of a repetitive action or a dynamic location over an extended period of time. Growth and decay are two interesting phenomena to investigate here – what else?
- ✍✍ Shoot short sequences that you intend to play backwards or out of order for comedic or mysterious effect. Anything involving the destruction of something impossible to put back together again (e.g. a water balloon) is a good start.
- ✍✍ Produce shots that capture motions that loop, or have a smooth continuous action from start to finish. Someone doing a cartwheel, swinging a baseball bat or any other type of clean movement would work here. These loops can then be used as video 'samples' to create rhythmic movies using music and beats.

Moviemaking Concepts:

Notion of the loop or video sample

Time stretching and compressing through capturing and editing techniques

Ordering of shots to create illusion of time passing or flashbacks

Broader Philosophy

Power of editing to manipulate and distort time

Looping or sampling to create rhythm

Project: Found Footage

Transforming, appropriating and recontextualizing existing work to produce new creations has served artists since the late 19th century, when the Cubists and Dadaists began to incorporate "readymade" fragments into original artworks. This same recycling process is evidenced in other creative domains also, in music with the works of Plunderphonics, Stephan Wolpe and John Cage, and in film, with the found footage film movement begun in the 1960's. These movies show film editors

examining notions of deconstruction to both question received understandings of documentary and to produce powerful (re)interpretations of this content.

Project Description:

Create movies without shooting any footage of your own. Beg, borrow or steal from recorded television shows, the Internet, radio, your group members, newspapers, magazines or any other media source. Think about how the selection and rearrangement of your found material commentates on that content itself, by forming surprising juxtapositions and altering the originally intended meaning.

Possible Explorations:

- ✂✂ Gather a selection of sequences from your favorite movies and reedit them. What about selecting movies of a certain cinematic type (action, comedy, animation) and putting together a series of similar stereotypical shots (car chase, embarrassing moment, animals walking off cliffs before freefalling). Or choose entirely different movies and experiment with editing together clips that cause radical changes in tone or demonstrate highly unlikely consequences following certain events.
- ✂✂ Take a selection of unedited and unused footage from your fellow group members and consider how it could be used to create a meaningful narrative. In particular, think about how you could construct something revealing about the original producer of the footage.
- ✂✂ Use photos, newspaper clippings, graphic art or any other print media as the raw materials for the title sequence of an imaginary movie. Edit the sequence together either by importing the images directly into an editing software package, or use the camera to add some movement and life to the images. Think about how panning, zooming and positioning the content emphasizes and draws the eye towards parts of the screen. Finally, maybe add sound bites or music from movie soundtracks to create an accompanying background rhythm.

Moviemaking Concepts:

This activity focuses on editing techniques, specifically montage editing, where meaning is created by the juxtaposition of startling images. Participants will learn how to extract meaning and create stories using material that they have not

produced themselves, thereby honing their improvisational skills. This project also introduces students to the concept of using still images in a dynamic way that helps bring them to life, as practiced by historical documentary makers.

Broader Philosophy

Reinventing and reinterpreting using the artifacts of others

Adding meaning to what is considered meaningless

Concept of the readymade (Marcel Duchamp)

Project: Story Interpretation

Many Hollywood movies today are adapted from novels, plays, and memoirs or are reenactments of actual events. Interpreting and representing the stories and experiences of other people, whether real or fictional, is a challenge for any filmmaker. Decisions must be made about the essential elements of the story - what can be left out and what must be included? What is the tone of movie, what feelings is it trying to evoke in the viewer, what point is it trying to get across? How accurate will the portrayal be, or how much artistic license will be taken given the constraints or desires of the moviemaker? What relationship does the moviemaker have to the original story or the people involved in it, and how will this be negotiated throughout the process?

Project Description:

Ask a friend to tell you about a dream they had, their favorite memory or a funny joke. Write your own interpretation of their story in a style that suits the content of the tale. Produce a short movie using this perspective and watch it together with your friend.

Possible Explorations:

- ☞ Explore your story interpretation through the senses. What are the important colors, the key textures, smells and sounds? What sensations would best evoke the essence of the story?
- ☞ Improvise with how you will represent the characters in the story. Would it be best to use live actors, dolls or puppets or maybe paper drawings? What about constructing miniature sets for depicting fantastical locations?

Experiment with forms of narration – do you want to use the original storyteller's voice or use a voiceover? Perhaps you'd like to use simple text or other word graphics? Or maybe the story could be best conveyed and supported by music or even silence?

Moviemaking Concepts:

This activity provides an opportunity for students to hone and develop their interview techniques. Here they can practice how to put someone at ease, to ask the right questions, to identify when more detail is required and to know when they have enough material and the interview is over. From here, the real hard work begins! Extracting the salient details from a story is a fundamental but by no means easy part of the moviemaking process. Learning how to formulate a clear narrative that captures the essence of a tale or encapsulates the tone of story is a process that takes considerable time and thought. Consideration must also be given to how explicitly will this story be told, as evidenced by the decisions necessary to make regarding the role of the narrator. Additionally, to enhance their story, the moviemaker can experiment with sound effects, lighting details and music. Improvising with homemade sets, toys or other objects found lying around highlights the notion that ideas can be conveyed and stories told in movies using symbolic or representative objects. Furthermore, this project introduces moviemakers to the notion of responsibility, both to their work and to their subject. The person interviewed will get to see how their story has been portrayed, and discussion about accuracy in reporting, artistic license and truth can be anticipated.

Broader Philosophy:

Narrative point of View

Interpretation of the stories of others

Responsibility of moviemaker to her subjects and to herself

Project: Collaborative Filmmaking

Collaboration and partnership between individuals on a project can expand the scope of an endeavor in wide-ranging directions, particularly with creative undertakings. "This Is What Democracy Looks Like" is a recent example of a movie produced using a highly collaborative process. This 70-minute documentary about the 1999 anti-WTO protests in Seattle was constructed from the footage of over 100 filmmaking

activists who attended the protest. Another somewhat different example is Richard Linklater's "Waking Life" which contains the work of 30 different animators who each rendered various sequences of the movie, thus lending it an ever-changing and dynamic energy as the artistic interpretation shifts and morphs from one style to the next.

Project Description:

Working together as both a fully contained group and smaller units, create movie sequences collaboratively. Use the Individeo application for further experimentation and rearrangement.

Possible Explorations:

- ✂✂ Break up into groups of three and make a meditative "video haiku".
Decide together on a contemplative topic that is meaningful to all the group members. Each person will contribute a single "line" to the video poem, in the form of a short sequence containing either 5 or 7 shots. These can then be stitched together according to 5,7,5 arrangement of traditional haikus. (Or not – go crazy!)
- ✂✂ Create a "video madlib" for your fellow moviemakers to fill in with their own video shot. Construct a movie sequence template that has a number of key shots missing (the shot before a reaction shot, or a shot of a door opening to reveal...). Give your colleagues some clues as to the general type of shot that might be appropriate here, similar to the way textual madlibs specify nouns, verbs, adjectives etc.
- ✂✂ Make a video whisper game. One person shoots the first shot of a sequence and passes this on to the next. This person gets to see only the shot of the person before them and creates a shot in response. This continues until everyone has contributed to the complete video whisper.

Moviemaking Concepts:

Essence of the shot and the sequence

Montage

Styles of shooting

Rearrangement and Interpretation

Broader Philosophy

Video as a gaming element

Collaborating in mysterious circumstances

Project: Projection in Space

Artists such as Kzrysttof Wodiczko and Rafael Lozano-Hemmer have explored the relationship between architecture, technology and projection for many years, producing a diverse body of work that seeks to interrogate and explore space using the projected image. The eventual display of a movie warrants thought and consideration as it can greatly enhance the audience experience. Do you want the viewer to be dwarfed and overwhelmed by a huge projection or do you want her to experience many projected miniature movies simultaneously? Could the projections be triggered to play based on the viewer's location, thus inviting the audience to explore a space? How can the layout of the physical space be incorporated as an important element in your movie experience?

Project Description:

Choose a location or relevant object that you would like to project a movie onto. If you select a physical place, examine it closely to determine the color, reflectiveness and texture of its structure, note the amount of light it receives and how sound reverberates around the space. If you select an object, measure it carefully and examine its color, texture and reflectiveness. Keep all of these properties in mind as you formulate an idea for a movie suitable for projecting in such circumstances.

Possible Explorations:

- ☞☞ Create a ghostly presence! Shoot some footage of people dressed in white moving around a room, making sure to use the camera on a tripod. Replay this footage in the exact same location, but with the projector in place of the camera.
- ☞☞ Project multiple movies created by the entire group onto a wall, creating story windows. Work on the design of the window sizes and the juxtaposition and positioning of the projections.
- ☞☞ Project movies onto personally meaningful objects or textured surfaces to add another layer of meaning to the movie content.

- ✍✍Project movies onto moving objects, such as balloons or curtains moving in a breeze, thus allowing the movie to be casually revealed and obscured
- ✍✍Coordinate and synchronize the playback and projection of movies according to sensor information as viewers navigate a space

Moviemaking Concepts:

This activity provides an opportunity for students to examine the formal elements of composition and the movie frame in a large-scale environment.

Tools:

Multimedia Authoring Environment – Macromedia Director, Isis

Broader Philosophy

Juxtaposition of content

Relationship between space and media

Dynamic surfaces and textures

Project: Location Based Moviemaking

Advances in handheld computers, position sensing technologies and broadband wireless networks provide a channel for the delivery of mobile cinema. Such a scenario necessitates the story space to be mapped to physical space both technically and in terms of content. M-Studio is a software tool developed by Pengkai Pan in the Interactive Cinema group at MIT's Media Lab that provides authors with a graphical tool for associating video content with a specific geographical space. Pan states his goal with the project as being to "provide tool kits with the goal of empowering and facilitating communities of people to make content together".

Project Description:

This large-scale project requires members of the group to adopt various roles such as writers, actors, camera, sound, editors, directors and producers. Working collectively, write and produce a location-based story using the M-Views studio system.

Possible Explorations:

- ✍✍Create a mystery story that the viewers have to solve

- ✍️✍️What about seeding a treasure trail with video clips that the viewers have to find?
- ✍️✍️Research a popular local tourist spot and develop content for visitors

Moviemaking Concepts:

Historical documentation
Fiction film
Multi linear story construction
Story time and real time

Tools:

M-Views Studio

Broader Philosophy:

Relationship between location, story and movement through space
Interweaving of storylines
Coherence of plot

Project: Cinéma vérité

Cinéma vérité is a style of filmmaking pioneered by Ricky Leacock and his colleagues at Drew Associates in the 1960's. Instead of beginning with any particular idea, the story and final narrative of the movie only becomes apparent to the filmmakers over time.

Project Description:

Select a theme or a person that you are very familiar with and create a documentary about them. Your movie will attempt to provide an in-depth, honest and revealing depiction of your subject, and will use a cinéma vérité style. No interviews, no tripods, no lights, no intervening, no directing. Try and convince your audience of the truth behind your movie.

Possible Explorations:

- ✍️✍️Produce a movie to convince your group about the truth behind a strange event – a UFO sighting, or Elvis working in your local supermarket. Other

group members will simultaneously produce movies negating your claim.

Who will be most convincing?

✍✍ Make a fly-on-the-wall documentary about a group of people you know

Moviemaking Concepts:

Point of View

Narration

Reconstruction of events

Reflective filmmaking

Broader Philosophy:

Deception and truth in moviemaking.

Influence of the filmmakers presence and subjectivity.

Media manipulation

Final Remarks

This paper offers a rudimentary outline for a research endeavor that I am excited to pursue. I believe that a constructionist framework is an ideal manner with which to investigate artistic and creative activities, and moviemaking in particular lends itself nicely to this effort. Over the course of this summer, it is my intention to develop this proposed activity series into a more substantial program and invite local school-children to participate. To borrow from Ricky Leacock, I think I have to do it to know and understand it, a process I am very much looking forward to experiencing.

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