Linkages, Languages: connecting traditional art and digital technologies

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Abstract

This paper proposes a case study elucidating a creative process in the arts that illustrates a constructionist approach very well. It describes the design and the implementation of IMAGO TRANSITUS, a video-light installation created during a residency early in 2008, in the Chapel St Eloi of the Domaine de Soucy, Fontenay-les-Briis, France. This paper presents a succession of decisions that reflect the dialogue between physical, virtual and intellectual resources.

As an artist, my aim is to make sense of space, time, light, materials and information with my art-works. I develop my own models exploring and using a variety of tools: materials, lights, virtual images, visual language, computer languages and software, silence, sounds, body movements…

IMAGO TRANSITUS associates a wadding-light arrangement with a video projection. Digital technologies contribute to the emergency of dynamic qualities of the material work while the later offers to the digital image a new medium of expression and existence.
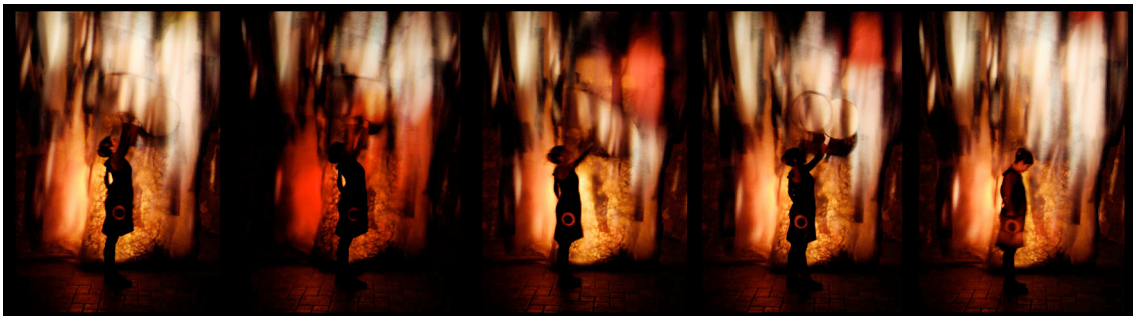
Figure 1. IMAGO TRANSITUS, five moments of the art-work. Performer: Irina Zhekova

The finalisation of the artwork cannot be considered as the last step of the process. A new page is opened when the art-work enters a public space. It becomes the focus of exchanges inducing a dialogue with other artists and visitors that may lead me to feel the impact of my art perhaps reconsidering my tools, my models, my ways of doing.

"Linkages, languages" refers to the real possibility of weaving physical, virtual and intellectual resources, traditional and recent, high tech and craft work, immediacy and sequential, private and public.

"Linkages, Languages" symbolizes the conceptual availability of building interconnecting bridges.

Keywords

Traditional art, digital technologies, linkage, language, creative process, interaction.

Describing the creative process of Imago Transitus

My artistic purpose is the creation of evolving illuminated art-works. The marriage of wadding-light becomes the material drive and the space to comprehend is conceived as a place of actual experience.

Mindful of the interaction of the materials under the influence of lights, I built my work and its field of vision, using composite techniques including drawing, sculpture, photography, video, scenography. New technologies and the concept of recuperation have increased in importance in my latest art-works.

The wadding, comprising fullness and emptiness, is the privileged area for a fluid, permeable and breathing gateway between exterior and interior. The digital technologies offer the movement to light which magnifies the materials as well as magnifying itself. Thereby the couple wadding-light enhances the visual and tactile qualities of the evolving art-work and questions the notion of borders and identity.

This paper describes the design and the implementation of IMAGO TRANSITUS, a video-light installation created during a residency early in 2008, at the Domaine de Soucy, France.

The creative process follows a constructionist strategy. I present a serial of mental and manual operations made during the experience to illustrate how intelligence (intuitive, logic, practice…) and environment (a shadow of a plant in sunset, a library of "trial and trash", a software…) interact following the initial purpose set for this project: expressing visually the notion of flowing.

The art-work is conceived as a complex, open and dynamic system, the digital techniques as a tool and also as an exploration territory [4].

The language of visual art combines with the digital language, making sense. Thanks to its fluid nature, digital contributes to the emergency of dynamic qualities of the material work while the later offers to the digital image a new medium of expression and existence.

" Linkages, Languages " is the motto in which I build my artistic creativity as well as my own reality [6,7,9].

The context and the purpose

The place to invest was the Chapel St-Eloi, a twelfth century chapel that has been converted into an exhibition center.

The dimensions of the chapel lead me to favor a vertical approach. The ceiling height was important in relation to the width and depth offering a very important distance between the entrance and the far end of the chapel. In this way, the spectator had a very good perspective of the exhibition area.

For this project, I was able to identify quickly my aesthetic choice clearly stating my intention: I want to express the notion of flowing.

Figure 2. Sketch: interior space of the Chapel St Eloi (XIII century)

The apse of the chapel hosted the artwork.

The two constituents elements of IMAGO TRANSITUS are presented in the longitudinal section of the Chapel of Figure 3. The wadding-light arrangement is the luminous body of the installation, the luminous flesh bathed by the animated light of the video projection configuring its evolving luminous skin (red line of Figure 3).
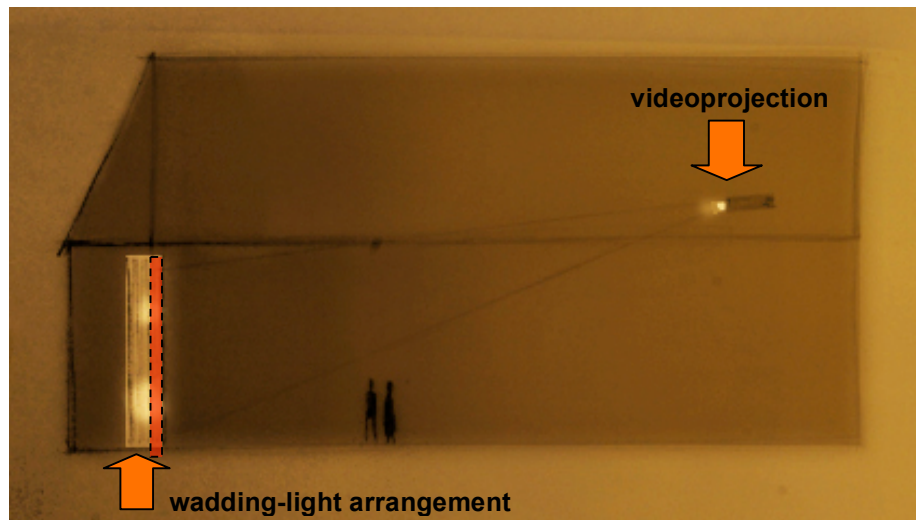

Figure 3. Longitudinal section of the Chapel

For the lights, the wadding is both a mould and a screen, a privileged area for a fluid permeable and breathing gateway, a membrane between exterior and exterior.

The spectator enters an exhibition area in darkness, the only light source is my light work. The spectator becomes immersed setting of a real perceptive experience.
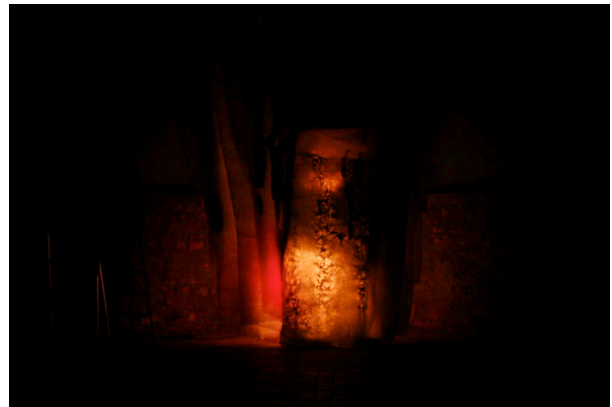

Figure 4. Wadding-light arrangement in the space of the apse. Stage of implementation. January 2008

Seeking the singular image to make the video

Concerning the creation of the video I must point out that only one digital image is enough for me to create the movement. The design and the implementation of the video followed a particular path.

While I was writing the blurb of IMAGO TRANSITUS project at sunset, I noticed the beautiful images of the shadows of the houseplant's leaves placed near my desk. I took a series of photos that I put in my picture library. They were "freeze frames" of what can light offers visually in its

continuous travel. I recognized them later as the images I was looking for, those which resonated with my purpose.

Freeze Frame and Insight

A particular photo (Figure 5A) drew my attention. The eye just stopped on it, whereas time seemed to do the same, it stopped. My perception was increasing. The presence of this image was of a rare density, almost hypnotic, so strong that it made me forget its context, as if there was no bottom [5]. What did it want to tell me? How this image was meaningful for me? Subconsciously, I knew that this representation appeared to contain information and an expressive potential. How was I to decrypt it?
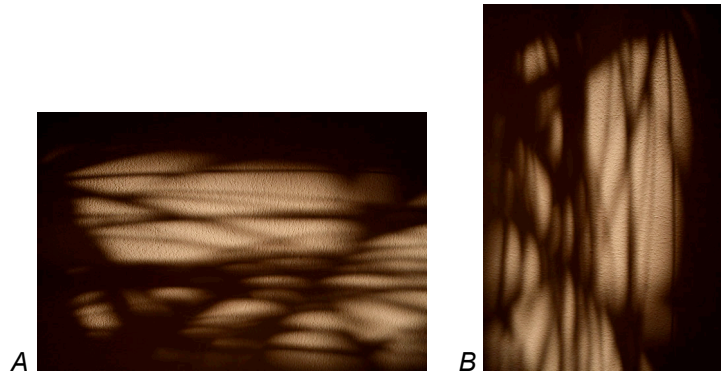

A   *B*

Figure 5. The shadow of the leaves of a plant at sunset. Digital image

The play and the Interpretation

Playing with the graphics editing program I made a simple but decisive operation: the rotation of the image (Figure 5B). Then I was aware that this particular position of the image fit the project, it was vertical and streaming, so capable of communicating the notion of flowing.

I would underline here how implicit and explicit knowledge can be linked, how playing would be an open door to reach and to enunciate an interpretation, our own certainty, personal data.

The image processing

Through a graphic editing program the image of figure 5B was processed becoming the Starting digital image to make de video, image of figure 6, which matches the proportions of the physical medium of the art-work and the physical constraints of the exhibition place.
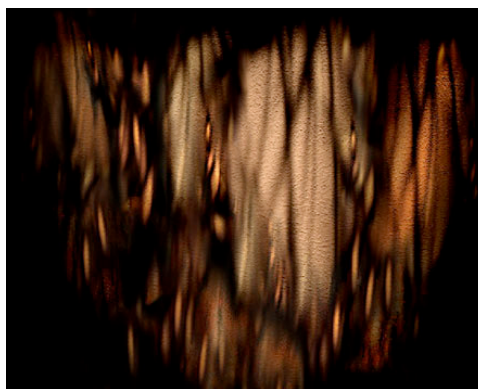

Figure 6. Changing the image of figure 5B using a graphics editing program.

The digital image has an evolving capacity through the fluidity of numbers and language being unstable, mobile, changing. But it is also inalterable, endlessly duplicable, transmitted without loss and stable through the pixels, the last components of the decomposition digital image [2].

Seeking movement

The movement is created thanks to a morphing software application that is currently used to gradually transform one image into another. But in this case, image of figure 6, is both the departure point as well as the point of arrival.

With the key points, from this "static" situation, from this kind of "equality" or "tautology", movement, flow, will triggered. At last, time enters onto the stage.

The resulting motion picture represented a kind of waterfall that flows identically every 8".

To obtain a fluid motion the key points were positioned using a "trial and error" process.

Figure 7. Morphing: From 6 to 6. Showing the key points.

An evolving intention, a richer meaning

Watching the video again and again, I felt a crucial need: to offset the endless flow. I imagined something rising up, like a bubble coming out of a thick liquid.

The picture of figure 8 was partially used to offset the endless flow, we can identify the red bubble inside. It was recuperated from my library of "trial and trash", my photo memory library where I stock visual data of my trials and fleeting creations. That is to say, images that I consider to be markers, references of meaningful past experiments even if they are not totally satisfying to me. Nevertheless they are expressive photos in themselves. They can be potentially useful, awaiting the moment to be integrated into a new creative process.
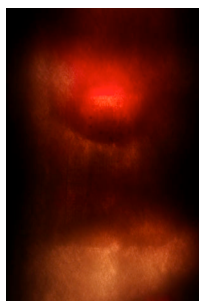

Figure 8. Red bubble in a photo of my Library of "trial and trash". Fleeting creation.

This bubble intertwined with image of Figure 6 to obtain three new images (Figure 9), one presenting a rising level of red, another showing the configuration of a red bubble and the last one, the ejection of this red bubble.
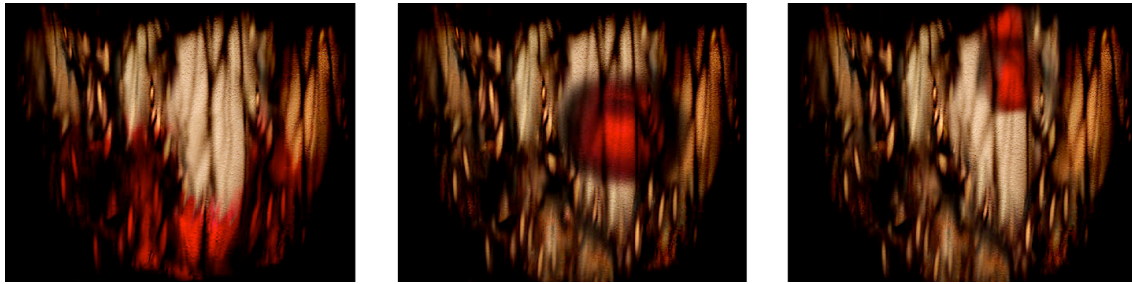
Figure 9. Three images enriching the video of flowing

Two morphing connecting images to each other and two others connecting the first and the last to image of figure 6 have been done an added to my first flowing video.

The Video is ready

The intervention associated with this paper would present the motion picture in its entirety accompanied by a sound track composed by Charlie Dalin specially for IMAGO TRANSITUS. The duration of this animation is about one minute.

The development of morphing and videos has been based on visual and tactile results obtained on the medium of the art-work. This one has been amended several times to meet the video needs. They are intimately linked.

Video of flowing 1'05"

Opening Imago Transitus [3,8]

This artwork did not stand alone. It was associated with other artistic propositions.

The artwork enhances its potential through the sensitivity of the sound track created by Charlie Dalin. The moving image and the sound track had different looping durations, 65" et 7' respectively. This contributed to the renewal of perceptions and meaning.

On the Opening-day, the musician Irina Zhekova injected the dimension of performance art. Her "bendir", a North African drum, was like a magical magnifying glass.
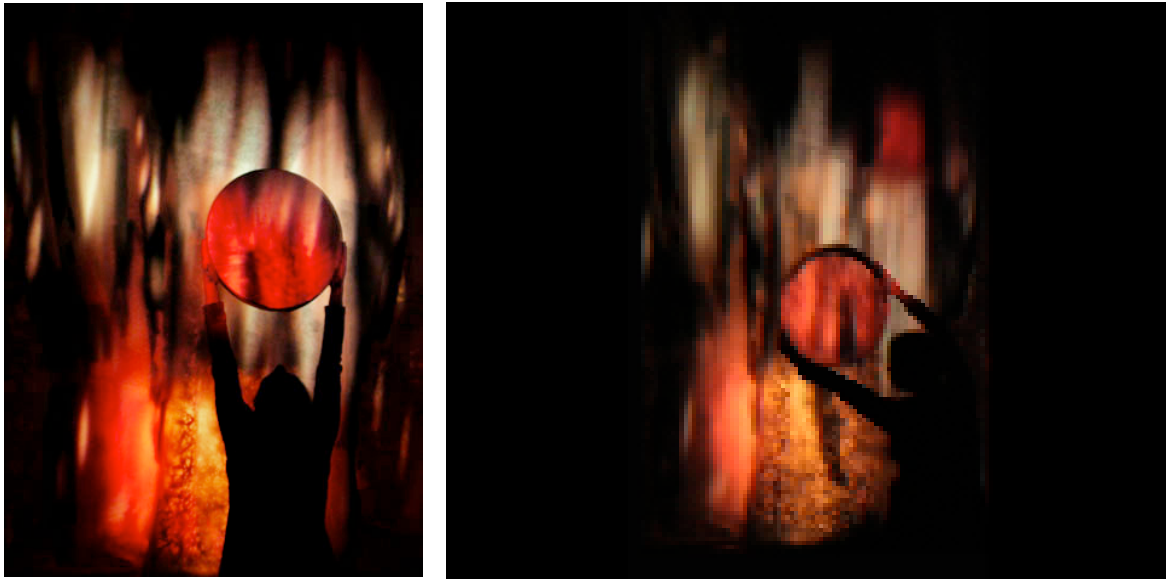
Figure 11. Imago Transitus. Photo and Video of the Performance. Performer: Irina Zhekova

Concluding remarks

This presentation elucidates a creative process that illustrates a constructionist approach very well although my own artistic purpose is, at its heart, the creation of illuminated evolving installations, of dense and luminous evolving images in space questioning the notions of borders and identity.

IMAGO TRANSITUS emerges from the dialogue between a tool-matrix, a concrete wadding-light arrangement, and a tool-machine that processes a virtual image transforming it into an animated projected light.

My aim is to make sense of space, time, light, materials and information with my art-works. I develop my own models exploring and using a variety of tools and techniques: a kind of experimentation weaving materials and digital, craftwork and high tech, intuition and formalisation, immediacy and sequential, implicit and explicit knowledge… and private and public.
When exhibited, the artistic entity I create "alone", falls within the "Public Entity" mentioned by Seymour Papert: the spectator sets off a real perceptive experience updating the art-work and me, as an artist, I'm able to see the impact of my art, reconsidering perhaps my tools, my techniques, my ways of doing.

Both art-work and art are complex, constantly open, dynamic systems.

This approach is inevitably incomplete, perhaps unfinished. It is very difficult to reach and elucidate "THE UNBREAKABLE CORE OF NIGHT" [1] a metaphor I have borrowed from André Breton. This is that creation is intelligible but irreducible: there always remains a part of intuition that cannot be reabsorbed by logic.

Acknowledgments

References

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3. IMAGO TRANSITUS

   Residency: January - February 2008

   Exhibition: 15th mars -13th April 2008 Chapel St Eloi, Domaine de Soucy, Essonne, France.

   Design and implementation: Maria Cosatto http://www.maria-cosatto.com

   Sound Designer: Charlie Dalin www.myspace.com/charliedalin

   Performance: Irina Zhekova, 14 mars 2008, Opening day. www.myspace.com/iremusicspace

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