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U1830509E

History of Design Reflective Essay

Interactivity in 'The Penis Wall'

QUESTION CHOSEN: (iii)

Choose a historic or contemporary media artist not discussed in class to carry out independent research that draws from our study of interactive media history, theory and its concepts and forms. The artist and their work should be relevant to our study of multimedia concepts and paradigms (ie Interactivity, Hypermedia, Immersion).

ESSAY:

Interactive Media today has evolved immensely in the development of concepts, interactivity, immersion of experience as well as hypermedia. It is essentially combining art and technology to create an experience or to evoke feelings amongst users. As of current, the interactive art scene is more inclusive though still dominated by men. Women digital artists tend to be disregarded from publicity and recognition. Hence, I would like to shed light on a contemporary interactive designer, Peiqi Su.

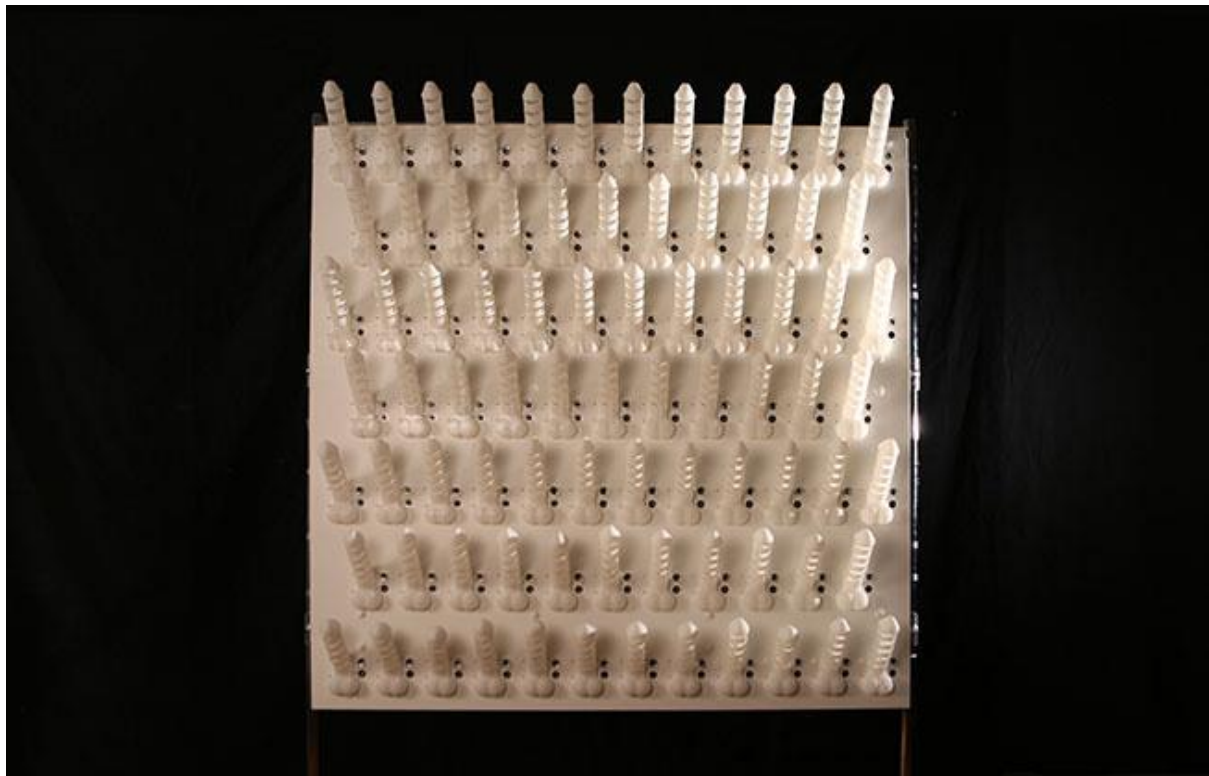


Peiqi Su.

Image belongs to Creative Tech Week

A new media artist and interaction designer based in New York, USA, she is well known for her interactive work, 'Butterfly Effect' (Rapoport) which allowed for interaction between countries via an interactive installation of LED Screen installed in both locations. Peiqi focuses on creating good interaction designs that are able to harmonise the elements of people, product and environment. In my humble opinion, a particular work of hers that I found to be a good balance of the three was 'The Penis Wall'.

Admittedly, this was a controversial piece and though amusing, the intent of this project was deeper than it looks. Peiqi found that the people she interacted with tend to have multiple notions of the male genital. The contradictory feelings of fear, power, ego, and laughter, coupled with the topics that are sparked such as feminism, male power, freedom, politics & Wall Street, allowed her to generate an exploration of this idea. (Su)



The Penis Wall
Picture owned by Peiqi Su

In terms of interactivity, this project is quite literal in execution which made user interaction that much easier, allowing users to focus on the message rather than having to figure out how it works. The technical aspects of this project was very complicated but Peiqi was able to deliver a seamless user experience. She wanted to show the interactivity between human and technology and conceptualised that into the visual of the male genitals.

“What is the most intuitive and intriguing interaction for humans?” was the question that triggered this idea. (Su) The derivatives of her concept associations in relation to the male genitals were generated after this which are stated, as follows:

(Su)

Mode 1: Designed to respond to viewer's movement

Mode 2: Developed to have the ability to visualize fluctuations in the stock market

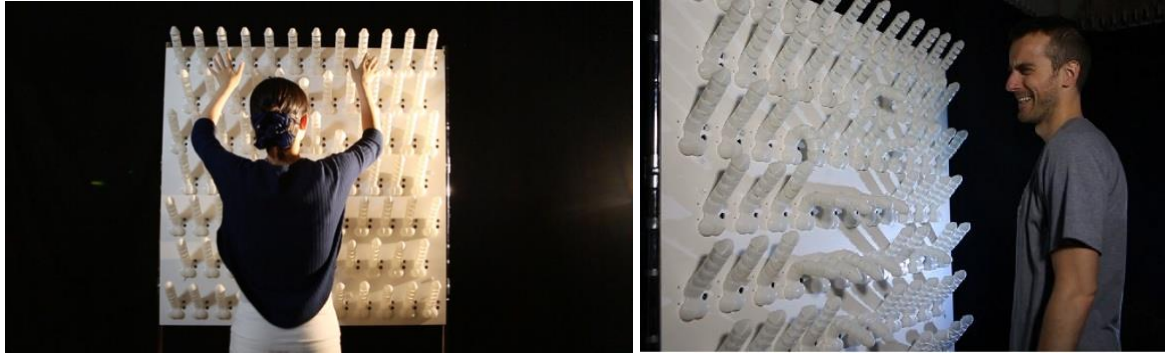
Mode 3: Dance to a piece of music



The Penis Wall
Picture owned by Peiqi Su

How it works is that this kinetic sculpture consisting of 3D-printed penises will interact with the movement detected through proximity, upon approach. In response, the genital moves up in closer proximity and down as one moves away with the use of ultrasonic distance sensor. (Laura) It is essentially the motion of an erection. The different modes of this sculpture causes for people of different gender and different backgrounds to react differently which generates unique experiences for each person or each group of people. For example, if one is more attuned in the stock markets and investments (Peng), they would understand and may draw references and interpretations in that the genitals could represent the male dominated industry and the up and down motion of the sculpture aligns with the fluctuations of this unpredictable market. In a way, this is immersion. Yes, it does not simulate a whole sensory or virtual experience, it does however, allow users to be immersed in other ways. For example, the simulation of the genital closely mimics the real one. Hence, in a sense, that realism allows for users to create accurate references and given the nature of the simulation, users will more than likely be uncomfortable with the interaction given the familiarity and controversial aspect of the simulation used; multiple male genitals simulations, existing in a social setting. This will in turn, lead many of them to make insightful conclusions rather than direct ones.

Interactions with ‘The Penis Wall’:



Interactions with installation
Pictures owned by Peiqi Su

In conclusion, from an interactivity standpoint, this particular piece was successful in manipulating, through simulation, the idea of male genitals and the link to its derivative associations that were generated through pilot tests during the process. A comment stood out to Peiqi, “A penis is the last thing I wish to see in a piece of art, but maybe, in a way, it is what I need to see.” (Su)

Therefore, considering this, the interaction with the piece though meant to be light-hearted, is also meant to trigger the connection between machine and human from different perspectives of men and women across backgrounds. The way Peiqi did it was controversial but was effective in that the realistic simulation combined with the interactive nature of a male genital was able to provoke emotions and generate thought in an immersive manner for users since they are forced to think about the project from more than a surface-level drawing of conclusions of the art work. In addition to that, she was able to make the interactive experience, an amusing one for the users. It also drew people in given the nature of the simulation which is needed to generate interaction in the first place.

VIDEO FOR REFERENCE:

<https://vimeo.com/140890989>

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