SHAPING SUBJECTIVITY: TIME, SPACE AND MIRROR-IMAGE IN ELECTRONIC
ART PRACTICES(1960s-2000s)
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This dissertation is not a research in art history, although it might have thrown some light on the evolution of electronic and digital art during the last fifty years. Rather, the electronic art experiments discussed here are regarded as aesthetic strategies functioning to expose some mechanisms in the formation of the self during the so called "information age" and to question their limits. The project is grounded on few premises-hypotheses: first, that the ways the subject engages with time (and especially with the present moment), with space and with one's own body-images are decisive for the formation of the identity of that subject (drawing on Heidegger, Lacan, Lefebvre). Which leads to, second, that time, space and body-images are neither abstract concepts nor objects opposed and independently existing from the subject, but rather dynamic mechanisms or technologies of the self. In this respect time could be seen as the process through which the self engages with its own activity/passivity, space could be seen as the process through which the subject engages with the world, and the body-image could be seen as the process through which the subject engages with its own living body/bio-powers, all these processes being closely interrelated. The third basic premise-hypothesis is, that these technologies of the self can be subjected to different manipulations and transformations, namely, that time, space and body-images can be constructed, organised or represented in multiple ways. The usual ways person's self-identity is shaped is via institutionalised, socially and politically determined and highly mediated temporalities, spaces and representations of the body. The function of the artistic experiments, on the other hand, is to invent alternative modes of the subject's engagement with time, space and the body-images, which free their potential for deterritorialization of the self. Grounded on the above hypotheses, the present study focuses on the working of these technologies of the self from the 1960s onwards. The reason is that, during the last fifty years, due to the rapid evolution of electronic media and digital technologies crucial and multiple transformations occurred in the experience of time, space and body. This study aimed at exposing some perspectives of these transformations as they have been made explicit by corresponding artistic experiments.

The whole thesis is built on the detailed microanalyses of 29 electronic art practices organised in three main sequences: shapes of presencing (8), electronic mirror-images (13), and space/time continuums (8). Each individual artwork is selected according to the rigorous criteria of inheritance and mutation (radical innovation) of specific traits. This methodology had been chosen because it provided multiple opportunities: 1. A close reading of each individual artwork in the form of a detailed analysis of its media-based construction of the present moment, the space or the body-images was performed, which accumulated a vast range of valuable information about the technology behind these works as well as about their aesthetic strategies in engaging the viewer-participant with time, space and his/her body-image. 2. That data could be meaningfully organised into complex networks of interrelated artistic praxis following the evolution in the media and the correlated evolution in the experience of the present moment, the experience of the body and the experience of space from the 1960s to the present. 3. Therefore, a theoretical pattern regarding these technologies of the self and the generated by them possible self-identities and deterritorializations could take shape from a grass-roots level.

The present study has tackled the complexity of new media art praxis by means of various media and research methods: formal and technical explorations; receptionbased descriptions of the experience of the viewer-participant; mind-mapping software for the graphic representation of the relationship between each individual work in the shape of presencing, electronic mirror-images, and electronic space/time continuums sequences; software-based semiotic tagging of the archival videos, interviews (audio-recorded); still images; and video-recordings of the ephemeral artistic experiments. Therefore, the reader/viewer receives the opportunity to interpret the information and ideas in this study from multiple perspectives.