

WORLD CONFERENCE on CULTURE @ STOCKHOLM 31 march - 2 april 1998						
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Conference Papers

Three papers

- on technology

Ture Sjölander

Ture Sjölander,

The Impact of New Technology on the Development of Culture

1. MULTI-CULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS BY SATELLITE - AN ELECTRONIC GOLD MINE

- An annual 3-week international satellite TV high-tech art festival
 - Commercialise peace via satellite
 - An international lobby group: to connect all TV-systems of the world
- SATELLITE is the medium
 - COMMUNICATIONS is the means
 - PEACE is the message

2. MULTI-INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS IS THE OUTCOME

The following text was written in 1973. It will be used as a basis for Mr Sjölander's comments today, 25 years later.

ARTISTS' MEDIA

For the creation of paintings, works of graphic art, free-standing sculptures and reliefs there is a fairly limited number of materials and techniques; these have changed relatively little during the last 300 years.

Even though new materials and methods have developed, the artistic techniques in the areas of painting, graphic arts and sculpture have kept their traditional character. A painting on canvas today has a technical structure largely similar to that of a seventeenth century painting.

The possibility of giving pictorial expression to the artist's message is however not tied to traditional methods. For the majority of people in the industrial countries, television, video newspapers and advertising have become the dominant transmitters of pictures and visual images. Television and video in particular have come to extend more and more widely through the global development of distribution systems, and are frequently used as a medium for other art forms, such as film, theatre and pictorial arts.

In this context it should be emphasised that it is journalists, above all, who have been recruited to these areas and who have therefore had an opportunity of exploiting the particular and specialised resources which television and video have at their disposal. The fact that pictorial artists occupy a subordinate position would seem partly to be connected with the fact that art schools still limit their educational role to the traditional creation of static images.

2. THE CREATION OF ELECTRONIC IMAGES

The work of artistic/technical development presupposes that artists have access to specialised technical studio equipment.

Television has been in existence now for almost 50 years. During this period a significant number of cultural programmes have been made by artists. Very rarely, however, have these artists produced works directly intended/designed for this medium. Although television per se is a pictorial medium, it has primarily been used to transmit words. The stress has been laid on 'tele' or the transporting/transmitting aspects of the medium, and comparatively little attention has been paid to the conceptual element of 'vision'; that is to say those aspects having to do with the language of the images themselves.

If one looks back on the history of art and makes comparisons with the visual aesthetics used in television today, one is struck by the fact that the greater proportion of all television production today uses visual aesthetics dating back to the 16th century. As an example we may mention the aesthetics of Cubism: this implied a visualisation of several different points of view being given simultaneous expression and coinciding with the discoveries by modern physics of Time and Space being only relative and not absolutely fixed structures.

Cubism dates back more than 50 years, and yet, in a television programme a few years ago it would be unthinkable to use Cubist visual aesthetics.

MEDIA DEVELOPMENT AND COMPUTER COMMUNICATION

This situation is however changing rapidly at the present moment. During the last decades or so, a series of international artists have initiated the construction of electronic image laboratories, where they pursue the development of new art forms through experimental techniques.

Those international artists who have access to modern electronic technology have been given the opportunity of realising, by a creative process, their ideas concerning a truly visually-oriented language. Artists with many different points of view and modes of expression have begun working with computer/electronics/video, taking their point of departure in their previous knowledge and training. Painters, sculptors, musicians, photographers, composers, choreographers and others have approached this medium with their own particular talents and creative methodology and all have contributed to media development in the area of television film and video and to a visual language characterised by greater awareness and creativity.

International electronic music studios have conducted its work of development in music for nearly 30 years, those artists who have been engaged in similar work within the visual arts field are mostly still obliged to manage completely without any corresponding access to electronic equipment.

In a number of countries considerable sums have been invested, for many years, in facilities for practical experimentation in both the visual and audio areas.

THE ARTIST AS DESIGN SCIENTIST

The creation of electronic images (sometimes called 'video art'), is an artistic development of visual language. Modern 'electronics' can convert sound vibrations into visual structures, and image components into patterns of sound, thereby giving visual expression to basic processes such as growth and change. The essential definition of 'video art' is based on the manipulation of video signals. Apart from the use of video to realise a series of images in a temporal sequence, artists can also exploit television as a physical, sculptural, object. At galleries they make 'installations' or 'environments' by placing one or more monitors or giant screen projections in specific, related positions. Video cameras, too, 'incorporate' the spectator into the work. In this way, it is possible to explore perceptions of what is seen, as well as the psychology of seeing, in a living context.

An electronic image laboratory, however, should not be limited to video. Another related area is the so-called computer animation (computer-assisted and/or

computer-generated images). This technique is based on advanced forms of programming and opens up hitherto unimagined possibilities of free-image composition.

With the aid of electronics and laser the static image, too, will have an interesting development in the fields of painting and graphic arts. Attempts in this direction have been demonstrated in the form of 'video paintings', or more precisely, electronic painting and computer art.

WORD PICTURES

Those who claim that we live today in a visually oriented culture are probably word-blind. Today's visual art and visual media, with the possible exception of painting, still bear a master-slave relationship to elite literature and popular journalism - in the beginning was the Word. The word is power. People who can express themselves well and forcefully in speech and writing, more or less automatically achieve positions of power... while people who express themselves well in pictures, must often support themselves through stipends and other grants.

The producers of words dominate the cultural columns of newspapers, control official cultural policy and the most important visual media. And generally exert a damnably important influence on society. The arts in Sweden are infested by the speech chorus and the clatter of typewriters. Authors write screenplays and become film directors. Journalists become television producers (or programme directors) and make TV-films. Our entire culture is beset by word-producers. Authors, journalists, investigators, letter-writers, polemicists and critics. Who, in fact, knows anything about pictures? And why do we understand so little about visual semantics? Photography and motion pictures have existed for 100 years, television for 50. Despite this, pictures have not attained more than a purely illustrative function. Why? Probably, because most of our pictures are created by Word-people. In fact, roughly half the items on TV today could just as well be broadcast on radio instead.

Ture Sjölander 1973

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES - THE ROLE OF OF CULTURE IN AREAS OF CONFLICT

THE FUTURE OF OUR WORLD HANGING IN THE BALANCE

Every mother is in fact a 'single-mother', raising the children alone 0-7 of age. Raising the boys to believe that they can not 'take care' of babies/children. Raising the girls to believe that they can, alone.....

Within every mother raised boy (or girl too for that matter) in the world, there will be a dormant Saddam Hussein and Bill Clinton (mother raised 100%).

Within every mother raised baby girl in the world, there will be another mother; 'single mother'....

The children's (babies') very basic human rights, the rights of the child, to be, in time counted, equally exposed to both parents, father and mother, from birth, are none. The children's right, to have that equal access, from birth is none. A crime against the whole humanity. All kids are 'kidnapped' from birth, and that's why the males are killing each other (in wars e.g.) and women do not.

Legislation seems to be the only solution if not 'power of culture' can solve this traditional 'gender-war', the world will continue to suffer, the next millennium too.

Stolen children means forever stolen adults.

Ture Sjölander

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