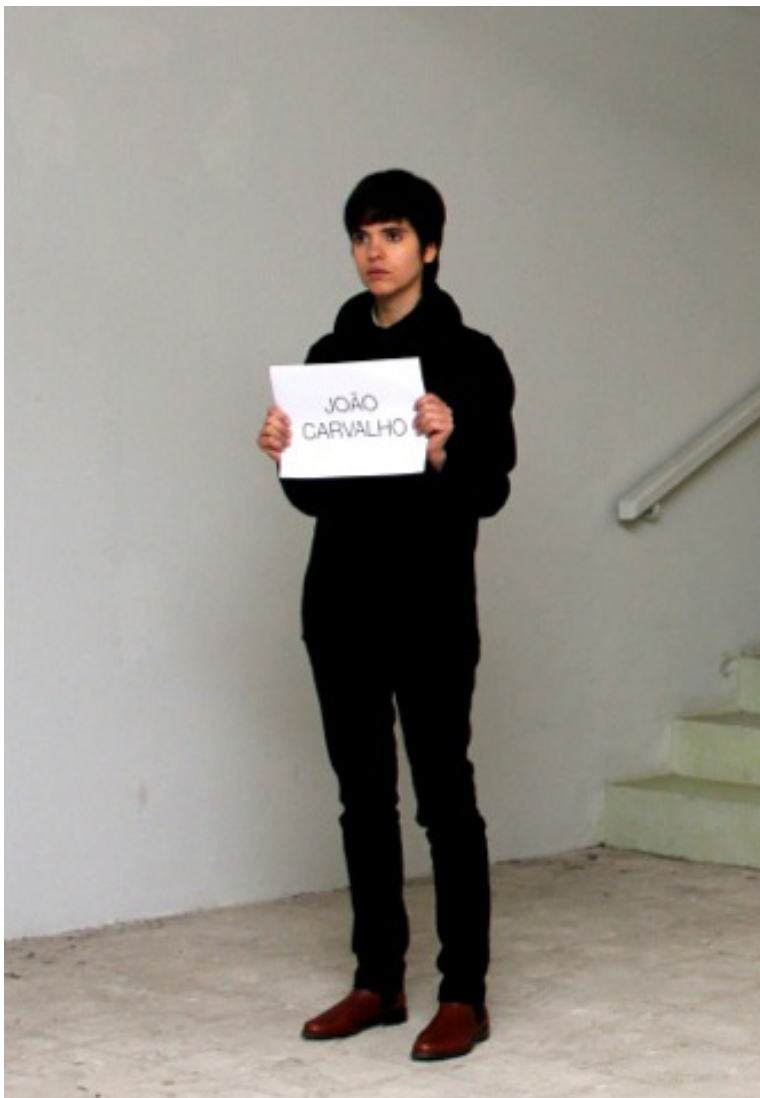# DISPLACING MEDIA - LCD ARTISTS RESIDENCY

FILIPE PAIS

Filipe Pais is a Portuguese artist and a student interested in the ways technologies affect human behavior and society. Currently, he's a PhD student in the Digital Media UT Austin-Portugal Program at the University of Porto, a researcher at DRII (Dispositifs Relationnels: Installations Interactives) at ENSAD (National School of Decorative Arts – Paris) and a member of LCD (Digital Creation Laboratory – Porto).

From 2010 to 2011 he was a student of SPEAP, an experimental program in Arts and Politics conducted by Bruno Latour at Sciences Po in Paris.

His artistic practice explores the use of new media technologies as a medium and as a subject and his work has been presented in the context of several festivals and events in different countries.
-----

1 | INTRODUCTION

During Guimarães 2012 - European Capital of Culture, the LCD LAB from Porto (Laboratory for Digital Creation) invited me to prepare an artistic residency, applying an unusual and experimental model of work. The residency lasted a week, the first two days spent between theoretical seminars and discussion while the other days were dedicated to prototyping.

The departing direction was a theoretical exploration on the concept of *hyperlink*, using a strategy of *Media Displacement*. At the end of three days of intense discussion and reflection, the four groups, made up of 12 individuals with backgrounds in fine arts, design, architecture and engineering, came up with four ideas which were then prototyped. At the end of the week, four prototypes were presented: "Join", "I", "AHA! – A Human Approach", and "3.000.000 Views".

2 | CONCEPT, STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

The conceptual direction of this residency, dedicated to the exploration of the concept of *hyperlink* using the strategy of *Media Displacement*, was a consequence of my theoretical and practical research and was discussed and refined by the organization committee made up of Ricardo Lobo, Pedro Ângelo, Sérgio Ferreira and myself.

The residency took place over 6 days, from the 12th to the 17th March of 2012 at the CAAA (Centro Assuntos Arte e Arquitectura) in Guimarães. During the first two days, four theoretical sessions were presented and intertwined by discussion and brainstorming with the coordinators and the groups of residents. The first theoretical session by Ricardo

Lobo, presented us the history and theory of hypertext in a social and political perspective using the authors Vannevar Bush, Douglas Engelbart and Ted Nelson as main references. The second session was presented by Sérgio Ferreira, which brought us a critical insight into the use of technologies and on the cognitive and social influences of Internet and Googlization. On the second day, Pedro Ângelo approached the concept of Hyperlink as the structural element in the information flow, analyzing the theory of graphs and the concept of digital dataflow, referring to some examples of applications in the physical world. I made the last presentation, where the strategy of Media Displacement was introduced, supporting it with the theoretical work of Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin, Martin Heidegger, Marshal McLuhan and Bertolt Brecht. After the presentation, the 12 participants were divided into four groups. Their selection took into account their interests but also the diversity of their backgrounds, in order to form groups with different points of view and to find a balance between conceptual and technical resources.

3 | THE STRATEGY OF MEDIA DISPLACEMENT

Today, media are omnipresent in all the manifestations of human life. We are surrounded by thousands of invisible waves and by all kinds of gizmos and appliances that share our space and time, connecting us with others. This strategy is connected to Marshal McLuhan's famous 'The medium is the message' by regarding the medium not just as a vessel for content and message transmission, but also as a powerful, consequent actor, which is able to transform the way we communicate, live in society and define ourselves. [1]

The long history of art tells us that media have been the subject of artists' inspiration, research and

statement for centuries, although this practice seems to be of increasing importance today, in a society saturated by information and under strong media influence. The complexity of the times that we live is not only revealed in the amount of new codes, signs and symbols which 'naturally' infiltrate in our daily routines but in the quick overlapping and combination of paradigms – the digital, physical, online and offline have become interdependent and impossible to separate. As Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin observe, the design process and the construction of virtual and online digital worlds is characterized by a strategy of *remediation*, which allows an easier adaption to media users [2]. In this process of refashioning, old concepts are imported from previous paradigms but as soon as new functions and characteristics appear, new *medium-specific* concepts fulfill our routines, although they are designed to integrate our lives in natural ways rather than to provoke reflection or disruption.

In a digital paradigm, the representation of metaphors like 'window', 'friend' or 'recycle bin' are certainly familiar to most of us, although what happens if we displace concepts like 'pause', 'undo', 'pixel', 'ftp' or 'hyperlink' to a physical non-electrical paradigm? Is this displacement capable of highlighting incompatibilities between these paradigms? Is it meaningful to us as human beings, constantly mediated and surrounded by media? Can this strategy render visible the workings of media, breaking the spell of transparency and make us aware of how media shapes our perception?

These are some of the questions which triggered the reflection and the discussions during the residency. This process was also intertwined with the close

observation and analysis of a body of artwork developed by Aram Bartholl, Christopher Baker and Jens Wunderling. The strategy of *Media Displacement* contradicts the flow of remediation and breaks the logic of transparency in order to expose the mechanisms and the

effects that media have in society and in human behavior.

4 | WORKS DEVELOPED

After the third day, the residents started to project their concepts, exchanging their knowledge and collaborating between groups. On the last day, the 17th March, the prototypes were presented in a public session at CAAA.

'Join' is a performance developed by Ana Palma, Diana Combo and Tiago Serra exploring the transposition of actions between online and offline social contexts. Each person that joins the Facebook event, which corresponds to the performance, has someone waiting for them in the offline event (the performance itself), hanging a sign with that person's name. This confrontation aims at introducing a critical distance to our use of the medium and to our notion of privacy, inclusion and exclusion in the transition from online to offline.

'I', an installation by Pedro Ângelo, Rebecca Moradalizadeh and Sónia Ralha remind us that the physical space we inhabit is imperceptibly changed and fulfilled by thousands of invisible waves coming from all the technologies and media that surround us. By entering the installation space, the visitor becomes an involuntary participant in the soundscape composition, which emerges from the interferences provoked by the visitor's mobile phones. When approaching one of the seven copper-cables vertically placed between the ceiling and the ground, the electromagnetic field of the

18H-19H
Sáb. 17.03.2012
LCD Guimarães

FIGURE 1 | Poster for performance 'Join'.

participant is transformed into a noisy sound mass, which grows and becomes chaotic when more visitors enter the space.

'AHA! (A Human Approach)', is an interactive installation by Gil Ferreira, Mónica Mendes and Victor Diaz which explores the mechanisms of online research. A fake Google search page presents the results in the form of videos, instead of the usual list of links. In these videos we see a group of three operator-researchers, who search in books, go out into nature or discuss in between them to find the best answer. 'AHA!' turns the transparent process of online search into the content of the installation, breaking our expectations and show-ing how automatized we become by technology. In a moment marked by optical fiber speed and world Googlization, this project inverts the logic of transparency, objective and immediate, by slowing down the research process in an attempt to r eflect on the impact of mediation and on the contemporary search-engine paradigm. '3.000.000 Views' is a public installation and performance developed by Raquel Carteiro, Sandra Araújo and Sérgio Ferreira that uses a popular strategy for online marketing.
On different muppies spread around

the city one can read '3.000.000 Views' in black letters over a white background, with a QR code just under the text. By reading the QR code with their mobile phone the passersby become involuntary participants of this installation and performance. They see an image of someone looking through a wall somewhere, and then a map appears indicating this location. If everything goes as expected, the participants will reach the gallery where the hole is located and when looking through the hole, they will see a man seated at a desk, who stands up when he realizes he is being watched. Then he draws a line on the wall with a piece of chalk, which corresponds to another 'view.'

A second phase of the residency is planned with the aim of transforming the prototypes into finalized works, ready to be presented and experi-enced in a public venue.

ENDNOTE

[1] MCLUHAN, M. 2007. Understanding Media. Routeledge Classics

[2] BOLTER, J. D., GRUSIN, R. (2000). Remediation: Understanding New Media. MIT Press.