



Assessing the Significance of Technoetic Aesthetics: The Self in Digital Contemporary Art

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This Big Bang implies a transition to a much more complex level of human identity, forcing us to look deeply at what is it to live at the edge of the net, half in cyberspace and half in a world which increasingly will be nano-engineered from the bottom up.

(Roy Ascott, "Moistmedia, Technoetics and the Three VRs, 2000)

Building on 1960s media theory advocating the reduction of physical distance on a global scale, British artist and theorist Roy Ascott asserts that the self has experienced changes perhaps on an inversely proportional basis. He posits that a certain sense of dispersion has been framing identity politics since the advent of digital systems and the blurring of physical boundaries. Ascott places this claim in the artistic field, demanding an intersectional, critical approach to new media artefacts. This method should be able to accommodate both the technological fundament underlying artistic production in the 21st century, as well as factors considered as pertaining to a more organic, subjective nature - such as issues concerning identity and consciousness. The concept of "technoetics" has been coined in order to be able to comprehensively assess this sense of awareness which owes at the same time to non-organic art forms - as is often the case with new media works - and to human subjectivi-

ty. The term refers to the embracing of both materialist discourse and consciousness research. This presentation aims to investigate the nature of technoetic aesthetics as a critical tool demanded by Roy Ascott with the purpose of highlighting what he terms "the rematerialisation of art" ("Moistmedia" 2000). For this purpose, an examination of the cultural shift informing the turn of the 21st century will be employed, detailing the engagement of humans from a variety of occupational domains such as artists, scientists, architects and performers engaged in creative processes. Moreover, concrete artefacts will be discussed in terms of the media employed and the artistic practices involved.

Key research questions are: how is the digital self understood and defined in terms of contemporary art practices? To what extent is technoetics able to describe the changes in the way both the artist and the art decipherer experience an artefact? How do the technologic structures or scientific principles informing a work of art translate into visual prompts or image production? Can we assume and ethically accept the notion of consciousness as emerging directly in the digital realm due to the intersection and blurring of organic and non-organic factors in the artistic process?

KEYWORDS

**Media theory.,
Technoetics,
Artistic practices,
Visual prompts**