CHAPTER THREE

CONSTRUCTING NARRATIVE IN INTERACTIVE DOCUMENTARIES

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The goal of this chapter is to map creative activity in the area of interactive film and to examine projects made as multimedia works which can be defined as interactive documentaries or personal participative audiovisual projects.

From the point of view of the visual arts researcher, film represents a thoroughly examined and analysed field. Although non-linear forms of film are a more recent phenomenon, they are less researched, and their description can be a problem because the field is in development and transition. Additionally, hardware and software are constantly changing, such that several multimedia artworks can no longer be shown in computer environments because of platform changes. When conservation practices have not been applied, artworks remain invisible and unavailable. With regard to newer projects, such as web-based interactive documentaries where both content and appearance are new, it is too early to draw conclusions concerning the opportunities of the medium and its future scenarios.

The 1990s can be seen as the "classical" decade of interactive multimedia, when it blossomed and became known as an international field. One goal of this article is to pay homage to some historical multimedia artworks which were famous in the 1990s but are invisible now due to computer platform changes. The disappearance and lack of availability of these artworks are additional factors which give value to these projects. In

fact, these multimedia narratives have not disappeared, but rather there has been a transition to new platforms, mainly online.

From the subjective point of view, evaluation of these works may vary, and recent technological and artistic developments have shown the uniqueness of the works of that period. Additionally, digital media evolved globally in the 1990s, differentiating this decade from the previous and following decades paradigmatically.

The history and dynamics of each medium are characterised by an accumulation of attention and financial resources. The result of this accumulation is a "dominant form",[1] involving aesthetics and technology. Multimedia on CD-ROMs became a kind of standard, whose engine was the money invested in the medium and technology by the commercial sector.

For content authoring, Macromedia Director was mostly used, and it became the industry standard software. The technical and aesthetic competence which radiated into the artistic field involved a surplus of energy, a "game" which arises when basic human needs are fulfilled. Here we can draw parallels with the excitement over software art in the late 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, which was also a manifestation of artists' and programmers' surplus energy. Projects were made without commercial purpose, the goal being to acquire symbolic capital and reputation in the artistic world.

With the development of the computer environment, radically changing art and communication forms emerged, with earlier professional technologies changing into common and regular forms; exclusive interactive artforms became located on the desks of users, and there was a breakdown of interdisciplinary borders, resulting in moving image environments turning into communication interfaces. The hybrid media environment, including games, social media documentaries, fiction and interactive art, have merged into one whole, where users can choose stories and directions.

Great emphasis should be placed on the discussion of the question of how exclusive desktop multimedia art moved into the network-based shared

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[1] Stefan Heidenreich, "Steps toward Collaborative Video: Time and Authorship." In Imagery in the 21st Century. Ed. by Oliver Grau with Thomas Veigl. (The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2011), 99.

space, where the question of authorship is abandoned and moving image practice is embedded into the environment of audiovisual media.

The goals of this text are:

1) to show the development of interactive documentary art in the context of visual art,

2) to characterise the development of the interactive documentary format and its relation to technological carriers and platforms.

3) to describe different strategies of viewers' engagement in the installation and screen art context.

4) to present a short history of the interactive documentary multimedia of the 1990s.

5) to show the development of the interactive documentary in the 2000s and its transfer to the online platform and to a different software, the i-Docs format.

6) to present a more in-depth look at Estonian examples created during different workshops in Tallinn and Tartu, and to evaluate Estonian examples of interactive documentary multimedia.

Linearity and Interactivity of Thinking

The linearity of conventional film depends for the most part on the technical character of the medium and is connected with historical and traditional narrativity, as we know from literature. Film as an established cultural field is sometimes seen as a continuation of literature and an extension into the visual medium, a view criticised by ambitious filmmakers. In 2003 Peter Greenaway said about film that in pessimistic moments he thinks that everything that audiences have seen in the last 108 years is merely illustrated text.[2] Additionally, the most famous statement by Greenaway: *Twentieth century painting has leapt ahead and left cinema way behind. Cinema hasn't even reached its Cubist period yet.*[3]

We can easily view this opinion as arrogant and baseless and disprove it with examples of computer animation in films of the 1990s, where a modernist artistic experience is embedded in visuality, leaving behind

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[2] "In pessimistic moments, I would argue that we have never seen any cinema; all we have witnessed is 108 years of illustrated text." (Cinema Militants Lecture, 2003, accessed June 5, 2014, http://petergreenaway.org.uk/essay3.htm)

[3] Peter Greenaway, *Interviews (Conversations with Filmmakers),* (Vernon W. Gras. Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2000), 132.

surrealist technologies and the sharp focus of photorealism. Although I agree with the view that film is the art of storytelling, for filmmakers this is natural, while for visual artists it seems a limitation.

I disagree with film radicals who think that film directors are somehow developmentally hindered and wish to rise to the "heights" that visual artists have already reached, and whose visual thought flows freely and unconventionally. An objection would be that the rules of filmmaking are not only shaped by authors, but also by producers. Undoubtedly, there are significant trends in alternative and low-budget film making which are more associated with radical filmmakers. From the radical point of view, everything that is linearly continuous is by definition conservative.

Here I will try to provide a formula for radicality and innovation in audiovisual narrative documentary or fiction. What is the source of the attitude that non-linearity is more innovative than linearity? Linearity in itself is not characteristic of an oudated form of audiovisual communication. A non-linear story can be presented linearly as well (if we think about the videos of Zbigniew Rybczyński, and the films of Mike Figgis, Christopher Nolan et al). Non-linearity does not necessarily mean interaction and even interactivity can be combined with a linear story: interaction does not necessarily mean the availability of choices. It could be contained in the viewer's options to stop, slow down, speed up or rewind, which do not provide other control options for the alternative development of the story.

From the point of view of the demanding critic and new media researcher, it is not possible to formulate the evolution of the innovative forms of film as something that developed from "lower" forms of audiovisuality to "higher" interactive forms of cinema, as if the goal of the art of the moving image is to achieve "higher" forms, or to break and change narrative. We see completely different presentation paradigms. Naturally we can not understand one or another presentation method as more or less "natural", and the fact that one is more established in the culture could depend on economic factors.

I will explain normativity and the evolution of presentation forms as follows. I begin with the fact that there are a priori conceptions of "natural" and "artificial" audiovisual narration, which depend on dominant cultural habits. These habits involve statistically cumulative forms when choosing one or other cultural form over another. Consequently we can say that the linear and logical are statistically dominant forms of the audiovisual and

therefore the "natural" and artificial—"interactive"—are interrupted, segmented and relatively unpopular with the masses.

Of course, the viewer who is devoted to narrative is much more common than those who reject it. Without relying on research, it is common sense that perceptive works which require decision-making activity also require some psychological and mental energy and therefore they are less appealing than tasks which require less energy and effort. It is a universal human trait to select tasks that are easier and less taxing on perceptive mechanisms.

Pondering the "interactive" and "participative" character of the viewer, we reach the conclusion that considering alternatives is a natural way of thinking, not just in terms of planning life and actions but with artworks as well. Considering alternatives is a part of everyday existence and decision making, although it is impossible to realise all possible alternatives.

After making a decision one might think about what would have happened if one had decided the other way, if life ("narrative") might have flowed differently, but to rewind life is usually not possible. As a result, non-linear, interactive artworks (as well as games and other forms of culture and entertainment), where one can try out different possibilities and "lives", is an interesting medium for viewers and especially for artists who design games. Such a person is like an archetypical storyteller who creates a perfect narrative world that can be experienced in several ways. A comforting conclusion is that the passive and participative positions of the viewer are both cultural constants.

The second argument concerning the universality of time-based arts is that linearity is also part of human nature, as is making choices and thinking along branching alternatives, which is the basis for the creation of interactive applications. Making choices creates stress and later raises doubts about the correctness of the decisions made. Considering the best solution and preparation in making choices are natural processes, and the human condition is defined by a kind of linearity—decisions are made for one "narrative" which becomes a chain of events: a life. Jerome Bruner in his article "Life as Narrative"[4] examines narrative from a constructivist point of view, a view that takes as its central premise that "world making" is the principal function of the mind, whether in the sciences or in the arts.

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[4] Jerome Bruner, "Life as Narrative," in *Social Research*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (Spring 1987).

As Nelson Goodman claims in his "Ways of World Making" (1978), physics, art and history are "*ways of world making*". Deriving from this, Bruner suggests seeing formal or informal autobiographies, with their procedures, as "*life making*". Bruner: *"...life is not "how it was" but how it is interpreted and reinterpreted, told and retold: Freud's psychic reality"*.[5] In conclusion, Bruner writes that *"life is never free of precommitment"*; we are never free of expectations about how things should evolve and when they are finally ready they are put into a frame of re-interpretation, which evaluates what has happened.

Although my goal here is not to dive into details of narratology, an important issue is the understanding of culture as an intertwining of narratives and stories. Stories circulate in culture as given realities; they have been lived by somebody or act as trails to follow. Stories are generally not open.

If we turn our attention to artworks which allow us to experience "open stories", to live them through not as wholes, but as options and opportunities, then we reach interactive multimedia works. However, to show that this is not the only way to offer variations to viewers participating in narratives, I shall present as examples the self-reflective video installations of the 1970s.

The Viewer in the CC-narratives of Video Works

In my discussion of interactive narrative in the participative documentary, I would like to highlight participative art forms as we see them in the CC-installations of the 1970s. The important dimensions of these works are the participation of the viewer and the real-time delayed/shifted reflection of the viewer. These works are pre-interactive and participatory.[6] I would like to mention five artists and their works: Peter Weibel's *Observation of the Observation: Uncertainty*, 1973 and *Kruzifikation der Identität*, 1973,[7] Dan Graham's *Yesterday/Today*, 1975,

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[5] Ibid.

[6] Here we could point out larger trends in the 1960s and 1970s, where exhibition space offered participation and co-action to the viewers, including happenings, actions and environments, which allowed participation by viewers. Today this trend appears as "relational art", which provides opportunities to the audience and which should not be technological. In this chapter, mainly technological art is discussed.

[7] Peter Weibel, "Kruzifikation der Identität," accessed June 5, 2014, http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/werke/krucifikation/.

Opposing Mirrors and Video Monitors on Time Delay 1974/1993[8] and *Time Delay Room*, 1974, Bruce Nauman's *Live-Taped Video Corridor* 1970,[9] Bill Viola's *He Weeps for You*, 1979 and Peter Campus' *Interface,* 1972[10].

In these classic works, the viewer is confronted with their own image in such a way that the feedback image is shifted, or at least it challenges the viewer's position. In Weibel's work *Observation of the Observation: Uncertainty*, the viewer is placed in an environment where three cameras follow him from an angle of 180 degrees. The viewer is confronted with the image of his neck and his face is not visible. In the work *Kruzifikation der Identität* (1973), the viewer has to stretch out his hands at a cross, covering the cameras, and then switch on the cameras in front of the cross. As a result, almost like a reward, a portrait of the viewer is projected onto a screen in the centre of the cross.

Dan Graham shifts the image of the viewer in his work *Opposing Mirrors and Video Monitors on Time Delay,* 1974/1993. Two screens with cameras which are turned towards each other show an image which is recorded by a camera opposite. On a monitor, the viewer sees a projection of another viewer, and the viewers' images are switched in space. There is a time delay involved as well. The artist splits space and image, breaking the spatial-visual continuity. The viewer steps into the artwork in real time, and the work is characterised by the use of shifted time or delay as a conceptual part of the project.

In Bruce Nauman's *Live-Taped Video Corridor*, 1970, the narcissistic viewer is cheated. Entering a 50-cm wide corridor, the viewer moves towards two screens, seeing himself from the back. As he approaches the screens, his image diminishes to the size of a finger, becoming completely unrecognisable.

In Bill Viola's *He Weeps for You*, 1979, the viewer is reflected in a drop of water, which falls on a drum with an exploding sound, waking the viewer from a meditative silence. In this work, the image of the viewer is magnified as a projection on a wall. The striking contradiction which emerges from

[8] San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, accessed June 5, 2014, http://www.sfmoma.org/explore/collection/artwork/4180#ixzz2AFT7gIrq.

[9] Bruce Nauman, "Live-Taped Video Corridor," accessed June 5, 2014, http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/live-taped-video-corridor/.

[10] Peter Campus "Interface", accessed June 5, 2014, http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/interface/.

juxtaposing the miniature water drop, the huge projection, silence and the sound of the water drop results in events of different scales being connected: the water drop and drum sound, silence and the huge projection of the small waterdrop. An aesthetic experience is guaranteed. The viewer has few choices, and is unwillingly a part of a narrative directed by the artist.

In Peter Campus' installation *Interface* (1972), the viewer is confronted with a mirrored and projected image. It is similar to Joan Jonas' work *Left Side Right Side* (1972) where the artist opposes her mirror image to a video projection. Here the focus is on the author herself, not the viewer. In Campus' work, the viewer moves towards a screen and beyond, discovering the unusual dynamic of their mirrored image. In all of his works, Campus manipulates the behaviour of the viewer in the exhibition space, embedding him in stories and performances, whose solutions are left to the viewer.

Along with these works, which we can describe as low-tech, there are also far more complex works, which can be seen as precursors of interactive screen art. Among them, the projects of Myron Kruger and Lynn Hershman are most prominent and we can clearly see in them something we can call "interactive documentary". In Kruger's work, the shape of the viewer's body is a source of visual compositions. Sometimes the victor and at other times the defeated, the viewer has to defeat "computer demons", shifting them into the periphery or squeezing them against his own body.

Hershman presents the life of a lonely woman in her works *Lorna* (1983–84), *Deep Contact* (1984–89) and *Room of One's Own* (1990-3). In all these projects, the opportunities for audience participation gradually increase, until there is an opportunity to encounter oneself in *Room of One's Own*. The viewer feels like a voyeur, peeking into a tiny box, the living room of a woman. The viewer is the initiator of the work and also a collaborator, a participant in the artist's story. In Hershman's work, the viewer is a rather annoying and impolite intruder.

A classic historical interactive documentary is the *Aspen Moviemap* (*The Interactive Movie Map. A Surrogate Travel System*), which was realised at MIT during 1978–80.[11] On Aspen city streets, images were recorded every three metres using 16 mm cameras. To maintain stable light conditions, filming was done between 10am and 2pm. The material was presented on a

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[11] Michael Naimark, "Aspen Moviemap," accessed June 5, 2014, http://www.naimark.net/projects/aspen.html.

laser disc player with a computer and touchscreen, such that the viewer could move around Aspen, choosing directions at crossroads by touching direction arrows on the screen. It is quite impressive that it was made more than 30 years ago, before the revolution in personal computers. Although the project would be seen today as a technical experiment, a precursor of Google StreetView, the recording reflects the city, cars and people of that time, documenting reality.

With this section, highlighting the art of the 1970s, I have shown that the "novel" interactivity of the digital art of the 1990s was previewed in exhibition rooms in earlier decades. Trends in audience engagement develop and change with the technological environment, under the label "interactive art". Additionally, we see that audience interaction with screens has been around for a long time, as we see in the projects of Krueger and Hershman, and in the Aspen Moviemap.

Glimmers of the Future: CD-ROM-Art or -Documentary

Highlights in the development of interactive installations are reflected in the works of the 1990s, where the feedback image of the viewer intersected with the high technological content of the computer. Some of these narrative projects fall into the category of *CD-ROM-Art*: multimedia projects recorded on CDs which were usually designed with a specific authoring software called Director. [12]

I would like to present a selection of works where we can see the following traits: usage of personal material, non-fictionality, definite location and recognisable environment, engagement of viewer/user, documenting of the moment, information from archives, and "databaseness" which relies on documentary material. Documentarity does not mean that a project is not playful, or that fictionality cannot be mixed with documentary material in a project.

In this context, it is unfortunate that we must neglect projects which were extremely innovative and extended the borders of the medium of CD-ROM,

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[12] Director started as "VideoWorks" (1985), from the company MacroMind, for the Apple Macintosh platform. In the beginning, animations were black-and-white. The name "Director" was used in 1987; in 1988 the programming language Lingo was added. The Windows version was available from early 1990. Adobe Director, accessed June 5, 2014, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adobe_Director.

such as JODI's *OSS/***** (1998), *Small Fish*,[13] and several projects which were produced by ZKM Artintact (with artworks by Luc Courchesne, Bill Seaman, Jean-Louis Boissier, Tamás Waliczky and others). The documentary material in their works is not direct, and therefore they do not fit into the context of this chapter. In terms of multimedia aesthetics in the broader sense, these works are undoubtedly pioneering and unique. *Small Fish* was adapted for iPhone and iPad in 2011 at a price of 89 cents. Such an update is not possible for all of the projects of the 1990s.

Christoph Blase, in his article of 1995 entitled "Walter Benjamin and the CD-ROM. A New Media Form",[14] based on Walter Benjamin's famous text *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936), wrote that "One of the foremost tasks of art has always been the creation of a demand which could be fully satisfied only later." [15] He does not mention a footnote of Benjamin where he quotes André Breton's thought in the same spirit: "An artwork's value is defined by its glimmering reflections of the future."[16] In this context we can cite Lev Manovich's articles "Avant-garde as Software" (1999) and "New Media from Borghes to HTML" (2003), where the author writes about the dynamics of the "new". Even when photography and phones were new, in the works of artists of the 19th century one can see "glimmering reflections of the future", which were projected into new technology. Therefore Blase's hint of the future possibilities of the CD-ROM medium forms part of the same pattern we have already encountered in art history.

However, it is important to recall opinions expressed at the beginning of the 1990s, when artistic multimedia began. Erkki Huhtamo wrote about them as "transitional" media: "Once cyberspace is able to accommodate and

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[13] *Small Fish*, Kiyoshi Furukawa, Masaki Fujihata, Wolfgang Münch; (ZKM/ Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe, 1999)

[14] artintact 2. Edited by Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie (ZKM), Karlsruhe, texts by Christoph Blase, Timothy Druckrey, Jean Gagnon and Anna Szepesi; essays by von Luc Courchesne, Miroslaw Rogala and Tamás Waliczky, 1995.

[15] Walter Benjamin, The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, accessed June 5, 2014,

https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ge/benjamin.htm.

[16] Walter Benjamin, "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit". In *Walter Benjamin, Gesammelte Schriften,* unter mitwirkung von Theodor W. Adorno und Gershom Sholme herausgeben von Rolf Tiedemann und Hermann Schweppenhäuser. Sieben Bände (in 14 Teilbänden). (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991, I/2), 471-508.

transmit high quality sound and image, who needs those little optical discs?"[17] Even in the heyday of the medium, there was an awareness that, just as it would be absurd to speak of "diskette-art", the CD-ROM should not evolve into a permanent artistic brand. Huhtamo was not alone in his foresight; he was quoting the designer of the Director programme Marc Canter, who had doubts about naming a cultural field after a carrier ("diskette-culture"!). Peter Weibel had similar ideas: "The CD-ROM is the little brother of the Internet, a consumption-oriented, physical implementation of the international Web."[18]

In the following text I will describe projects which were famous during the 1990s and produced remarkable artworks mainly in new media. They will be divided into the following themes:

1. Visual archives: from form to content.
2. Interactive travelogues.
3. The World of Things and Memories: biographies and self-reflection.
4. Varia: outside the categories.
5. Interactive documentaries in Estonia.

Visual Archives: From Form to Content

Eric Lanz's *Manuscript* (1994) looks like it is written in the language of useless things: utensils, tableware and gardening tools. Even the title *Manuscript* suggests writing, although it is in fact a screen-based photo installation. Each object/image on the screen is clickable, and the user can magnify it and see a video clip which shows the tool in action. It is like an ethnographic museum on disc which shows the viewer a world of forgotten objects. The ambivalence of the whole project lies in the presentation of objects as letters, referring to the idea that old objects can be read as texts, books or letters. Although the viewer doesn't understand the relationship of the project to its author, this is less important than the fact that multimedia are used to turn a photo album of dead objects into a living encyclopedia. In some way, this project comments on the popular idea of the 1990s by Jaron Lanier on "post symbolic communication"—that in the communication of

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[17] Erkki Huhtamo, "Art on the CD-ROM Frontier – a Mirage, a Fly in the Eye, or a real Thing?" in *5th International Sound Basis Visual Art Festival*, Wroclaw, 3-7 May 1995 (Open Studio/WRO, Wroclaw 1995), 132.

[18] Peter Weibel, "The Post-Gutenberg Book. The CD-ROM between Index and Narration," in *artintact 3, Artists'interactive CD-ROMagazin (*Cantz Verlag 1996) 23.

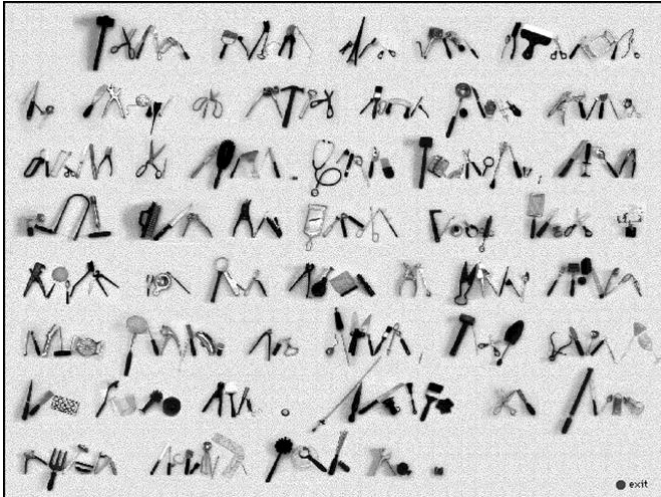the future we will use things themselves, not words, which are signs of things.

Figure 3-1. Eric Lanz *Manuscript* 1994.

On the other hand, we can point to anecdotal "pre-symbolic" communication, as Swift dealt with in *Gulliver's Travels*. Visiting an academy in Lagado, Gulliver encounters extraordinary innovation. Instead of words, real objects are used for communication. The justification lies in the fact that talking exhausts the lungs and therefore life. Thus, the academics of Lagado have servants carry objects for them so that they can communicate.

Lanz's *Manuscript* is an example of both pre-symbolic and post-symbolic communication. Of interest here is that as a multimedia work it is not complicated; the work is even superficial, but that is the beauty of it. At the time that it was made, at the beginning of the 1990s, when authors tried to amaze viewers with complicated projects, simple projects were rare and contrasted with those that were rich in information.

The work *Maire* (1994) by Finnish artist Marita Liulia is like an art historical essay, with supplementary documentary material added on the subject of Maire Gullichen's life. Marita Liulia writes:

There are many paths to Maire: you can search for gems in the modernist flea market, take a plunge into art theory, wander inside the mazes of contemporary criticism, listen to the thoughts of the artists themselves, or browse through a collection of 88 major modernist works of art. One intriguing path is dedicated to Maire Gullichsen, who played a pioneering role in giving modernism a foothold in Finland.[19]

Figure 3-2. Marita Liulia *Maire* 1994.

In the context of the multimedia projects of Marita Liulia, her *AB (Ambitious Bitch) 1996* and *SOB (Son of a Bitch)* 1999 should also be mentioned. Both are strong intellectual and visual achievements, but it is difficult to fit them into the matrix of the documentary concept. Instead, they should be considered to be strong artistic projects, emphasising the documentary aspect of *Maire*.

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[19] http://www.maritaliulia.com/en/productions/maire/index.php (accessed June 5, 2014)

Two documentary-based projects I would like to mention which transcend the borders of the category are Miroslaw Rogala's *Lover's Leap* 1994/95 and George Legrady's *Slippery Traces* of 1996. The "category" of documentary here means the mediation of reality. In these projects we see that recorded or found documentation of reality serves as a pretext for the authors to create their own spatial-interactive compositions.

Rogala's project was realised during his residency at ZKM in 1995.[20] The framework of the project is formed by photos taken from a "fisheye" perspective in Chicago; they are combined into a spherical interactive image of a place called "Lover's Leap" in Jamaica. Such tragic places of "cliff jumps of lovers" can be found in numerous locations. The place photographed by Rogala is revealed in the installation space even though the viewer is immersed in the spherical image of Chicago.

The aesthetic experience of the viewer is based on the feeling of being immersed in an image, and the surprise of finding oneself in another image. The author's relationship with reality is rather exploitive, allowing the viewer to forget it completely. Such pictorial transformation shows the new media artist's relationship with image media in a broader sense: visual reality is like a pretext for visual or interactive transformations: "how" is much more important than "what". The form and transformative technology dominates over the content. I would, however, add as an evaluative remark that this "how" evolves into an instrument of content creation in such a way that it influences and changes the original content.

The same kind of exploitation of image layers is encountered in George Legrady's *Slippery Traces*, which he calls a multi-layer visual narrative. The basic material consists of 240 postcards in 24 categories:

> ... The intention of the work has been to explore database structures as a means of generating multi-linear narratives at a time when web search engines were introduced. I wanted to produce a narrative work in which three sets of cultural messages could intersect or collapse into each other. First, the archive consists mostly of commercial postcards selected out of 2000 to represent 20th century culture. The second level consists of my evaluation of these images encoded through keywords and cross-listed through a database to maximize movement between categories. Third, the

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[20] Collaboration with Ludger Hovestadt and Ford Oxaal. Produced at ZKM /The Center for Art and Media Technology, Karlsruhe, Germany, Artist in Residency Fellowship, 1995. See also: "Lovers Leap" 1995, accessed June 5, 2014, http://www.rogala.org/LoversLeap.htm.

collection of these images signifies in a dispersed way my autobiography. Amongst the images can be found 1920s to 1940s family portraits printed on postcards, places I have been, and cultures that shaped me in various ways.[21]

Here the autobiographical dimension is of interest, since the author mentions pictures taken from places which have influenced him. In a way *Slippery Traces* continues, and adds a substantial element to, Legrady's earlier project *An Anecdoted Archive from the Cold War* (1993) which was a personal reflection based on Hungarian Jews and the Eastern European communist past. The author writes that at first *Slippery Traces* was inspired by an installation with two projectors. In this installation, he explores the interrelation of images in a situation of co- or parallel presentation. Images are normally understood in relation to others, where they are expanded and changed. Being transferred into computer space, they are even more released from their spatial relation housed in a box of slides. As a result, tension between the images arises—which in Legrady's interpretation extends to 2000 connections—generating associative wholeness between images. As a result, after each click and image selection, the user, relying on his "perceptual filter", entwines with the network, which is recorded in the temporary memory of the presentation of the programme.

The aesthetic of the interface is the subject of discussion here, it being an important field of innovation for new media artists in the 1990s. In Legrady's project, a system of hotspots on the screen is like a consistent rule of the game, which is quickly understood by viewers. In interpreting this aesthetic, it is important to firstly define the starting point for the discussion, which is an ordinary multimedia button. The button's function is defined by a "mouseover" script which changes the colour of the button, whilst pressing it changes the colour again and the button is "activated". This kind of cliché design is a criterion of "user-friendly" interface design. The expectation of all users is that the buttons "communicate" their readiness or usefulness. In *Slippery Traces* Legrady redefines this routine. The viewer has to discover the hotspots of the postcards and their skills with the mouse are tested. What provides gratification for the viewer is that this non-linear artwork is always a different experience and forms completely individual sequences of images, which remain in the operative memory of the computer. [22]

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[21] George Legrady, accessed June 5, 2014, http://www.georgelegrady.com.

[22] G. Legrady´s installation "Pocket Full of Memories" (2001) is suitable to illustrate the documentary topic from another angle. To produce the content of the work, the

Graham Harwood's *Rehearsal of Memory* (1996) is a mixture of documentary stories and artist statements, recorded on CD-ROM. During his trip to Ashworth High Security Mental Hospital in Liverpool, the author recalls his conversation with a former soldier whom he met on a train. Reading a copy of Philosophy Today, the former soldier talks about his experience in the army, hunting down terrorists. His conclusion is that human life is worthless and he could easily take Harwood's life. He says: "I might feel bad about killing you as an individual, but not about ending your life."[23] This makes Harwood think about the borders of reason—and the whole multimedia project can be understood as an homage to the outcasts of society.

Visually the disc is attractive, as scans of the patients' hands and faces were used to provide visual material: this was done by literally "putting the heads into a scanner" as cameras were not allowed in the hospital. In addition to its unusual photographic quality, the CD-ROM pages contain patients' stories about their suicide attempts, escapes and family violence. One of them writes:

> My Dad's aways been handy with his fists.
> Before I was born, he used to box. He also used
> his fists on our family.
> He was quite a big man, my Dad.
> He was about five foot ten, broad and muscular.
> He had a bit of a belly, though.
> And he was covered with tattoos over both arms.
> He had a small face that was completely pock-marked.
> He always stank of tobacco.
> He'd never smoke tailor-made cigarettes,
> always rolled his own. When he talked,
> you could tell he wasn't interested in anybody's
> opinion but his own.
> And if he couldn't get his own way by talking,
> the fists'd start coming.[24]

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personal belongings of exhibition visitors are scanned; then they are placed with descriptions into the database of the work. These are open database projects in which the co-authors are visitors to the gallery. See George Legrady, accessed June 5, 2014, http://www.georgelegrady.com.

[23] Rehearsal of Memory. Harwood 96, accessed June 5, 2014, http://www.mongrel.org.uk/rehearsal.

[24] Ibid.

Browsing through the pages, the viewer is accompanied by sounds whose strength changes with mouse movements made towards the centre of the screen. The sound design was made by Scanner. The sound environment was recorded on the disc and its multimedial dynamics seem to imitate schizophrenic sensitivity in connection with the auditory environment.

As the project became famous and travelled to several festivals and exhibitions, [25] the authors felt guilty that the computer industry was using their work for humanitarian purposes. It brought accusations of the glorification and ennobling of poverty.[26] Additionally the project's authorship was criticised, as the co-authors were patients of a mental hospital together with a group of unemployed activists who worked in the ARTEC centre and later became members of the Mongrel group. [27]

Although the project can be understood as a database of different portraits and stories, it contains, in addition to the universal quality of focusing on abandoned people, extremely powerful photographic language, which is based on a weird scanning technology, creating a unique visual quality.

The above-mentioned five projects characterise the scope of the themes that I would like to highlight. The works of Lanz, Liulia, Rogala, Legrady and Harwood contain both documentary elements and material relating to the author's personal connection to the work, even though the works are quite different. The projects of Lanz, Legrady and Harwood are photographic databases whose interfaces represent the particular aesthetic achievements of their authors. The materials and database offered to users in Rogala's project are quite scarce, the main interest lying in the Chicago scene. The design of the interface is a remarkable achievement, but lacks excitement in comparison with an installation in an exhibition space. In Legrady's work we can talk about the author's distant relationship with photographic material, which is different from Harwood's project in which people are encountered directly. In connection with all of the previously discussed works, as with later examples, the typical invention by the artist has a certain interaction logic, which makes the project different from others.

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[25] 1999 presented Graham Harwood his project "National Heritage" (1997) at Tallinn festival Interstanding 3.
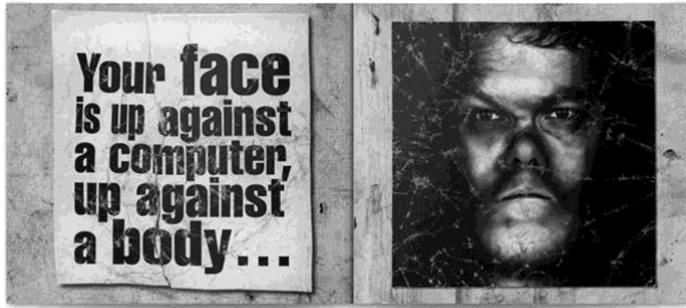[26] Op. cit.
[27] Op. cit.

Figure 3-3. Graham Harwood *Rehearsal of Memory* 1996.

Interactive Travelogues

In the following section I will turn my attention to interactive travelogues and to certain site researches, as we see them in the multimedia works of Sally Pryor, Russet Lederman and Chris Hales. These represent just a few out of many interesting examples.

Sally Pryor in her multimedia *Postcard From Tunis* (1997) depicts the city of Tunis, where her relatives live. She designed a unique user interface where the user can learn a few words of Arabic. She calls it an "objective" documentary. This is a playful research on writing practices using subjective portraiture of the city and the author's sympathetic presentation of the culture. As a precursor of this project, Pryor created the multimedia *Xchange*, which allowed Arabic non-speakers to translate thoughts into Arabic using a visual interface.

The author relies on the integrationism theory of Roy Harris and subsequently continued her research in her doctoral thesis "Extending Integrationist theory through the creation and analysis of a multimedia work of art: Postcard From Tunis".[28] Pryor describes postcards as an expressive genre in which people write in different directions. They are mostly visual. She refers to mail-art, with which she has been involved, and the book by Jacques Derrida *La carte postale: De Socrate à Freud et au-delà, 1980*. The postcard theme provides her with the opportunity to mention George Legrady's opinion, expressed in reference to his own project, that postcards are an ideological form of expression used by culture itself.[29]

Pryor writes about her interactive postcards project in terms of a writing space which completely transforms the text and image environment: "Instead of the single static space of the standard postcard, Postcard has multiple, interrelated and dynamic writing spaces, each with different structures and ways of creating meaning."[30] These new "writing spaces", as she says, "... contain new written signs that are kinetic, dynamic and reflexive, their communicative power depending on the biomechanical skills and macrosocial understandings the audience brings to the work".[31] In short, the project's goal is an integrated experience of activity, relying on the integrationist point of view of communication as the integration of activities, where the borders between the linguistic and non-linguistic are not fixed. Therefore, this CD-ROM is designed for a non-Arabic audience.

[28] Sally Pryor, "Extending Integrationist theory through the creation and analysis of a multimedia work of art: Postcard From Tunis". Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Communication, Design and Media, University of Western Sydney, Nepean, 31 August 2003

[29] In terms of postcards as subject matter, we can mention the video "Cartes postales vidéo", by Robert Cahen, Stéphane Huter and Alain Longuet, 1984-86, 63:57 min, colour, sound. At the beginning of the 1990s this video circulated at festivals, as a rather humorous travel diary of French vidéastes about such places as Paris, New York, Rome, Quebec, Iceland, Lisbon, Cairo, Algiers and others. In the video, the image of the city is recorded as a traditional postcard, which is first frozen then released, revealing an anecdotal moment, which becomes frozen again.

[30] Sally Pryor, "Extending Integrationist theory through the creation and analysis of a multimedia work of art: Postcard From Tunis", 47.
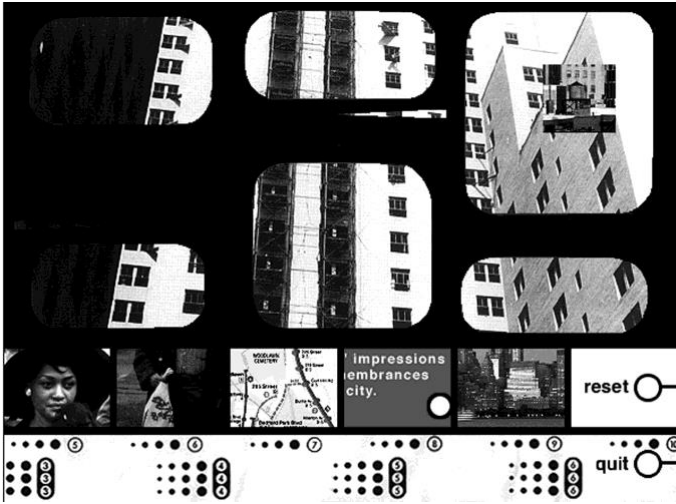
[31] Op. cit., 47.

Figure 3-3. Russet Lederman *NYC Thought Pictures: Memories of Place* 1999.

Russet Lederman's project *NYC Thought Pictures: Memories of Place* (1999) is based on Walter Benjamin's writings on the city as memory space.[32] There are recollections of New York inhabitants from different decades which have been recorded as interviews. The author explores NYC stories through four themes, "Memory", "Time", "Fragmentation" and "City Experience", combining everything into a graphic format. Moving along an interface, the user can switch to different audio tracks, which are usually personal "micro" tales, where Benjamin's thoughts about the environments of Berlin, Moscow, Paris and Naples can be heard.

In a way, Lederman continues in the established hybrid graphic style of the 1990s, merging photography, moving images, graphics and animation—a style which became dominant in multimedia applications, advertisement design, television graphics and movies. It contains technical and visual excitement related to the combinatoric features of new media—which were implemented by artists to achieve innovative audiovisual literature and documentaries, and which are referred to as the "remix culture" by Lev Manovich.[33]

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[32] NYC Thought Pictures: Memories of Place, 1999 – CD-ROM, accessed June 5, 2014, http://www.russetlederman.com/nyc-thought-pictures/.
[33] Lev Manovich, What Comes After Remix? 2007, accessed June 5, 2014, www.manovich.net.

Figure 3-5. Chris Hales *The Tallinn People's Orchestra* 1998.

Chris Hales' *The Tallinn People's Orchestra* (1998) is a witty comment on a one-day trip to Tallinn. In terms of multimedia design, it is a rather skillful project in which tiny video images are integrated into a photographic picture such that the images can be erased by clicking on them. Visually, one sees an almost static image of Tallinn's main square in which pedestrians appear accompanied by humorous music. If the user clicks on them, they disappear. The author's annotation: "A cityscape in which the people portrayed can be combined together in various musical combinations. The work is non-fiction, based on real, not enacted, activities." The author describes the technical goals of the project: *"*To attempt a new variation of algorithmic multiscreen representation in which a single video image is deconstructed into numerous component videos. To solve technical issues around the simultaneous display of multiple video streams." He continues:

 Activities in the Town Hall Square of Tallinn have been deconstructed in such a way that the user and the computer can combine together to create infinite combinations from the original components of the scene. Thirty seven short elements of the original scene (such as children playing, tourists, car traffic) have been extracted and made into individual video entities, such that they can be played out in their original locations according to a computer algorithm.*"*[34]

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[34] Chris Hales, "RETHINKING THE INTERACTIVE MOVIE: A practical investigation demonstrating original and engaging ways of creating and combining "live action" video segments under audience and/or computer control. " A thesis

In examining user feedback, Hales concludes after reading some opinions that the project reminds some users of "shoot 'em up" games, as the user's preferred activity is like "shooting" the characters in the image, thus cleaning the Town Hall Square. There were, however, other users who enjoyed the project's similarity to a screensaver, which continuously presented new combinations.

The projects of Pryor, Lederman and Hales are connected with locations, but they are not strictly site-specific. The background of Hales' project was recorded in Tallinn, but it could have been recorded in any city. Pryor's work is most passionately connected with the city where it was made, because the intertwining of cultures and languages which characterises Tunis formed the conceptual basis of the project.

The World of Things and Memories: Biographies and Self-reflection

The Finnish artists Veli Granö and Hanna Haaslahti, in their multimedia project *Tangible Cosmologies* (*Esineiden valtakunta*, 1997),[35] conduct interviews with unusual collectors. Granö calls himself "a collector of collectors". He found himself in the fortunate situation of talking with people who were ready to share their thoughts about their collections. Most of these collectors saw the world through their objects, and his description of himself as "a collector of collectors" was warmly received.

> Collectors are easy to approach, as they always seem to have plenty to say about the things they collect. During the three years I spent photographing them, I found an interested expression was often enough to get them talking: collectors often seem to see the world through their collections, and my presence seemed to offer them all the excuse they needed to lose themselves in the objects and memories of their collections. The only personal question I was asked was generally concerned with whether I myself was a collector. It was quite impossible to give voice to my horror in the midst of the piles of objects around me, so I evaded the question by saying I was a collector of

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submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of East London for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, 2006, 114-115.
[35] Veli Granö and Hanna Haaslahti "Tangible Cosmologies", accessed June 5, 2014, http://veligrano.com/esineiden-valtakunta-1997/tangible-cosmologies/.

collectors. This response, which was intended to be witty, was always received with enthusiasm.[36]

The material as a whole is based on Granö's photo installation and 8 mm film and is a kind of portraiture of marginal habits. Visually, the disc interface is created using images of scanned film clips, which run across the screen and whose movement the user can influence with the mouse. This is a documentary project at its best: marginal personalities are recorded and documented. It seems rather mainstream in that the documentary makers use deviations from the norm to excite the audience.

Mari Soppela's *Family Files* (1998) is a multimedia reworking of personal film material. What is interesting is the project's specific media quality, which can be achieved only in a programmed environment. The choice of the medium justifies itself completely. The screen is divided into nine squares. Moving onto one of the squares, the image sequence starts moving and we see a film sequence, which is accompanied by Soppela's husband Leo Anemaet's music. The work contains fifteen different chapters depicting amazingly beautiful landscapes of Finland, with snowy winters, a bright summer landscape of beaches, gathering blueberries and boat trips.

The user interface enables the user to move around by clicking thumbnails without a traditional "menu". At first there is an explanatory page and instructions. There is a main selection page, but the user has to make their own choices, as the titles of the stories are not given. Intuitive movement among colourful family episodes frees the viewer from rationality and creates trust, which carries the viewer from image to image. Soppela programmed into the project a certain surprise, a "Russian doll effect interface": by clicking on a certain image, the user is navigated to a screen filled with thumbnails which become smaller and smaller.

The project became the focus of attention in 1998 and appeared on the cover of Mediamatic magazine. Dirk van Weelden discusses in the magazine how, until the 1980s, home videos were made on celluloid:

Vacations, weddings and birthdays were recorded with rattling cameras on expensive reels. Ever since video systems have become smaller and cheaper, making home movies has become as normal as brewing coffee or playing a

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[36] Op. cit.

cassette. Minute-long movies have become hours of video, arbitrarily strewn-together pictures and sounds from family life. [37]

He is not claiming that putting those videos into a multimedia form was as easy as before. Soppela's intention was to create a universal digital environment in which users could upload their family images and videos, creating their own "family files".[38]

Figure 3-6. Mari Soppela *Family Files* 1998.

The exquisite nature of the project, if I may say so, lies with its simplicity and beauty. Van Weelden writes: *"The linearity of the cinema and the non-linearity of the interactive medium are woven together."* This creates a positive experience in the viewer and produces certain emotions at the sight

[37] Dirk van Weelden, "Family Files," accessed June 5, 2014,
http://www.mediamatic.nl/magazine/9_1/weelden-cdrom/cdrom-2e.html. See also: Mari Soppela, "Family Files," in *French-Baltic-Nordic video and new media festival "offline@online"* (E-Media center, Tallinn 1998), 27.
[38] Personal conversation with the author in Tallinn in 1998.

of activities which are both banal and beautiful. Dirk van Weelden shares his exaltation:

> Soppela is not a video artist, pasting together personal pictures with a black box. She writes in the electronic medium, and does so in the most fundamental sense of the word. She creates forms which allow the user to see pictures which are both everyday and less everyday, which are filled with meaning. And all of this stems from the subtle power of a keen mind. And love.[39]

Agnes Hegedüs's *Things Spoken* (1998) is also family-centred.[40] The author scanned some of her personal belongings and added her own comments on them, as well as those of her colleagues and husband. [41] Again, from the point of view of the user, unexciting things come to life and they become populated with events and characters. A comment which is connected with a certain object contains a link to some other object or words, allowing the user to interlink to somewhere else. As comments are auditory and are read in a reflective and nostalgic tone, there is a certain melancholic quality to the work. The comments are embarrassingly intimate: about things and documents preserved from a maternity ward, birth information and things normally not shared, including children's digestion details. This kind of openness makes the viewer defenceless, forcing him to forget the technical medium out of which personal experiences pour. Here there is a clear parallel with Soppela's project in which we see a young mother amidst idyllic family meetings. In Hegedüs' work the personal dimension is brought even closer to the user. To some extent, her project which is based on "things", *Their Things Spoken*, is similar.

It was published in the multimedia projects collection "(dis) LOCATIONS"[42], along with the work of five other authors (Jeffrey Shaw, Peter Weibel, Ian Howard, Susan Norrie and Dennis Del Favero). Here she questions friends and colleagues, who each present one object of importance for them and describe its value in their lives. The author writes:

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[39] Dirk van Weelden, "Family Files."

[40] CD-ROM Artintact5, Artists' interactive CD-ROM Magazine (Cantz Verlag, 1998).

[41] Flora Asseyer, Ken Feingold, Agnes Hegedüs, Annette Hünnekens, Gertrud Klotz, Jeffrey Shaw.

[42] Curator and Editor: Dennis Del Favero and Jeffrey Shaw; ZKM digital arts edition 2001.

"Their Things Spoken" refers to the gulf between the conservation and valuation of officially recognised cultural representations and the information content of bearers of personal significance originating in apparently unimportant, unknown biographies. The artist distributed among visitors to the ZKM a leaflet asking, "Why not put your favourite object in a museum?" This question stimulated the museum visitors to reflect upon rituals of appreciating and keeping, and to relate the museum exhibits to the relics to which they attribute private significance.[43]

Figure 3-7. Agnes Hegedüs *Things Spoken* 1998.

Takahiko Iimura's multimedia project *Interactive: AIUEONN Six Features* (1998)[44] remains somehow outside the convention of telling and archiving personal stories. Here we encounter grotesque self-reflection. The author modifies his facial expressions as he pronounces the letters A I U E O and NN through the Sony software "System G". The results are unnatural mimic transformations which are clearly of computer origin. This is a tendency that we can follow throughout the history of the application of new media: its use for experiments in self-reflection, not only the presentation

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[43] "Their Things Spoken", accessed June 5, 2014,
https://www.digitalartarchive.at/database/general/work/their-things-spoken.html.
[44] "Interactive: AIUEONN Six Features", accessed June 5, 2014,
http://www.takaiimura.com/work/CD-ROMaiueonn.html.

of reality. As each new medium is essentially a tool for transformation, this ability can be used to effect a change in portraiture.

Amongst the above-mentioned works, Granö deals with the documentation of others, creating a database of database makers. Soppela and Hegedüs are personal and family centred, showing different ways of talking about themselves. In Iimura's work, we encounter a completely different intimacy, which has nothing in common with the previous examples. We see a database of grimaces and attention is focused on the author, as it is in the works of Soppela and Hegedüs. Iimura's work can be compared with Natalie Bookchin's CD-ROM *Databank of the Everyday* (1996), where the user can move through a database of everyday and looping movements, and where we see parallels with Eric Lanz's project.

Varia: Outside the Categories

I will now add to the discussion several examples that fall outside the other categories, whose material is not categorised under artistic projects, but which still contain documentary material. In these examples, authorship is questionable; either they are not individual works, or the project is born outside the experimental artistic field or is commercial or commissioned.

I will give three examples in which documentarity is hidden by other features. *1935 - Matka Kyröjärven pitäjään* (Hannu Sinisalo, Yrjö Teinilä et al. Finland, Everscreen Mediateam Oy, 1999.) dramatises the history of the village of Kyröjärvi. If this work had been more generously funded it might have resulted in a computer game. A local image archive is used, a script for the characters was written and the text is presented by actors. The life and characters of a Lapland village of the 1930s are revived.

The Serbian artist Zoran Naskovski's *War Frames* (video stills, installation and web project, 1999)[45] is a reflection on the 1999 NATO bombing of Serbia. Raw material is taken from news media, and in appearance it is web-based multimedia, which can be distributed by the author to festivals online or shared with acquaintances directly. This project is worth discussing as it does not fit into the category of "CD projects"—it is web-based and can also be presented as computer files.

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[45] Zoran Naskovski "War Frames", accessed June 5, 2014, http://www.medarh.org/visual.php.

Bombing is a dramatic event no matter which side one is on; collateral damage is unavoidable. Naskovski adds a personal view to the image material taken from television and newspapers in Serbia. Screenshots of children's programmes are presented ironically with, for example, warning signs of approaching bombing appearing in the corner of children's animations. This shows a situation which is not experienced in other countries, but which could plausibly happen anywhere. The combination of brutal physical demolition with ephemeral electronic communication produces an unreal effect.

Steve Dixon's curated *Chameleons 2—Theatre In A Movie Screen* (1999) is a documentation of the methods of the multimedia theatre organisation Chameleons Group whose goal is to bring together video and live presentation. Dixon writes:

> The narrative portrayed four characters in an imagined place and time somewhere between reality and a dream, who were striving to find a sense of self and their role within the external world. The primary research objective of the Chameleons Group was to bring a closer integration of the video and of live action."[46]

In a performance environment, windows and doors are cut into walls on which video images are superimposed. In an environment between experimental physical space and a virtual projection room, there are actors inspired by shared dreams.

Interactive Documentary in Estonia

Several Estonian interactive film projects meet the definition of documentary. From the 1990s, using multimedia authoring, one can name Ando Keskküla, Mare Tralla, Ivika Kivi, Kristel Sibul, Tuuli Lepik, Raul Keller, Tiia Johannson and Raivo Kelomees. They were aware of the character of the medium and primarily tried to realise their own art projects. Clearly, they were motivated by international developments, and new media in Estonia proved to be technically and physically the most easily acquirable technology which could be used to step into international communication networks. The term "interactive documentary" is, however, not applicable to all projects by the above-mentioned artists.

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[46] Steve Dixon (director), Chameleons 2: Theatre in a movie screen, (University of Salford, 1999) CD-ROM.

Mare Tralla's CD-ROM *her.space* of 1997 (first version 1996)[47] focuses on the author's life, particularly her childhood, in Soviet Estonia. The work is divided into several chapters, and presents the ironic point of view of the author towards society and women's identity. The project is intentionally feminist with its use of documentary content.[48]

I would like to particularly focus on Kristel Sibul's *What is media art?* (2001), where the author presents the standard question "what is media art?" to artists and art historians, from the ex-rector of her academy to her own colleagues. It is documentation of the moment at its best, but it reveals confusion regarding this new term—which is still present today.

Raivo Kelomees' CD-ROM *tokyocity.ee* (1999) is a multimedia presentation of a trip to Tokyo. The project has been examined by the German researcher Jutta Zaremba in her doctoral work.[49] The installation was presented in a Tallinn gallery in spring 1999, and later distributed on disc.

As I am emphasising the documental approach, I will leave out other projects (such as Ivika Kivi's *Virbits*, which is an alphabet book for preschoolers) and focus on projects dealing with artists' multimedia of the 1990s incorporating documentary content. It should be added that these works arose from a pedagogical context, mostly in the Tartu Art College and Estonian Academy of Arts, and are connected with Chris Hales, who has taught more than fifteen workshops in Estonia since 2002. The fact that these projects were produced under supervision slightly dilutes their value, but the ideas and actual realisation were carried out by the young artists themselves. Supervisors helped to write the programmes, including sharing ready-made programming modules with students, but the results prove interesting and provide excellent examples of creative documentaries in the

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[47] Mare Tralla, accessed June 5, 2014, http://lizard.artun.ee/~trimadu/cv.html.
[48] Writing this, I was relying on my memory of multimedia and a CD-ROM which was made for an old version of MacOS. Without this old OS, it is no longer possible to review the disc. Unfortunately, other projects of the 1990s have suffered the same fate.
[49] Jutta Zaremba, New York und Tokio in der Medienkunst: urbane Mythen zwischen Musealisierung und Mediatisierung. (Transcript Verlag, Bielefeld, 2006) The project is discussed on pages 164-173, in a separate chapter. The project is also discussed by F. Popper, *From Technological to Virtual Art*, (The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.), 2007, 148. The project belongs to the collection of the Estonian Art Museum.

multimedia format. I have written about them on several occasions,[50] but I think these works should be discussed once more, as the goal here is to place them in the context of the artistic trend of documentary multimedia over the course of twenty years.

In the project *Tour of Tartu*, whose authors are Gabriela Järvet, Lauri Järvlepp, Kaiko Lipsmäe and Stella Vainikko (Tartu Art College, 2002), we see a screen divided into two sub-screens and a girl, the main character of the documentary. She moves through the city, along Ülikooli, Vanemuise, Pepleri and Vallikraavi Streets, which form a square on the map. On the screen, she is presented from two points of view: her own and the point of view of a bystander. The user can choose between different speeds of movement: standing, walking, running and riding in a car. The emotional atmosphere of the work is quite rich. It can be described as thoughtful and melancholic in a way that makes it quite different from other works. In terms of atmosphere, there is a similarity to Mari Soppela's project, which also has a distinctive emotional reality.

The Sleepy Tramp, by Holger Lihtmaa, Ingrid Väärsi, Maiken Urmet and Heiko Unt, (Tartu Art College 2002) is a depiction of the adventures of a homeless person in a Tartu "slum", the city district of Karlova in Tartu. The user can choose different ways to interfere with the tramp as he tries to sleep and remain sober. His obstacles are a flowerpot, dog, woman, toilet seat and housekeeper. The film ends with the escape of the tramp from the area. Several times the user is presented with two choices, each giving a different result, but the video clip viewed subsequently is the same in both cases. The video material was recorded in real locations, mainly on the campus of the Tartu Art College, and is reminiscent of Charlie Chaplin films, including using tango music composed by Chaplin. Time is frozen and, knowing that the surroundings of Tartu Art College changed later, we experience the passing of time.

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[50] Raivo Kelomees, "Kolmes saalis esitleb ennast tulevikukino" (Future Cinema in Three Exhibition Rooms) *Postimees*, 17.02.2004; Raivo Kelomees, "Jagatud autorsus: kunstniku hajumine elektroonilistel väljadel" (Shared Authorship: Dispersal of the Artist in Electronic Fields), in *Studies on Art and Architecture*. Tallinn, 2007/3 (16), 78-80.

Figure 3-8. *Tour of Tartu* 2002**.**

Figure 3-9. Alis Mäesalu *8 Études About Rooms* 2003.

Database cinema examples include Kristo Rihm's *Kes elab kapis?* (*Who Lives in the Closet?* Tartu Art College, 2003) and Alis Mäesalu's *8 etüüdi ruumist* (*8 Études About Rooms*, Tartu Art College, 2003).[51] In both cases the video and audio material is grouped around the same subject. Rihm's work is a multimedia portrait about a shelf on which personal belongings of his fellow students have been placed. Each owner is characterised by an image, music or video material. Mäesalu has interviewed eight people and asked them to describe their experience of space. Among them are real people: a teacher, an astronomer and a blind person. Rihm's and Mäesalu's projects are similar in the sense that we see hotspots or "buttons" in rows on the screen. While in Mäesalu's project the user cannot make choices about whether to click on "hot" areas or not, in Rihm's project on each shelf and personal shelf area there are several sub-hotspots. Formally, Rihm's work is more complicated, but the clarity and unusualness of Mäesalu's project are dominating features. Rihm's project is a mixture of things connected with familiar personalities, Mäesalu satisfies the user with less. However, one must not evaluate the projects from the point of view of quality; rather, we have here different approaches and concepts.

To our study of documentary projects Taavi Varm's *Alphabet* (2003) can be added. He ironically articulates the alphabet, distorting his face into grimaces and referring to his grandmother, who forced him to speak correctly. Triinu Borga and Alis Mäesalu's *Tolstoi Doors* (2003) is a sketch for an interactive story located in the Karlova district, where the user can enter different stories through the doors of wooden houses. Marge Pärnits's *Memory Game* (2003) is based on the toy collection of Vladimir Sapozhnin, but the interface is designed as a memory game, yet also functions as an archive. Fideelia-Signe Roots' interactive tutorial *Maali nii ja naa/Paint yourself (*Tartu Art College, 2004) is clearly a documentary based on the author herself as a painting instructor. Here, the user can choose combinations of brushes, water or spirit, acrylic or oil paints, and paint a virtual project. *Salme projekt* (2006) was realised by a team of students, the content being a DVD based on six streets, evidently inspired by the *Aspen Moviemap*. In Virve Vilumets and Mihkel Mõttus' *People and Possessions* (2006), the user has to guess the owners of the items shown on the screen. It is about real people, although it is in the form of a game. Maria Laanelepp, in her work *Names* (2008), questions her friends and acquaintances about whether they like their names, and why. She asks them when their name days are, whether they celebrate them, whether there is a special meaning

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[51] Both projects are supervised by Raivo Kelomees.

of their name, how their name was chosen and what kind of nicknames they have had. The personal questionnaire produces short answers, which document both the participants and the time. Finally, among other authors one could mention Martin Rästa, Pille Tammejõe, Aive Kalmus, Lauri Rahusoo and Andrus Lauringson, who have made projects which can be analysed in terms of interactive narratives and documentary.

All these works were predominantly designed as typical multimedia projects in which the user is initially presented with interfaces offering choices. *Sleepy Tramp* is an exception, as the user is not brought back to the first page. The user can repeatedly make one of two choices, and the movement is only forward. Fictional projects are mentioned here only because the artists have intentionally used local environments, i.e. they are "documented" fictions.

Artists' Multimedia at the Beginning of the New Millenium

At this point we can ask what happened to documentary multimedia projects at the beginning of the new millenium. The time frame is of course artificial. We can talk about a certain "tiredness of aesthetic form", as we can observe in other artistic trends. There was clearly a shift from CD-ROM to DVD; the DVD in comparison with the CD being a bigger disc. Many thorough overviews have been published on the medium, such as *New Screen Media: Cinema/Art/Narrative*,[52] edited by Martin Rieser and Andrea Zapp which was accompanied by a DVD of project samples.

In 2002-2003 Karlsruhe ZKM organised the exhibition *FUTURE CINEMA. The Cinematic Imaginary after Film,* which was curated by Jeffrey Shaw and Peter Weibel. Interactive and participatory film were placed in an historical context and visitors could examine participatory and collaborative film practices from the end of the 19th century until today. The exhibition situated interactive film in the broader context of art and cultur. Interactive documentary formed just a part of a wider picture.

Although it is not possible to give precise numbers reflecting the "aesthetic tiredness" of interactive multimedia, some clear factors can be cited to show the changed situation: the rise in internet speed, new browsers

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[52] New Screen Media: Cinema/Art/Narrative. Ed. Martin Rieser and Andrea Zapp (London: British Film Institute, 2002).

and HTML standards, video codecs and websites dedicated to video. The change may also be reflected in the themes chosen for many video festivals. It is true that each format became exhausted, and when alternative technologies emerged, new authors replaced the old ones.

The programmer Florian Thalhofer, who will be discussed in detail later, created his Korsakow software using the multimedia software Macromedia Director for the interactive connection of video clips. He has developed a programme for other collaboration groups and continues his efforts in this field. I would call Thalhofer a transitional personality who is carrying forward the Director experience into the interactive form of the documentary.

Dating to the beginning of the 2000s, Lev Manovich and Andreas Kratky's *Soft Cinema*[53] should be mentioned; being an experiment in the field of database cinema. The artist and theoretician Manovich made an introduction to database cinema in his *Little-Movies* (1994), discussed the topic in the fifth chapter of his book *The Language of New Media,* and continues to try to realise his dream of database cinema with the help of the programmer Andreas Kratky.

The content of the project involves the possibility of editing real-time video material by means of a computer programme. Four hundred and twenty-five clips are offered, and the length of each story is two minutes. The design refers to Piet Mondrian's constructivist layout, videos are presented in different windows and they have different shapes—the asymmetric design being a conscious choice to make the project different from ordinary cinema. Manovich uses horizontal movement of text, which is familiar from news programmes. We clearly see the invasion of computer interface design into cinema aesthetics, and it is also influenced by television and information screens.

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[53] Lev Manovich and Andreas Kratky,   SOFT CINEMA: Navigating the Database DVD-video with 40-page colour booklet (The MIT Press, 2005). See also: "Soft Cinema: ambient narrative," accessed June 5, 2014, www.softcinema.net.

Figure 3-10. Lev Manovich and Andreas Kratky *Soft Cinema* 2002.

As Manovich says in an interview recorded on DVD, the authoring system is based on ten features. Some decisions are chance-based, while others are based on meta-rules. In the Texas version, there is more randomness. The project demonstrates how to utilise computers to show subjectivity and to present consciousness in new ways. Here Manovich turns to the topic which he analysed in his text "From the Externalization of the Psyche to the Implantation of Technology" (1995),[54] referring to Hugo Münsterberg and Sergei Eisenstein.

Over all, it seems that artists' multimedia ebbed at the beginning of the 2000s, the *Future Cinema* exhibition and *Soft Cinema* experiment marking peaks of this development. YouTube, and developments in Flash and internet bandwidth raised online and interactive video to new levels. The situation is characterised by the change of name of the Interactive Cinema Group (1987-2004)[55] at MIT Media Lab, led by Glorianna Davenport, to the

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[54] Lev Manovich, "From the Externalization of the Psyche to the Implantation of Technology", accessed June 5, 2014, http://manovich.net/index.php/projects/from-the-externalization-of-the-psyche-to-the-implantation-of-technology
[55] Interactive Cinema Group, (no longer active) accessed June 5, 2014, http://ic.media.mit.edu.

Media Fabric group, and the disappearance of the Media Lab research groups completely; their last works were created in 2006.

In connection with the 2000s one could ask if the predictions of Huhtamo and Weibel about multimedia as a preparation for web-based projects came true. The answer is certainly affirmative, because internet bandwith increased—and 2005 may have been the turning point, since in this year YouTube came into existence along with several other web environments. The opportunities for video compression and adapting them for the web rose dramatically. The "net-video" format, video clips linked to websites, were not rare in the latter half of the 1990s, but were limited in terms of codecs and bandwidth.

Interactive Documentary on the Internet

As a sign of the aforementioned boom, several noteworthy conferences dedicated to interactive documentary emerged: ICIDS (International Conference on Interactive Digital Storytelling, http://icids.org), the DNA Symposium (http://www.dnasymposium.com), the Europrix Academic Network Conference (EADiM, http://academics.eadim.org), and the Interactive Documentary Conference in the context of the Amsterdam International Documentary festival. The MIT Open Documentary Lab (http://opendoclab.mit.edu), which deals mostly with collaborative and interactive documentary should also be mentioned, as well as the docSHIFT Institute at the Documentary Organization of Canada[56] which supports and distributes the creation of stories on different platforms and develops innovative interactive documentary projects.[57] Their portal contains a substantial archive of interactive documentaries, "The docSHIFT Index".[58] Interactive documentary options can also be found on the i-Docs webpage.[59]

What generalisations can we make about the movement of interactive documentaries to the internet platform? Are there any decisive changes in this field in terms of the aesthetic dimension? In this regard I would mention the i-Docs mapping, created by Sandra Gaudenzi and Arnau Gifreu, who

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[56] Documentary Organization of Canada, accessed June 5, 2014, http://www.doctoronto.ca.
[57] The docSHIFT Institute, accessed June 5, 2014, http://www.doctoronto.ca/docshift-institute.
[58] The docSHIFT Index, accessed June 5, 2014, http://www.doctoronto.ca/docshift-index.
[59] i-Docs webpage, accessed June 5, 2014, http://i-docs.org/resources/.

define the development of interactive documentary in ten points.[60] It was written in 2011 and follows trends which are emerging almost in front of our eyes, although it is certainly not the final word concerning this content. The authors mention, amongst the ten factors which have influenced interactive documentary: changes in HTML standards, the increase in funds for the production of works, new technical platforms, *augmented reality* software possibilities, interactive documentary as a new kind of activism, the possibilities of documentary and fictional projects, transmedia projects, the emergence of new i-Doc events and conferences, the new and evolving blogs and websites, and the initiation of new training programmes.

Gaudenzi and Gifreu have also discussed self-evident facts: software (HTML 5 and Javascript) and the speed of the internet have now created an environment where earlier innovative but technically unrealisable ideas can be brought to life. Primarily this concerns the compression possibilities of video material and the environments for uploading it. Nowadays upload possibilities are directly embedded in software programmes, this software being basically web-based. For instance, Apple Mac Final Cut Pro makes it possible, from the same menu, to "share" video directly to the web or to a hard drive.

Text editing software works on the same principle, making it possible to upload predesigned pages directly to the web. Here we can mention cloud technologies, typified by "iCloud" for the Mac environment, although more broadly all of the internet can be understood as the "cloud", where users upload or download their material. On the other hand, web-based programmes now exist which need not even be purchased by users and which are meant for open use directly from the portal website. WeVideo of Youtube might be mentioned in this regard, and there are many others as well, but it is most important to note here the trend and what it demonstrates: that users should not buy commercial software, because the work can be left online, as well as all the raw material. The typical rhetoric of these programmes is that the user is invited to "tell your story"—the software tool is for telling a personal story.

Differences from earlier software and the cultural situation include better financial possibilities and an institutional interest in the resultant products. Indeed, it could be called a production rather than an enthusiast's activity,

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[60] The i-Docs' "evolution", in just 10 points, accessed June 5, 2014, http://i-docs.org/2012/02/26/the-i-docs-evolution-in-just-10-points/.

since the web environment is overwhelming. The National Film Board of Canada and French organisations, for example, support different projects.

A good example is Time Magazine's project *Beyond 9/11*,[61] which contains interviews with 9/11 survivors. Perfect technical realisation and interviews that include such personalities as George W. Bush and many war veterans place this documentary in the context of mainstream media—it is no longer a marginal project for a selected few. Immersion in content, traditionality and non-experimentality have become more evident, and dramatic events are revealed through personal viewpoints and biographies. From the point of view of visuality and graphic realisation the project is rather conservative and inexpressive, but a *memento mori* project should hardly be visually attractive. Nevertheless, the difference is remarkable when compared with Katerina Cizek's project *Out My Window*,[62] which has a visually opulent form. These are just two examples representing the visual-technical extremes, although in the sense of content they are rather close, i.e. they both offer a database of biographical narratives. They are similar in being works dedicated to a single consistent topic: one is about 9/11, and the other is related to life in multistorey buildings.

Figure 3-11. Katerina Cizek *Out My Window* 2009-.

Technological development is heading in the direction predicted in the 1990s where everything is becoming more interactive, spatial and tangible. Laptops, tablets and other new tools contain integrated movement and

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[61] "Beyond 9/11", accessed June 5, 2014, http://www.time.com/time/beyond911/.
[62] Katerina Cizek "Out My Window" accessed June 5, 2014, http://interactive.nfb.ca/#/outmywindow.

position sensors, three-axis gyro accelerometers and other features. We might consider, for example, a product by Condition One,[63] an "embeddable immersive video player", offering virtual windows whose effect is most impressive with an iPad or iPhone. The product's producers write that *"The virtual window that Condition One offers viewers provides unlimited viewpoints of a single video".*[64] With the help of desktop computers, we can see the effect using Firefox and Google Chrome browsers and it is impressive: moving the pad results in instant changes in the point of view of the videos (clearly a video should be filmed in such a way that different points of view are available).

Other examples are products by Touchpress[65] made for school children, such as *The Elements*,[66] which is a programme downloadable from AppStore that makes it possible to research different materials and elements in 3D, turn objects 360 degrees and magnify them. We can certainly say that interactive multimedia technologies of the 1990s, which were dedicated to the anatomy of visual arts, are re-incarnated in products that can be used on pads or smartphones. Intuitivity and tangibility have been developed further in such a way that objects are not manipulated by a mouse, but directly by a finger or hand, or by moving the pad or phone in space.

To illustrate the situation more clearly, I will give as an example the works of Florian Thalhofer,[67] referred to previously as a transitional personality, who started in the 1990s by modifying the dominant authoring software Macromedia Director in order to design his programme Korsakow System. But then he moved forward. Thalhofer is clearly motivated by his authorial ambitions, which is evidenced by his projects *The LoveStory Project* (2002), *13ter Stock* (2005) and *Planet Galata* (2010). He presents stories from the margins of society, about Turkish people in Germany and the inhabitants of Istanbul's Galata bridge. These interactive products have been turned into linear films as well. Looking more closely at *Planet Galata*, the specific appeal of the web version is the possibility of interrupting narratives and switching to others. As a whole it was compiled almost as a collection of short documentary clips and interrelated mini-stories.

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[63] Condition One, accessed June 5, 2014, http://conditionone.com/.

[64] Condition One, accessed June 5, 2014, http://conditionone.com/solution/.

[65] Touchpress, accessed June 5, 2014, http://www.touchpress.com.

[66] "The Elements," accessed June 5, 2014, http://www.touchpress.com/titles/theelementsmac/.

[67] Florian Thalhofer, accessed June 5, 2014, http://www.thalhofer.com.

Figure 3-12. Florian Thalhofer *Planet Galata* 2010.

In that sense, The National Film Board of Canada's projects *Out My Window*,[68] *Highrise*[69], *Capturing Reality*[70] and other web-specific projects are much more interesting. *Highrise* won an Emmy and, as explained in an annotation, it is a "multi-year, many-media, collaborative documentary experiment at the National Film Board of Canada that explores vertical living around the world". In the Board's call for interactive projects, it seems that the initiators are unsure what to expect. They are at least expecting innovation: "...to put it another way, we are striving to produce things we haven't yet imagined, with technology that hasn't yet been invented*"*.[71] Although the field is undoubtedly in constant turbulent change, bandwidth is still rising and technical tools are advancing, it still seems that authors are mostly interested in telling stories about people's lives.

Conclusion

The goal of this chapter has been to analyse the phenomenon of interactive documentary and place it in an historical context. Mostly this survey contains information on the last forty years, a time period characterised by developments in documentary image-recording technologies and interactive manipulation. Primarily, I derived my standpoint from experimental media art and visual art, but to a small degree

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[68] Katerina Cizek "Out My Window".

[69] The National Film Board of Canada, "Highrise," accessed June 5, 2014, http://highrise.nfb.ca.

[70] The National Film Board of Canada, "Capturing Reality," accessed June 5, 2014, http://films.nfb.ca/capturing-reality/.

[71] The National Film Board of Canada, "Interactive Creators Guide," accessed June 5, 2014,
http://interactive.nfb.ca/downloads/NFBInteractive-CreatorsGuide.pdf.

I have relied on film, documentary and journalism. One could also add approaches which are games, collaborative tele-projects, and crowdsourcing-based acquisition of material, but this chapter is focused on one direction. Since this field has changed completely in the last forty years and different branches of this activity have taken place in different cultural fields, such as film, visual art, journalism, computer games and literature, my interests and emotions are connected primarily with innovations in the interactive multimedia of the 1990s, and my personal relationship to the media and presentation modes is inescapable.

I aimed to include in the chapter my admiration of an art form that became almost invisible because of changes in computer platforms. But this admiration is naturally not for the form, but for the content. These projects deal with a topic that concerns viewers and has always been a topic of art: the artist's personal experiences and the lives of the people around them. I think that the projects of Graham Harwood, Mari Soppela, George Legrady and other artists present human experience in a form that turns it into new content, new experience and new art.

The previously described examples involve somewhat conservative efforts at multimedia, as the works are presented on screens and some of them are recorded on carriers. I have tried, however, to give an indication of a growing trend which is described as a transfer of interactive documentary onto the web. Certainly I could give examples of less conservative works, such as projects by Blast Theory, location-based gaming, and the combining of mobile devices, internet and live art into consistent experiences. Additionally, I omitted experiments on television where viewer participation is realised through mobile applications and the internet. I have focused on a selection of works that include such features as the use of personal material, non-fictionality, definite location and recognisable environment, engagement of the viewer/user, recording a moment, archival work and databaseness.

In conclusion, the goal of this text was to analyse interactive documentary in the context of experimental media art and visual art and its dependence on technical tools. I have tried to connect it with the earlier strategies of user participation in the context of screen-based art. I have attempted to write a brief history of documentary multimedia, to define the heyday of the medium (*Future Cinema* and *SoftCinema*) and to show the development of the i-documentary in the 2000s and the transfer to online platforms and different software. I regard Estonian multimedia

documentaries as important. They are worth a separate historical and typological analysis, especially since it is a creative area not yet defined in the "big" local art history.

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