

A Study on the Reconstruction of Art-Society Interaction Models in the Context of New Media

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Abstract:

Against the backdrop of rapid technological advancement and the swift dissemination of information, new media technologies have not only expanded artistic forms of creation and modes of dissemination but also reconfigured the patterns of interaction between art and society. This paper, grounded in new media art, explores its technical characteristics and social functions, systematically revealing the cultural significance of the “two-way permeation” between new media art and society. By examining the influence of new media art on society, it provides a reference and foundation for subsequent research.

Keywords:

New Media Art, Social Impact, Cultural Communication, Interactive Models

1. Introduction

With the widespread adoption of digital technologies and online platforms, artistic creation and dissemination are undergoing unprecedented transformation. From traditional painting, sculpture, and theater to new media art forms represented by graphic design, digital painting, and video art, technology is deeply embedded in the production and consumption of art. This process not only diversifies artistic language and modes of expression but fundamentally reshapes the interactive relationship between art and society. Under traditional artistic models, artworks typically followed a unidirectional transmission pattern, with creators as “active expressers” and audiences as “passive recipients.” The rise of new media art, however, enables audiences to interact with artworks in real time during their experience, and even participate in the creation process, fostering a collaborative creation dynamic. This shift represents not only an innovation within the artistic realm but also a significant manifestation of changes in the socio-cultural structure. This paper systematically explores the evolving patterns of art-society interaction under new media reconstruction through three dimensions: technological characteristics, the evolution of interactive models, and sociocultural impacts.

2. Characteristics of New Media Art

New media art primarily refers to artistic works that utilize the latest technological achievements—such as computers, networks, and digital technology—as creative mediums. (On the Characteristics of New Media Art and Its Impact on Media Society) Its theoretical foundation draws heavily from Marshall McLuhan's “The Medium is the Message” theory, emphasizing that media technology is not merely a tool for conveying information but also shapes the content and social significance of that information. [1] This results in new media art possessing characteristics distinct from traditional art, encompassing both artistic attributes and social functional properties.

2.1. Technical Features

A key technical characteristic of new media art is its strong interdisciplinary nature and dependence on technology. The most innovative new media art will be the fusion of “dry” silicon-based computer science and ‘wet’ biology. This newly emerging form of new media art is termed “MOIST MEDIA” by Roy Ascott. It refers to a connective and interactive art form situated between electronics and living organisms, or between cyberspace and the biological realm. This medium carries a “wet” quality because it integrates artificial life, synthetic consciousness, and electronic science. [2] Artists, scientists, and engineers must engage in close collaboration and communication during the creative process to fully harness the potential of moist media. Such cooperation not only enhances the quality and creativity of the work but also fosters exchange and integration across different disciplines.

The rise of digital technology and network media has shifted art from traditional physical carriers to data streams and behavioral interactions, thereby giving birth to new artistic paradigms of “open processes” and “human-machine co-creation” (Manovich, 2001). . Kittler (1999) further argues that digital media have altered the material foundations of art. Artworks are no longer merely visual images but manifestations of digital code and algorithms. The creator's subjectivity has partially shifted from human agency to programs and algorithms, making new media art highly dependent on technology. [3]

2.2. Social Functional Characteristics

One of the core distinctions between new media art and traditional art lies in its high degree of interactivity. This interactivity is enabled by the integrated application of multiple emerging technologies, such as virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), artificial intelligence (AI), motion capture technology, and big data-driven creative models. Virtual reality technology constructs immersive three-dimensional environments, enabling audiences to “enter” the artwork and experience it through multiple senses. Augmented reality technology breaks down the boundaries between reality and virtuality by overlaying digital information onto the physical world. The integration of artificial intelligence allows artworks to dynamically respond to viewers’ behaviors, preferences, and emotions, thereby creating personalized artistic experiences.

Correspondingly, interactive forms in new media art are also diversifying. On one hand, interaction can be physical, such as viewers triggering changes in artworks through touch, movement, or gesture control. On the other hand, interaction can be informational, such as viewers participating in creation and dissemination through social media platforms by engaging in discussions, online voting, or providing real-

time feedback. Moreover, interaction in new media art is often multi-layered, encompassing both direct engagement between the audience and the artwork, as well as indirect interactions among audience members and between audiences and creators. This constructs a multi-node, multi-path communication network. Such interactivity not only enhances the audience's sense of participation but also renders the boundaries of artistic creation more open and dynamic. [4]

3. The “Two-Way Permeation” Model of Art and Society

In the new media environment, the interaction between art and society is shifting from one-way communication to two-way exchange. In the past, artworks primarily relied on specific spaces like galleries, theaters, and museums for display, with information flowing along singular pathways. New media technology has broken these constraints, enabling art to transcend spatial and temporal boundaries for instantaneous dissemination across platforms and regions. Audiences are no longer passive recipients but can actively participate in artistic creation and interpretation. This participation may take the form of direct creative acts or extend and reconstruct original works through sharing, commenting, and re-creation. This evolution not only alters the logic of artistic dissemination but also reshapes the structural relationship between art and society.

3.1. The Impact of New Media Art on Media Society

First, art is no longer the exclusive domain of a select few artists but can be popularized among broader audiences, thereby playing a more significant role in public cultural life. New media art provides vast groups with space to unleash their creativity and enables artworks to be discovered more rapidly and widely. Anyone can participate in the creative process using tools like smartphones, tablets, and digital cameras. This shift not only broadens the range of participants in art but also allows art to play a more vital role in public cultural life. For instance, the emergence of short-video platforms has made art forms—once confined to galleries and museums—accessible to millions of viewers through simple filming and post-production editing.

In China, new media platforms like Douyin, Bilibili, and Kuaishou have become key battlegrounds for the public to showcase creativity. Many amateur creators leverage these platforms to film and upload “micro-movies,” “short videos,” or creative visual projects, garnering massive viewership and discussion. For instance, the low-budget original short film “The Wave Within the Wave” by a college student team on Bilibili gained millions of views in a short time through its unique narrative style and meticulously designed cinematography. It not only showcased the artistic potential of young creators but also sparked a heated societal discussion about youth cultural confidence. The widespread adoption of tools represented by short video platforms has enabled groups like rural farmers, retired seniors, and teenagers to become key creators. In Huining County, Gansu, Qinqiang opera artist An Wan uses Kuaishou livestreams to teach traditional opera, blending it with modern elements like glow sticks and market stalls. A single performance drew tens of thousands of villagers and spurred the spontaneous formation of cultural markets featuring calligraphy stalls and food vendors nearby. Stall owners openly stated, “Following the performances brings in more money.” Meanwhile, the Panlong Bangzi Opera Troupe in Gangcheng District, Jinan, comprised of farmers, created micro-plays like “Shaving in the First Month” and “Brother and Sister Parting Ways.” These works address real-world issues such as intergenerational communication and the harmful practice of

dowry, garnering 103 million views on Douyin within six months. Similarly, on Douyin, independent musicians have broken geographical barriers by creating highly personalized music videos, propelling their work into national and even international markets. This emerging creative model decentralizes artistic production and dissemination, challenging the traditional art market's monopoly on discourse.

In the new media environment, the dissemination of this art often transforms viewers into creators and disseminators. For instance, the Ice Bucket Challenge was initially launched to raise awareness about amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). However, propelled by social media platforms, it rapidly evolved into a global participatory social art event. Thousands of people documented their participation in the challenge through videos, creatively adapting the concept. This campaign not only raised substantial funds in a short time but, more significantly, enabled the public to create socially meaningful and communicatively valuable visual art through engaging, visual means while participating in philanthropy.

The advantages of new media art in terms of dissemination speed and reach are unmatched by traditional art forms. Through the internet, it enables instant transmission across regions and even countries. For instance, TeamLab's immersive exhibition "Borderless," though physically housed in Tokyo, saw its artwork videos and live interactive imagery captured and shared by countless viewers on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. This generated hundreds of millions of views globally, significantly amplifying the art experience's social impact. Similarly, the 2022 "Future Media Art Triennial" hosted by Beijing's UCCA Lab employed VR virtual exhibitions, enabling overseas or geographically distant audiences to experience the content online. This approach achieved a groundbreaking extension of art beyond physical boundaries.

More notably, new media art has significantly increased its engagement with social events and public issues, emerging as a vital force in driving public discourse and cultural reflection. In addressing certain societal topics, new media artists often employ interactive video installations and digital artworks to render abstract social problems tangible and emotionally resonant, thereby sparking public empathy. For instance, in environmental advocacy, internationally renowned artist Olafur Eliasson's Ice Watch project placed melting Greenland ice blocks in urban public spaces, allowing the public to directly experience the impact of climate warming. The work's dissemination on social media rapidly elevated environmental concerns to high visibility. Similarly, the online interactive installation Cloud Hug, created by Chinese independent artists during the pandemic, connected participants across different cities through real-time interactive technology, conveying emotions of mutual support and care. It became a warm and powerful cultural footnote in the pandemic narrative.

In summary, new media art has not only achieved decentralization and popularization in terms of creators, audiences, and dissemination methods, but also leveraged technological advantages and platform effects to forge a closer relationship between artistic creation and public cultural life. It provides a space for broad participation in both display and creation, while its rapid and widespread dissemination enables art to play an increasingly significant role in social events and public discourse. This trend signals that future art will become more embedded in everyday social life, playing an indispensable role within the public cultural ecosystem.

3.2. Social Activities Guide the Development of New Media Art

Unlike the traditional art model where artists serve as the sole creators and audiences merely passive recipients—a “one-way output, passive input” dynamic—new media art, driven by both technology and medium, empowers audiences to actively participate in creation and re-creation. This participation transcends mere formal interaction; it becomes a collaborative process of content production and meaning construction. Audiences are no longer mere observers confronting a work; they become integral components of the artwork itself, even directly influencing its generation and presentation. Consequently, the interaction between art and society undergoes a fundamental restructuring—shifting from unidirectional linear transmission to multidimensional cyclical exchange, significantly blurring the boundaries between creator and recipient. Artist Hu Jue's “Seven Days” project exemplifies this shift. He conducted a seven-day live creation at Tree Hole Art Museum, streamed entirely to the public. Audiences could only witness fragmented moments of creation through virtual screens, and the finished work was subsequently shredded and distributed online. This design transformed viewers from passive observers into witnesses of the creative process and secondary disseminators of the fragmented artwork. Curator Liu Gang observes: “Live creation pushes the backstage to the forefront, returning art from static ‘objects’ to the dynamic ‘act’ itself. The outcome, shaped by environmental and audience interactions, brims with serendipity, dispelling art's mystique.” This transparent process subverts the one-way transmission of artistic authority, enabling public participation in the spiritual dimension of art's genesis. Similarly, the “Fresh City, Happy Life” project employs dynamic text and split-screen technology to interweave policy highlights with citizen interviews within 54 seconds. Audience comments described the information as “visually intuitive like bullet screens,” with some videos even embedding interactive multiple-choice questions, boosting consultation conversion rates by 19.3%. This instant feedback mechanism transforms artworks from static entities into dynamically optimized expressions responsive to public reactions. The bidirectional nature of this interactive model enables art to absorb societal feedback in real time, forming a mechanism for dynamic adjustment that aligns more closely with the public's emotional and cognitive needs.

4. Sociocultural Impacts and Potential Issues

The proliferation of new media art and the transformation of interactive models exert a multidimensional influence on society and culture. On one hand, it advances the democratization and diversification of culture, enabling audiences from diverse backgrounds and regions to participate equally in artistic activities and express their cultural identities and values through interaction. This equality in cultural participation helps dismantle barriers within traditional cultural power structures and promotes the redistribution of cultural resources. On the other hand, the openness and immediacy of new media art's expressive forms enable it to swiftly respond to social hotspots and public events, making it a vital platform for social discourse and cultural debate.

However, this influence also presents certain challenges. For instance, in an online environment characterized by information overload and fragmented attention, artworks risk being consumed in a fragmented manner, with their deeper cultural significance and aesthetic value potentially overshadowed by immediate sensory stimulation. Moreover, the technological platforms underpinning new media art are

often controlled by commercial entities, potentially compromising the independence and critical nature of artistic creation. As new media art gains widespread dissemination, whether it can foster sound values and artistic appreciation among minors and the general public remains a matter worthy of deep reflection. Therefore, striking a balance between interactivity and commercialization, openness and artistic integrity, emerges as a crucial issue for the future development of new media art.

5. Conclusion

In summary, the integration of new media technologies has not only restructured the interactive model between art and its audience but has also profoundly altered the relational framework between art and society. This bidirectional—or even multidirectional—interaction has rendered artistic creation more inclusive, participatory, and dynamic, while simultaneously endowing art with enhanced social functionality and cultural influence. However, this transformation also brings challenges such as the potential dilution of artistic value and constraints on creative independence. Moving forward, striking a balance between technological advancement and cultural values—while harnessing the social potential of new media art and preserving its artistic essence—will be a critical focus for both academic research and practical exploration. This study not only provides a theoretical framework for understanding the interaction between art and society in the new media environment but also offers practical insights for artistic creation and cultural policy formulation.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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