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Laze Tripkov

International Balkan University, Skopje, N. Macedonia

Email: lazetripkov@gmail.com



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Transformation of the Poster as a Medium Through Virtual Reality Technology

Laze Tripkov

Abstract

Poster as a medium of change has transformed its functionality many times, adapting or following changes, but new tendencies have requested a proper transformation due to the advanced development of Virtual Reality, NFT's and the upcoming 'Metaverse' in order to preserve the so-called "universal communication vehicle". How can designers integrate in a complex system of virtual technological tendencies in order to tackle the present and forthcoming future? Should old myths be dethroned, old educational methods upgraded, and societies prepared, since the new generations are already aware of the new industrial revolution.

| The key part of the process of design is to externalize thinking and feelings, especially the invisible, intangible, apparently abstract ones. The process of making, thinking and feeling visibly has proved to be a pivotal component of design synthesis, especially when much of the design practices, teaching and learning happen virtually. I will share the act of reflection, using visual thinking tools, for inspiring a collaborative sense-making and way-finding. How can a complex layered research process lead to further visual possibilities in order to project the future of social design? The simultaneous act of constructing images and deconstructing visual metaphors can become a path-finding creative action preceded and followed by critical reflection.

This research art project will provide a state-of-the-art on the use of the process of making, thinking and feeling visibly that has proved to be a pivotal component of design synthesis, especially when much of the design practices, teaching and learning happen virtually. Virtual poster in virtual cultural communication, reality, functionality and usability.

Keywords: graphic design; poster; virtual reality; visual communication; mass communication; social design; visual thinking; interactive art; collaborative design

Introduction

Culture has always been related to the environment, the resources, and the artifacts that a certain population uses and creates. Knowledge and habits are also part of the culture. Virtual reality is becoming one of the most common methods for re-enacting previous cultures and connecting them with their original environments. Creating 3D virtual worlds is regarded as the most cost-effective, dynamic, and interactive method of merging a culture's surroundings, artifacts, and information.

It has been just few months behind us that the pandemics is no longer a global priority, but other problems are burdening our everyday functioning with even bigger concerns, like the possibility of a new world war or a nuclear bomb attack... In the meantime, we have all "woken up" with a very strong feeling that the global tendencies are reestablished introducing new social (digital) interactions and models through the Metaverse Facebook using Virtual Reality. As we already know "The arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement viewed collectively" is how culture is defined. Culture, according to Koentjaraningrat, is a "power of mind" manifested via creativity, intention, and taste, whereat culture is the outcome of creation, intention, and taste [1]. Culture, according to Liliweri, is a group of people's way of life expressed through subconsciously received behaviors, beliefs, values, and symbols that are all passed down to generations through communication. All of these definitions can be summarized as "The arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement viewed collectively", which is how culture is defined. Eventually, this theory introduced (in a better way) the Covid-19 pandemics as a teaser to the escapism of social interactions and introduced a possible new culture. Furthermore, these actions foster the physicality of knowledge as a set of automatisms incorporated in the body.

Local cultural attributes may be a source of inspiration for developing innovative products in the context of globalization. The poster as a living artifact identifies, portrays the actual narrative, but also the social climate and human mentality of the time in which it is produced. Posters communicate by themselves; they do not require a particular location or a proper environment to do so. From this perspective, poster art gives us a secure feeling and takes us truly into the realm of visual expression, which forces us to think deeply about the past and present.

One of the dynamics in the evolution of the creative sector is the culture and the development of time. Slowly but steadily, the course of history has transformed

the society's way of life. Cultural items that no longer meet market demands are likewise affected by lifestyle changes.

Approach

Virtual reconstructions have been increasingly popular in recent years, allowing visitors to immerse themselves in a digital environment that re-creates buildings and relics from a certain historical period and location. Virtual reconstructions that simply show static items, on the other hand, give a restricted user experience. Virtual reality involves mental transportation and can occur without any technology — for example, a well-done set in a theater. Technology simply allows simulations that were previously rare and costly to build to become pervasive.

Therefore, I started my journey with the VR technology, enhancing my personal reflections to understand the challenges of art in the face of the pandemic. Stress has become a routine and our collective everyday life, was and is still digital. The mobile phone has become a book, the laptop has become a notebook and the TV has become a box full of various contents; the entire culture is slowly but surely changing. Since then, our lives have taken on a different perspective and the responsibilities have forced a new course in the role of the designers and artists.

We were constantly surrounded by information about the pandemic and the Covid-19 virus, which forced us to limit our social needs. Starting on March 22, 2020, I created one poster each day.... All of my posters and visual thoughts were a personal expression and a reflection of personal experiences. The landscapes were dominating, perhaps because of the quarantine, followed by collage and collage expressions that had a tendency to manifest my personal attitude and relationship towards the isolation and helped me articulate my personal growth as a visual artist – I called this cycle of posters “Reflections on the New Reality”.

Figure 1

The official poster of the exhibition, Laze Tripkov 2021



The social and emotional turmoil has been my guiding principle and support in my creative play of symbols, signs, meaning, visual poetry, expressions, attempts at minimalistic deliberation, aesthetic improvement... It strived to prioritize the issues of the new times. That is why, in this article, I will stay focused on the elements that can help in preserving those values, through personal experience.

The following approach that I implemented had several stages:

1. Analysis phase – compare – create – test – implement
2. Development phase – design – transform – adapt – produce
3. Execution phase – set up – test –
4. Experience phase – questionnaire – workshop – debate

Phase 1 - Analysis

The main focus in this phase was put on understanding the transformation of the 2d to the 3d virtual space, understanding the technology and software, programing and gestures including interactivity, motions, spaces, transitions and forms. The main challenge was certainly creation of the virtual reality contextualization of the 3-dimensional space, having in mind the character of the 2-dimensional visual form of the poster, and trying to adapt the space, plan and content. The analyzes were with a focus on the possibilities of what can technology and Virtual Reality do for the cultural values of different media in order to enhance new audience, bring old, reestablishing the museum in order to reinitiate old/new feeling of belonging, inspiration, through the old/new virtual poster?

Having in mind the gaming aspect of the VR, I am familiar with the advantages and disadvantages of the technology and design interactions. On the other hand, I managed many projects and exhibitions that prioritized the role of the poster, also as director of the Museum of Contemporary Arts in Skopje that helped me better understand the culture and the understanding of the upcoming challenges.

Phase 2 – Development

Facing these crossroads, the poster carries the necessary predisposition, the most fitting tool to inform, to identify, and to induce. The message in the form of visual communication is clear, convincing, seductive, poetic, argumentative or rhetorical. Eventually, a poster would sustain the same values in the 3d interactive virtual space, but it has to be dimensionally limited and readapted to its visual appearance as virtual availability, effects, content, interactivity, tendencies.

Once the approach is determined, the second step is to determine the development plan. The final step in the assignment phase is to specify the level of immersion and the target hardware. They both directly influence each other, so it is not always necessary to achieve the highest immersion level possible.

Using the virtual reality technology, it can not only show the three-dimensional simulation model of the poster, but can also “roam” in to the ambient of the poster imposing new simulation, which can be shocking, charming or surprisingly different, transforming the plain space into a virtual site. With the development of computer technology and other related technologies, the functions and browsing forms of digital spaces have also undergone great changes. From the early introduction

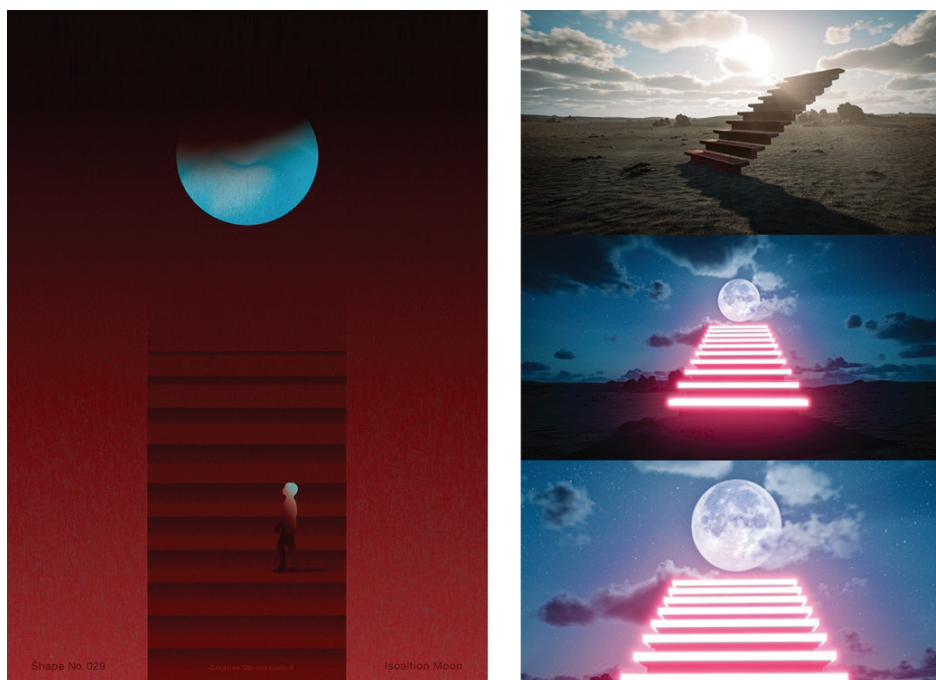
of graphics and texts, it has gradually evolved into three-dimensional virtual scene roaming and interaction supported by the virtual reality technology.

Phase 3 – Execution

This stage was aimed at presentation of the challenge and the effect of the visual transformation of the poster, and at the end, presentation of this kind of cultural project for the first time in Macedonia, additionally made and created to serve its purpose in the Museum. VR is an effective tool to promote values and help break through the traditional way of promoting/communication or presenting art and culture. The exhibition was set up in the first part of the gallery space and the VR room (computer, VR set and sensors) was set in the back. Both spaces were divided by a huge panel wall, in front of which, a projection was displaying what was the VR user activity at the moment.

Figure 2

Isolation Moon - Poster, and the interactive content adapted in VR



The biggest challenge was to create as much as possible similar 3d space projection that would be both interactive and presenting or bringing as much as possible closer to the main concept behind the virtual poster.

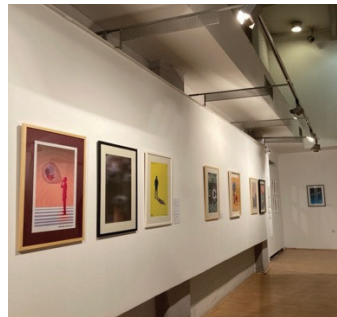
Phase 4 - Experience

Virtual Reality can be conductive. The heritage of many cultures is a whole in itself. According to traditional protection and inheritance methods, they are usually displayed in museums. Using the virtual reality technology, we can construct “experience culture or experience belonging” to restore and reproduce a comprehensive and complete virtual simulation legacy space. By using the virtual reality technology, not only can a poster be related to intangible cultural institutions, but it can help preserve, intrigue and enhance new audience to understand the technological possibilities, their engagement in a more natural way, to grasp the future as a stable environment, controlled by feelings and emotions.

I would like to stay a bit longer on the experience stage, as some of the results and answers were surprisingly interesting to me as an artist, and to the design community as well, putting the main focus on the following 8 segments (read bellow) with nonspecific target groups. Since the exhibition was opened for almost 3 weeks, different groups of visitors were registered in the museum – starting from my son Jakov (age 12) and his friends to the oldest ones, who were between 70-78-year-old.

Figure 4, 5

From left to right: my son, the youngest user, age 12, and the posters exhibited.



The precise number of visitors would be difficult to specify, since the exhibition was under strict Covid-19 measures, but approximately around 2000-2500 people visited the exhibition in the Museum. The main focus regarding the questionnaire was put on different age categories, as I mentioned before, starting with 12-22, then graduated students and young people between 23-33, then 35-50 and the last category was above 55 (limited target audience). The group between 12-22-year-old, were mostly high school students, coming from gymnasiums and the High School of Arts from Skopje, mostly from the second, the third and the fourth year. The second subgroup in this segment were the university students, mostly represented by those who study art and design, but also those who study mechanical engineering and architecture.

Below is the questionnaire that was given to the visitors to help in this research and project exhibition:

Questionnaire						
No.	Questions	Answers				
		SA	A	N	D	SD
1	Was the VR an interesting experience?					
2	Did VR made this exhibition more interesting along with the posters?					
3	Do you think that interactive and user generated content, offers bigger involvement of the audience?					
4	Do you think that the interactive concept thru VR offered better understanding of the exhibited posters?					
5	Does all museums in Macedonia need to include VR technology as part of their exhibits?					
6	Would that enhance additional audience?					
7	Would you be rather interested in viewing the exhibition from home thru personal VR?					
8	Would VR make you come to an exhibition?					
10	Can VR help improve school activates and educate in a better way?					
	Would you rather attend classes thru VR or go to school/faculty?					
11	Is the 2d form outdated and does it have to be replaced by a virtual one?					

12	Should art become more virtual?					
13	Would you attend painting/drawing/sculpture classes thru VR?					
	Would VR improve your knowledge of the study specifics?					
Write your comments and your feedback:						
No.	Questions	Answers				
		VG	G	N	B	VB
1	Representation of quality of room size in Virtual Reality?					
2	Representation of quality of content in Virtual Reality?					
3	Representation of quality of interaction in Virtual Reality?					
4	Representation of lighting quality in Virtual Reality?					
5	Representation of sound quality in Virtual Reality?					
6	Representation of material quality in Virtual Reality?					
7	Representation of quality of execution of the posters in Virtual reality?					
Write your comments and your feedback:						

Through the set of answers and information coming from the questionnaire and the specific discussions, I enabled different groups of visitors, individuals, artists and professionals share their objective and subjective opinions, thoughts and beliefs. The methodological outcome, coming from the overall activity, can be formulated through the following questions:

1. What are the challenges that we are facing with the new global paradigm?
2. Where is the designer in this whole process?
3. What would be the future of the poster as it is no longer “the art of the streets”, when NFT’s are taking over the virtual highways?

4. Should graphic design transform itself, again?
5. Can design help and transform the museums and galleries?
6. Should faculties reshape and introduce more virtual approach?
7. Will there be a substitution and “no go” back to the human feelings?
8. If we were scared by the computer technology influencing the design thinking, then what would our fears be like in near future?

Audience (Target Group)

In the previous paragraph, I wrote about the specifics of the target groups and the diversity in age and interests. I would say that Virtual Reality has both positive and negative impacts. Regarding some of the previous researches connected with VR, it has been found that virtual experiences, such as seeing prosocial or antisocial conduct, can have an impact on how we act in the actual world. Cultural shifts have already begun. According to a recent research published by the Kaiser Family Foundation, children aged 6 to 16 spend more than eight hours each day outside of the classroom, consuming digital media. It is impossible to ignore how this digital lifestyle is influencing people's worldviews.

A number of psychological studies have shown that virtual reality representations of ourselves alter our thinking and behavior. Wearing a taller avatar will make us feel more secure in the physical world, and wearing one that is beautiful will make us act more socially. Wearing handicapped avatars can help us become more sympathetic, while wearing healthy and energetic avatars can help us modify our food and exercise habits. Even modest levels of exposure to avatars can alter our behavior.

From the above mentioned, the audience still cannot be determined precisely because of several factors and my experience with the exhibition goes in line with that. It is worth mentioning that there is no specific market that targets the person, who makes the final purchase – usually these are affected by a variety of internal and external influences. Also, the target group between 6-16 are familiar with the option that VR is offering but the purchase value is still high and it should pass through the stage of adjustment to the market and the wider audience. The results from the whole research have shown the following:

- The target group that were the most familiar and informed about the VR were the 12-22-year-old teenagers - most of them have already been in contact with the device and have used it mostly for gaming – overall, they were very familiar with the possibilities, opportunities, advantages and functionality. This target group knew how to use the device without previous introduction. They showed huge emotions and empathized and identified themselves with the virtual posters and the possibility of connecting with them in the virtual reality.
- The second target group (23-33-year-old) were familiar with the VR devices and the possibilities that VR technology offers. Some of them were using them for the first time, but mostly, they were well informed by the social media (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube). While using the device, they had small difficulties with following the content vs functionality. This target group didn't know precisely how to use the device, they needed the introduction.
- The third target group (35-50-year-old) had difficulties in understanding how this technology advances the presented art form on this subject. Some of them were familiar with the technology from the movies and medicine related videos. They were particularly informed about the possibility how it can help and improve the quality of human health. This target group didn't know how to use the device at all. They had problems with the physical balance and they needed the introduction and guidance through the trial. Usually, they spent less time and were very quick.
- The last target group (over 55 years) have heard about the VR, through literature and magazines. They showed the biggest interest in trying and using the VR and understanding the comparative concept and approach. From all of the age groups, they spent most of the time available to enjoy the interactivity, functionality and possibilities of the virtual content and, along with the youngest group, they were the most curious to explore.
- Overall, Virtual Reality (VR) is becoming an increasingly essential instrument for shaping culture, communication, and popularization, as well as highlighting technological challenges and analyzing the effects of interaction on user engagement, sense of immersion, and learning effectiveness as well as a test-bed for interactive information and evolving the virtual poster as old/new media. Technology evolves, and so does the use of virtual assistants in the digital culture, from basic 2D characters to complicated interactive 3D. This also demonstrates how VR is used from the user's perspective as well as from the design perspective. It will also consider the discussion on the strengths and

flaws of the current approaches, as well as unsolved difficulties, resulting in a compilation of recommendations and best practices to follow when developing VR-based cultural heritage applications, including posters.

Usability and Functionality

Culture is extremely important for the future of any country. Nowadays, art and creativity is more a category that is left out of some systemic qualifications and national and educational strategies, being compensated by unnecessary subjects or data. Designers contribute significantly to the culture, environment and economy. This needs to be further recognized and accepted in both public/state/educational and corporate domain. Design over the last 40 years has evolved into a new paradigm of development. It has been transformed into a serious tool to make aesthetically pleasing and desirable products, a key role in promoting the idea and also in people's lives. It is a discipline that leads to economic growth, shapes human interactions with objects and systems and improves the quality of life of citizens. VR reality can contribute to that role in large.

Interaction between users and virtual content is a crucial element of any immersive visualization environment. The common types of interaction methods are: tangible, collaborative, device-based, sensor-based, multimodal, and hybrid interaction methods. Tangible interfaces allow direct manipulation and interaction with virtual information through physical objects. Hybrid interfaces integrate a range of complementary interaction interfaces to devise a method that combines different characteristics from the above categories. For instance, a combination of collaborative, and multimodal interfaces.

To make full use of new technologies and new media, and provide various new channels, models and methods for the cultural institution by introducing the advantages of the virtual reality technology, will certainly create bigger awareness of the legacy, will create bigger awareness of cultural identity, awareness of certain cultural, nationality, community and, above all, will preserve and sustain the value of the poster.

Case Observation

Creativity is an element strongly related to the idea of originality and novelty; culture and context shape our perception of it. Through body movement and time,

emotions are translated into intangible/visible elements, which helps enhance self-reflection and engage in collective awareness.

The current trend is to populate these worlds with virtual humans (VHs), who have an appearance and behavior that is very similar (hopefully identical) to that of the original inhabitant, essentially virtual actors, who can interact with the environment and the user himself through human-like manifestations (moving, speaking, using tools, and so on).

By carefully assessing whether a given immersive reality technology or interaction method can enable the following:

- Engagement: does the technology or method enable engagement? What is the level of engagement supported?
- Collaboration: Does the technology or method support collaborations?
- Remote Collaboration: Does the technology or method support remote collaboration?
- Relationship between users and virtuality: does the technology or method enable interaction and relationship between users and virtuality?
- Relationship between reality and virtuality: does the technology or method enable interaction and relationship between reality and virtuality?
- Relationship between users and reality: does the technology or method enable interaction and relationship between user and reality?

Acknowledgments

This research examines the function and benefits of virtual reality as a new technology in cultural institution and heritage inheritance, as well as the new techniques of integrating or introducing the poster as a tool for virtual articulation and addresses the use of this new technology in virtual transformation, allowing the poster medium to reaffirm its functional aspect in the new realm. Also, it will reaffirm the role of the poster as a link between transformational concepts and human attachments to visual messaging from the 2d to the 3d reality.

The creation and innovation of design values by enhancing the cultural heritage is a critical strategic goal for improving the cultural soft power in the new times, improving people's cultural quality, and creating powerful cultural tides. The new technology has opened up new possibilities for the development of cultural heritage.

Conclusion

Bearing in mind the problems and progress that await us, designers, on the road to future and preserving the authenticity, the cultural outreach by design is extremely important for the future of any country. Nowadays, art and creativity are more a category that is left out of some systemic qualifications and national and educational strategies, being compensated by standardized models limiting experience and possibilities. With the transformation of the media like posters and finding their place adapted by the virtual reality technology, a variety of new ways of inheritance of cultural achievements can become more approachable and also suitable for the needs of the age of network and information, which will inevitably promote the values of art and culture.

People have used media for millennia, but today's media are more appealing to the senses. Virtual reality tricks the brain into believing that digital events are occurring... It affects practically every aspect of life, including social contact, education, entertainment, and almost all aspects of existence. According to psychologists, this is referred to as "mind wandering." Daydreaming, imagining, and other forms of mental amusement have always been popular among humans. In terms of sight, sound, feel, and odor, virtual reality allows the mind to go to places that appear to be as real as their actual equivalents.

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