IMMERSIVITY AND TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS

International and interdisciplinary colloquium
Université de Montréal / McGill University, 11-13 June 2020

If we are to believe the press releases that accompany every new virtual reality device, fully immersive experiences that rival reality are fast approaching. Already in 2004, Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman criticized this "immersive fallacy," whereby the ability of technologies « to create fully illusionistic experiences that are indistinguishable from the real world » is blown out of proportion (Salen and Zimmerman 2004, p. 451). Indeed, many have already demonstrated the rich heritage of the notion of immersion, thus challenging the novelty of the concept and its ties to so-called new technologies. For example, Oliver Grau (2003), Alison Griffiths (2013) and Erkki Huhtamo (2013) have proposed media archeological approaches to demonstrate the long history of immersive forms, from antiquity through 19th-century panoramas and more. Others such as Victor Neil (1988), Jean-Marie Schaeffer (1999), Janet Murray (1997) and Marie-Laure Ryan (2001) have considered immersivity in a literary context by addressing technologies of textual communication , as well as the psychological contribution of readers in their narrative immersion. Finally, in the field of game studies, Gordon Calleja (2011, p. 25) has criticized the confusion—in the industry and academia alike—that occurs because of the semantic confusion around the term immersion.

Understanding contemporary immersive forms therefore requires a range of approaches aimed at decoding the notion of immersivity through its different sociohistorical and disciplinary contexts. It also requires highlighting types of immersive experiences that fall beyond the limits of modern technologies. How can art history, literature, visual media and science influence the notion of immersivity? What can past experiments in immersive media teach us about this (as yet unfulfilled) fantasy of totally immersive virtual experiences? What roles do bodies, spaces and narrative play in fostering and maintaining immersivity? What purposes do immersive technologies serve? Questions that have long shaped the notion of immersivity have reemerged in more recent forays into the field of immersivity and technological innovations, whether in the context of cinema and media (Lisa Nakamura, Wendy H.K. Chun, Deborah Levitt), or in the fields of cognitive science and psychology (Jeremy Bailenson, Mel Slater, Philippe Bertrand). Others still have sought to unite these different approaches by taking inspiration from psychology and cognitivism in order to address immersivity in the context of different media and technologies (Torben Grodal, Mireille Berton, Douglas Trumbull).

As part of the event "Immersivity and Technological Innovations," we are currently seeking contributions that will help shape the notion of immersivity, as well as the role of technological innovations therein. We invite proposals that challenge the novelty of immersivity and propose new perspectives on media formations of all kinds that might fall under the banner of "immersion." Presentation topics may include (but are not limited to) :

- (Pre-)history of immersive media (panoramas, cinéorama, sensorama, cinerama, etc.).
- Immersivity in literature (from absorption to implication).
- The limits of immersivity (challenges and flaws).
- Psychological and cognitive approaches to the concept of immersivity.
- The place of the body (agency, incorporation, presence, senses, affect).
- Large formats (from Monet's *Nymphéas* to IMAX).
- Situating immersivity (sites, spaces and immersive locations).
- Suspension of disbelief (automatons, conversational agents, Artificial Intelligence).

- Creating immersivity (screenwriting, programing and the creation of immersive experiences).
- Economic and logistical challenges to immersivity.
- Institutionalization of immersive media forms.
- (Photo)realism and other conventions.
- Immersive systems in education or training scenarios (medical, military, etc.).
- Accessibility and safety (universal and inclusive approaches to mediated immersivity)

Submissions

Proposals (300 words excluding bibliography) as well as author bios (150 words) may be sent to: **immersivite@gmail.com**. The deadline for submitting a proposal is **January 15, 2020.** Responses will be sent in in **February 2020.**

Organized by Laboratoire CinéMédias, in the Departement of art history and film studies at Université de Montréal, this event is the product a collaboration between TECHNÈS (International Research Partnership on Cinema Technology), GRAFIM (Groupe de Recherche sur l'Avènement et la Formation des Identités Médiatiques) and CINEX (programme de recherche sur l'expérience cinématographique), as well as the Moving Image Research Laboratory (McGill University). The guest of honour for the event will be Douglas Trumbull, celebrated special effect specialist (*2001: A Space Odyssey*; *Blade Runner*) and director (*Silent Running*; *Brainstorm*).

Scientific committee: Philippe Bédard (Université de Montréal), Thomas Carrier-Lafleur (Université de Montréal), Santiago Hidalgo (Université de Montréal), Caroline Martin (Université de Montréal), Alanna Thain (McGill University), Carl Therrien (Université de Montréal).

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