

From the Imagined Storyworld to IDNs: In-depth Interview with Authors

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Abstract. The comprehension of the authorship practice for Interactive Digital Narratives (IDN) is one of the main issues of the field. The broad variety of IDNs in terms of media, human-computer interfaces, topics, applications and overall experiences makes the task of developing authoring tools a very complex one, and in the same time, it hinders the making of workflows for creative writing and prototyping of experiences in their first stages. A way to tackle this issue is studying the creative process of authors and artists within the field by the means of structured in-depth interviews.

Keywords: Artistic Workflow, Authoring Tools, Creative Process, Interactive Digital Narratives

1 From the Imagined Storyworld to IDNs

Art is a creative-productive, receptive and communicative activity [1], in which an artistic/narrative text acquires life and meaning during the communication process. Iser [2] distinguishes two poles on the literary work: “the artistic pole is the author's text and the aesthetic pole is the realization accomplished by the reader” (p. 21). On the Artistic Pole, we find the author who, through the mastery of the platform, translates the imagined storyworld into sensory codes. The imagined storyworld is the starting point of the creation process, it is a mental space with narrative content, where “by narrative content we intend characters able to generate multiple events that unfold in time and changes the state of things” [3].

The variety of interfaces, electronic supports and assets that are used for the creation of IDN experiences, requires a complex technological set up that presupposes a great challenge for creators when it comes to put the imagined storyworld together. On one hand, creators must master the technologies they are using and the techniques to compose an artistic text on specific platforms. On the other hand, media involving different perceptive stimuli usually require an artistic dialogue between different artistic roles and diverse media. A scriptwriter may not be the director of a film, as an actor may not be the writer of his monologue. This issue has been one of the most relevant debates raised in film theory: In cinema, who is the author? [4] The one who imagines and writes the storyworld and plot or those who translate them into audio-visual signs?

Like in cinema, in IDN the debate about authoring emerges, and is expanded because the cybernetic and interactive aspects add a new layer or dimension to the act of artistic creation and communication. In computer-based media, a new kind of artist has emerged [5]. The technical aspects involved in the construction of virtual digital worlds usually unite the artist and the engineer in a single figure. Pia Tikka in *Enactive Cinema: Simulatorium Eisensteinense* [6] distances herself from the debate of authorship in cinema (individual author, (co-) authorship, or multiple authors), focusing her study “on the hypothetical imagery aspects of the author’s mental working process. This set-up implicitly excludes the other potential agencies of authorship, and the collaborative teamwork [...] is understood to converge into a single holistic embodiment of expertise, as exemplified by Sergei Eisenstein’s own use of the word ‘author’ or ‘creator’” (p. 28).

Under this centralized conception of author, my proposal for this workshop is to debate about the first stages of the creative process in order to develop a structured in-depth interview model. *What inspire authors to create IDNs? How authors concretize their imagined storyworld into multiple sensory-codes? How do authors choose their platforms? How do they merge and balance narrative and interactivity?* The understanding of the first stages of authoring would allow the development of IDN’s authoring tools and prototyping methods for different types of media supports and technologies, and would create a dialog between artistic practice and research.

For this workshop, I present some insights from a first interview with director Vincent Morisset (<http://vincentmorisset.com/>) about the authoring process and the artistic practice on IDN.

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