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Media Art and Contemporary Art

이현진 | Lee, Hyunjean

제7회 서울 국제 미디어아트 비엔날레, 미디어아트 서울 2012가 너에게 주문을 한다('Spells on You')라는 제목 아래 열리고 있다. 총감독 유현상은 "미디어아트는 이미 진행하기 때문에 진부한 것은 작업들을 선택하려고 한다"고 말한다.* 그동안 센터나 트레일 등의 상호작용이 강조되거나 기술이 부각되는 작품들은 많이 보였기 때문에 이런 진부한 작업보다는 미디어아트가 다루는 기술을 돌려보는 정치·사회·문화적 배경에 대해 주목하며 비평적 미디어 활동을 다루고자 한다는 것이다.* 전시 제목인 '너에게 주문을 한다'는 따라서 미술적 주문과 같이 가르치는 매체와 맥락의 경험에 대해 말한다. 또한 '확장한 개인으로서의 예술가'가 미디어 기술의 필요를 보여 우리가 당면한 재난과 전쟁이 거듭되며 불확실한 세계가 역사적 사건들의 잠재적 진전이자 세계의 중심이 될 수 있음을 보여주려 한다.*

전체 전시작가의 의도를 드러내는 듯 전시는 입구부터 사회적이고 정치적인 이슈의 작품들을 다룬다. 입구에 설치된 아동 배너에도의 '가어'는 개요의 첫 나라가 자씩작을들을 밝혀 불어 '후두', "후두"라는 단어를 만들어낸 반은 영상과 함께 각각의 자혹자들이 순례에 달려 penet을 때 발생하는 강력한 사운드를 반복적으로 만들었다. 이 단어들은 브랜던의 식민주의 분할정독으로 나누어 두 부분을 지향한다. 작가는 이 작업을 통해 과거에서 일어난 전통문명과 괴롭음을 상기시킨다. 이아지는 아크릴 자터리의 작업 내일이라면 기인이 될 가정의 타자기를 통해 치르고, 오래전 혀어진 연인과 라브레터에서 주장하는 방대한 대화를 보여준다. 타자기를 통해 재현되는 텍스트는 전체적으로 매우 고전적으로 보인다. 하지만 상대적 대립 역시 타자기 안의 공간 속에 안티체 체질이나 SNS상의 대화를 상기시키듯 실시간으로 떠오르는 산의 서로 다른 미디어 경험을 중첩시키는 듯하다. 이에 의해서 디지털 기반 상호적 소통보다는 선형적 내러티브를 가지는 작품들이 많이 보였다.

소셜미디어에 대한 관심 그리고 아날로그 감성으로의 치환
소셜미디어를 이용한 작업들도 많았는데, 뮤직비디오에서 내용의 주가성과 봉은정성 때문에 신호, 사소한 감정을 보여주며 신호의 소리가 아날로그의 향을 모으고 있다. 이는 미디어아트의 아날로그 감성으로 돌아가는 경향이 보인다. 미디어아트의 아날로그 감성은 미디어와 신호의 소리가 아날로그의 향을 모으고 있다는 점에서 미디어아트의 전반적인 관점용에 재단이 가능하다. 미디어아트는 앞으로 미디어와 신호의 소리가 아날로그의 향을 모으고 있다는 점에서 미디어아트의 전반적인 관점을 바꾸고 싶었는데, 이것이

Lee, Hyunjean graduated from Seoul National University with a B.F.A in painting. After receiving a M.P.S, from the Interactive Telecommunications Program at New York University, Lee earned a Ph.D in Digital Media at the Georgia Institute of Technology. As a media artist, Lee has had solo exhibitions such as Turn around at 'the between' ([Insa Artpace], Corresponding [Songye gallery], Encounter-Bridge [Songkok Museum]) and participated in various international art shows. Currently Lee is a professor of Media Art major at the Graduate School of Communication and Arts, Yonsei University.

Akram Zaatari, Tomorrow Everything Will Be Alright; Single channel video projection, 12min, 2010

beeldtekst
이미지넷의 기술 개발과 이미지의 활용이 향상되면서, 미디어의 역할은 더욱 중요해지고 있다. 그러한 상황에서 미디어의 역할을 통해 다양한 정보를 공유하고 이해하는 것이 필요하다. 이에 본 연구는 미디어의 역할과 관련하여 연구를 진행하기로 한다.

미디어의 역할
미디어는 정보 전달의 역할을 한다. 미디어는 정보의 전달과 수용을 통해 사회적 환경을 형성하고 변화시키는 역할을 한다. 미디어는 정보의 전달을 통해 소통의 장이 되며, 미디어는 정보의 수용을 통해 개인의 생각과 견해를 형성하게 된다. 미디어는 정보의 전달과 수용을 통해 사회적 환경을 형성하고 변화시키는 역할을 한다.

미디어의 역할을 보هن
미디어의 역할을 보هن으로 보는 것이 중요하다. 미디어의 역할을 보هن으로 보는 것은 미디어의 역할을 보هن으로 보는 것이 중요하다. 미디어의 역할을 보هن으로 보는 것은 미디어의 역할을 보 henne로 보는 것이 중요하다. 미디어의 역할을 보 henne로 보는 것은 미디어의 역할을 보 henne로 보는 것이 중요하다. 미디어의 역할을 보 henne로 보는 것은 미디어의 역할을 보 henne로 보는 것이 중요하다. 미디어의 역할을 보 henne로 보는 것은 미디어의 역할을 보 henne로 보는 것이 중요하다. 미디어의 역할을 보 henne로 보는 것은 미디어의 역할을 보 henne로 보는 것이 중요하다. 미디어의 역할을 보 henne로 보는 것은 미디어의 역할을 보 henne로 보는 것이 중요하다. 미디어의 역할을 보 henne로 보는 것은 미디어의 역할을 보 henne로 보는 것이 중요하다. 미디어의 역할을 보 henne로 보는 것은 미디어의 역할을 보 henne로 보는 것이 중요하다. 미디어의 역할을 보 henne로 보는 것은 미디어의 역할을 보 henne로 보는 것이 중요하다.
The 7th Seoul International Media Art Biennale, MediaCity Seoul 2012 is held under the title 'Spell on You.' According to Jinsang Yoo, the main artistic director of this Biennale, 'Our focus was to select unconventional works, since media art has become a familiar art form.' Thus far, since the most commonly observed media artworks are the ones which emphasize either interactivity – using technology such as sensors and tracking, or the technology embedded within them – this time the focus is set on the media artworks which are making critical approaches to the topics concerning economy, society and culture in this techno-society. The exhibition’s topic ‘Spell on you’ means charm and oblivion within the experience of technology, which is just like a magic spell, and shows that although we are facing this vast uncertain world, that seems to relentlessly embrace repeated disaster and war, the ‘outstanding individual artist’ can obtain the potential to become the a fountain head or place themselves at centre of the world harnessing the powers of media technology.

In order to deliver the curatorial intent, right from the entrance of this show, many artworks are dealing with the issue of economy or society. Adel Abdessemed’s Memory which is installed at the entrance, is a short video of baboons spilling out the words ‘Hutu’ and ‘Tutsi’ on the board. These words refer to the two opposing ethnic groups, which were violently divided during Rwanda’s civil war. This artwork leads us to think about the tragic ethnic conflicts which result in devastating cases of genocide. Akram Zaatari’s Tomorrow Everything Will be Alright uses a typewriter to talk to the lover who he broke up with a long time ago. Although, the overall texts which are represented by the typewriter seems very classic, the real-time answers which appear at the typewriter paper remind the viewers of the conversation of Internet chatting or SNS. Therefore, the old and new media experiences overlap. Besides, a number of artworks present their message in a linear way rather than using digital technology or interactivity communication methods.

Interest in Social Media and the Tendency toward Analog

There are numerous artworks utilizing social media. Dominic Gagnon collects the YouTube clips that ought to be deleted because of their aggressive or threatening content warnings, editing them into video artworks. This shows how the endless presences of conflictive personal expression and statements are struggling with the surveillance and restriction structure in social networks.

Among the large-sized installations, Romy Achituv creates the delicate trace with honey by utilizing Samuel Beckett’s theatre. He plays the video of Samuel Beckett’s theatrical play on a TV monitor. The sound reaction of the actor’s murmuring is transformed to delicate visual traces by converting the sound to physical manipulation using a vibrating tube. The tube is connected to a giant honey jar, which is installed on the ceiling and honey falls according to the vibration. This artwork replaces the immaterial signals between the digital technology and the sound into strong material reverberations. This kind of analogue expression creates attractive emotional drags and nostalgic feelings with the strong material base.

However, there is also a concern over the presentation that considers this kind of emotion and preference could become the profitable proposal or the wise direction to conquer the problems which have been brought about by new media accidentally, such as the mechanical coldness, the immateriality of digital technology, and the abstractness and clumsy interaction it has caused. On the other hand, many artworks approaches to use social media only react to it. In this respect, the most interesting piece for me was Exonema’s DesktopBAM, because this piece not only utilizes technology in a powerful and sophisticated level, but also leads to face the human nature itself which preceding technology. At first glance, one can see the desktop image projected on the wall and a physical laptop notebook laid on the floor. However, if one observes carefully, one will find that the mouse cursor is moving fast around on the desktop controlling many computer programmes in a very frenetic but splendid way. Its performance looks as if there is an invisible person hiding behind the desktop. Soon after one realizes that no one is involved in the process, one’s appreciation is excited by the rhythmical DJ mixing sound and replaced with the experience of meeting oneself as one is standing in front of a humanized machine or the machine which is superior to human. Through this process, the appreciation excited within the cheerful rhythms and fancy performances has become an experience of meeting oneself in front of a humanized machine or the machine that is superior to humans themselves.

This exhibition suggests taking a look at technologies in economic, societal, and cultural grounds and from a critical standpoint. And this is the positive direction that this exhibition evinces. This is because that media art exists in our society and works functionally as art, and that can offer significant insight. However, on the other hand, the economical and
cultural attitude, and the critical opinions towards technological society possess meanings by emphasizing on the direction and viewpoint which media art has been overlooked. The concerns about technology itself and the worries about technological phenomenon are and will still be the topic for media art that continues to be developed with diverse experiments.

Media Art as Contemporary Art vs. Media Art in Contemporary Art: Is It the Evolution of Media Art Itself or Class Inclusion?

Recently the genre, Media art’s main subject of examination has been changed to the ‘art’ from the ‘media’. This year, the Biennale also aims to show this perspectival/interest shift.”

Surely, this transition in media art as an art rather than a high-technology is a great step forward. On the other hand, another concern has evolved from this view of simply welcoming a freshness of approach to replace a banality of technological experimentation. The concern is that a trend in contemporary art and the ensuing politics created around international mega events such as biennales and festivals, might influence media art.

In fact, over the past decades, contemporary art has built a political hegemony and power as well as a corresponding capital flow, through numerous large-scale international exhibitions and events. This trend, however, has brought more attention to the art institutions, curators or critics than individual artists listed in the shows, building a hierarchical system. Prior to facing the audience, each artwork was labeled as good or bad according to several internationally influential art critics’ taste and judgment. The constructed system based on specific tastes and judgments wielded absolute power in the art scene, setting trends and dominating the fringes. The problems of this phenomenon are that the mainstream tastes, values, and perspectives can profoundly impact future exhibition plans and evaluative criteria brought to bear against exhibitions, as well as on institutions that support the art world, on the fringe culture, and even on young artists’ direction of their own work. Korea seems to be no exception from this fall out, in fact in many aspects; there are some artworks showing similar tastes and judgments imitating the foreign artworks and the power hegemony in the domestic art world. The phenomenon of a cultural and artistic authority creating apolitical and economic hegemony is happening in the mainstream of the contemporary art scene, and in this situation, media art also seems to fall under this dominant influence.”

At this point, it will necessary to think of the relationship between contemporary art and media art. Through this I want to distinguish the meaning of ‘media art in contemporary art’ from that of ‘media art as contemporary art’. When considering ‘media art as contemporary art’, the word ‘as’ can also suggest other disciplines outside of contemporary art that can be replaced here instead. For example, ‘media art as architecture’ or ‘media art as science’. And through this replacement of other disciplinary areas, media art can be open to its ‘evolution’ by crossing and making a connection to other fields of research.

On the other hand, ‘media art in contemporary art’ can mean looking at media art in the perspective of contemporary art. This can mean that ‘contemporary art’ includes ‘media art’ under a dominant-subordinate relationship. I want to emphasize that media art can move toward not the class inclusion under contemporary art evolving media art itself with communicating other disciplines.

The Beginning of Another Exploration: Media Art, Art Media

Meanwhile, if media art has to be considered within a contemporary art’s discourse, a paradoxical point of contemporary art also has to be considered. We should remember that media art has pursued autonomy and openness, resisting the pre-existing hegemony of the mainstream art world.”

This is also the point that contemporary art tried to accomplish in the 20th century and at the beginning of 21st century, after Duchamp. According to Thomas McEvilley, Duchamp tried to destroy the authoritative stance of critics emphasizing the aesthetic faculty like a ‘pseudo-religion’ following Clement Greenberg’s aesthetic position. Instead, he insisted art as ‘pseudo-science’ focusing on the cognitive faculty of human beings. Seeking this, he proposed ‘indifference’ through the concept of the ‘readymade’. This idea became the base of conceptual art and performance art, which has demonstrated its ethic faculty in the contemporary art.”

Duchamp did not search for art inside art. He tried to search art outside art as if Tao may not be found from where Tao is said. I think of the relationship between contemporary art and media art as from an equal stance. Perhaps, media art cannot be approached as an expanded field of contemporary art and fairly interpreted within the discourse of contemporary art. Rather than seeing satisfied inside the art of contemporary art, media art should take a responsibility as ‘art media’ by bridging art with other fields. One direction would be to cultivate its experimental spirit and rigorously converge with other areas. This is the very unique point that media art has made so far.”

Therefore, in order to consider media art works properly and meaningfully, the emphasis should be placed upon the point of art and media (technology) as finding a fair balance. This direction should be pursued thorough examinations from a number of different perspectives. And in our technology-oriented society, where technology has so irrevocably influenced our culture, a media art biennale and festival needs to keep examining how to strike this balance, experimenting more effectively with innovative technology and refining its critical attitude to media art as artwork itself.

Material provided by Mediacity Seoul

3. op. cit. p.14. "Technology makes us believe we can never escape from the power of technology. This technology forces us to believe that we can make a choice from ‘what we are given’. In a world replaced with technology, spells replace ‘outside’ with ‘inside’."
4. Dongyoung Choi, one of the co-curators of the exhibition, said: "Today, the use of media is no longer reserved for the pioneers of media art and media art can be seen in various art museums, performance centers, etc., not only at media art centers and festivals. It is then that the adjective ‘art’ disappeared in the biennale and the ‘art’ is emphasized more than media. In short, this transformation marks the point where the ‘seriousness’ of art is appreciated rather than the wonders of the media. In Dongyoung Choi, "Syncretic Spells: The Future is Upon Us!", "Spell on You': Art exhibition, Seoul Museum of Art, 2012, pp. 245–6.
5. In media art, the issue of balancing art and technology is often discussed based on the artistic director’s interest and preference in media arts and biennials. In 2010, Mediacity Seoul and Incheon Digital Art Festival (India) also present each media art exhibition very differently.
8. This also intends to examine the dangerous attitude in the contemporary art which willing to wait for new media art itself can be upgraded into a level of contemporary art. This suggests that media art needs to examine itself by investigating that any precious experimental values or branching aspect are not lost while it making relation to contemporary art. Rather, contemporary art also needs to reflect itself through the media art, by crossing the bridge that media art put with other disciplinary areas.
9. Particularly the participatory feature, or experience design or rigorous experiment searching for good interface through interaction will be one of unique trend in media art and they are not experimented enough yet. They should deverop further. Also, the very attitude of media art toward consciousness and reflection toward science and technology is another unique value that media art possess. Sometimes based on the process itself reveals the meaning in the process.