
Art, Technology and Interaction in the context of teenagers' digital age

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Abstract

The following paper describes research upon teenagers' behavior regarding technology and digital art: would teenagers born in this digital age be more interested in digital art than old generations? Are teenagers a better target for digital artists? Whilst both groups had the opportunity to use and experience technology, adolescents born in this new digital age are more fascinated about it.

Author Keywords

Digital art, Interactive, Teenagers, Technology use

ACM Classification Keywords

[Digital Art]: Interactive

General Terms

Interactive digital art, Teenagers

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CHI'13, April 27– May 2, 2013, Paris, France, Europe.

ACM 978-1-4503-1016-1/12/05.

Introduction

This paper provides a reflection upon teenagers' new way of living and how their lives are related to technology and digital interactive art. It also describes how new digital age (media and information technologies) strongly determine young adolescents' lifestyles. Accepting that young adolescents' lives and digital art are linked to technology, it could be argued if teenagers born in a digital world will become the next digital artists.

According to Piaget's theory [1], teenagers are always trying to *'make sense of'* something. They are trying to understand the world by knowing and thinking in their own logical ways. It is however important to note that teenagers' brain development started to be slightly different from old generations' one, because of online information and technology use.

Currently a new relation between teenagers as users and digital interactive art is developing. This suggests that *"digital technologies change the nature of interaction itself. Digital functionality transforms a work of art into a dynamic environment. Here, viewers become participants in a space that is unlimited by clearly set boundaries, with the potential for the emergence of new events and insights that unfold as an active collaborative process"* [2].

Teenagers & Media

Nowadays it is quite difficult to establish a certain period of adolescence, because of the age of entering into a job market, an age which depends on educational path. Therefore, in this paper the age of adolescence will be considered from 12 to 18 years old [3].

Undoubtedly, the use of technology is more and more frequent among teenagers all around the world. The number of young adolescents using a PC, connecting to the Internet, possessing a personal mobile phone is increasing day by day [4]. Furthermore, teenagers *"are one of the most targeted age groups by advertisers, TV programs, DVDs, videos, and CD"* [5]. For this reason, *"mass media and information technologies strongly determine teenagers' lifestyles."* In general, television, mobile phones and Internet are the most influential technologies, but online gaming is also very popular among young adolescents, especially boys [4].

For instance, Wands [6] affirms that television and media provide only one way of communication, whilst *"the internet offers the opportunity to interact others and allows access to a far greater range of information."* He believes that *"digital technologies have a profound effect on contemporary art and culture."*

A research carried out by the Center of Sociology of Education of the Russian Academy of Education in 1997 demonstrates that Russian teenagers are watching TV only to be entertained. They are finding information received from the media more attractive than the one given by the educational systems. They enjoy watching TV because it is not "*intellectually taxing*" [7].

Authors Palfrey and Gasser [8] have a very interesting idea about the new generations born in the digital age. They believe that children born in the early 1980s are quite different from the older generations due to the use of technology. They called them *Digital Natives*, since they grew up in a digital age, and for the reason that they cannot imagine a world without internet, computer, television and mobile phones. These teenagers are thinking and reacting different from the older ones, because their brain develops different in this new world. They relate different to information, to new technologies and to one another. "*When they chat with each other, broadcast their latest videos, post messages on their blogs and social network profiles, or share the latest tunes over P2P networks, they do so across states, national boundaries, and continents. These factors, among others, are likely to shape the ways in which Digital Natives use digital technology, how they can realize its opportunities, and how they will address the challenges it poses*" [8].

Nevertheless, the use of technology such as Internet remains a growing problem for the old generations. In this manner it can be argued if the new digital generations' brain development will change in a positive or negative way.

Interactive Digital Art

The word *interactive* has different meanings in different contexts. The interaction between a viewer and a painting is a mental one. The painting would not start changing while the viewer is watching at it, as well as the viewer would not start drawing over the paint, because of the museum's restraints. Regarding to digital art, however, things are quite different, because interacting with the artwork is the main purpose. "*While the user's or participant's involvement with a work has been explored in performance art, happenings and video art, we are now confronted with complex possibilities of remote and immediate intervention that are unique to the digital medium.*" [9].

According to Ernest Edmonds [10], interactive art must be dynamic, because it has to response to its external stimuli, "*such as people moving and speaking*". "*It is impossible to understand an interactive artwork by just considering the art object unrelated to its audience and the audience actions and, hence, the artist's focus will be on a combined artificial (artwork) and human (audience) art system,*" affirms Edmonds [10]. Therefore, the role of the audience as a user could be considered an important new element in art. However, it can be argued if the viewer becomes the user, since contemporary art started to be more experimental and interactive, using a totally different new sense: touching [6].

As author Paul [9] states, digital art is "*interactive, participatory, dynamic, and customizable.*" The use of digital technologies has vastly increased, especially in teenagers' lives. Moreover, more and more artists use digital technology as a new tool for creating their own art [9]. They design new types of art work that were never created before because of technology. Using new software and a computer, artists can design three dimensional sculptures rather than creating them in stone, as in the old times [6]. It might be concluded from this that interactive digital art cannot exist without technology, as Candy affirms: "*interactive art is an emerging art form that increasingly depends on digital technology*" [10].

Conclusion

Regarding the ideas above, digital art would definitely not exist without technology.

Not only future generations would not know how a world without internet, email, television, computer and mobile phones is, but also future artists will use more and more new technologies to create their art, and they might even never know how it feels like to draw by hand on a white piece of paper.

In my opinion, the young generations who are raised in this new world, a digital world, the world of online and offline individuals are the new image of us. "*Our economy, our politics, our culture, and even the structure of our family life will be forever transformed.*" Art and design as well [8].

Based on that, I truly believe teenagers grown in a digital world are the *new us* who shall take forward digital interactive art, because their brain is differently evolved. But will they be more interested in digital art than we are? This shall be seen in the next research papers.

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