

PhD Thesis Abstract

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Digital Self-Portraits

Computer Graphics Art for the Decomposition and Construction of My Self

Making various kinds of artworks using computer graphics since the 1980's, I have become strongly interested in exploring "the uniqueness of digital art". For my future activity to be fruitful, I decided to take the doctoral course as an opportunity to reflect on my own works to be newly aware of the underlying intentions as well as to further examine materials to be used, concepts to be loaded and results to be realized. Setting "Self-portraits" as the theme, with the aim of creating a new kind of self-portraiture, which enables an artist's sense of self and a real sense of life to be imprinted on through computer graphics, this research paper explains my actual practices from self-reflection and conception to production process including how to reconstruct the self.

The first chapter overviews self-portraitures found in paintings, sculptures and photographs to look into what people have made self-portraits for all through the ages from the two points of view: "self-observation" and "self-revelation". In addition, it defines what it is for me to create self-portraits, while tracing the advent of new media ideal for them chronologically from mirrors to computer graphics through photography, which was invented in the 19th century and opened up a new horizon for self-portraiture.

The second chapter makes a general survey of the sphere of portraits, focusing on a shift in the purpose of production which occurred in portrait painting and a change of signification which occurred with the invention of photography in the 19th century, as well as the representations characteristic of each medium. Furthermore, with an eye on the universal theme of "who am I?", it also reflects on today's digital portraits in terms of the reasons for their rise and the meaning of their presence while clarifying the motives and concepts behind my own in parallel.

The third chapter, in light of the study results presented in the two forgoing chapters, goes into details about my very own digital self-portraits based on such elements as "form", "color", "composition" and "time and space expression", inspired by various kinds of artworks from all ages and cultures, including but not limited to portraits and self-portraits, in order to illustrate the differences and affinities between the analog and digital techniques as well as their respective originalities. Besides, referring to diverse theories and thoughts from art to science, from religion to philosophy in an interdisciplinary way and compared to the said inspirational pieces, it investigates my own self-portraits themselves, which embody my own physicality, concerning their conceptions and production processes. Finally, the fourth chapter provides details on my doctoral graduation work named "Abyss", from the intent and purpose of the realization to the process of decomposing and reconstructing my self, reaching a definitive conclusion that for me, an attempt to reconstruct even my digital self-portraiture itself is all about seeking a sense of being alive, which has been increasingly becoming difficult to feel in this information society today, thereby regaining a sense of physicality, which should be the most crucial for everyone as a human being.

I have deliberated on an innate desire of expressing their individuality proper to humankind so far. Acquired through the realization of the graduate work, the "Reconstruction of self-portraiture with computer graphics" reveals a new form of self-expression based on a new way of self-recognition. In the current digital networked environment, there are an infinite number of "artworks" posted, viewed and circulated, of which the representations seem a little bit too naive and private. The digital self-portraiture, which exactly constitutes the core of the research and realization, could play a more significant role in the information age and provide a guide for self-confrontation while raising such questions as what individuality is or what the individual self is, which should invite people to further explorations - what a human is, and then, what art is.