Michał Ostrowicki

IMMERSIVE NATURE OF ART

ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of immersion mainly appears and relates to human existence in the interactive electronic environment. Immersion can produce an experience of electronically generated reality, which consists of feelings similar to those known from the experience of the physical world and can influence our sensuous and intentional attitude (Michal Heim). A person enters the electronic world, frequently finding there the value of being and a sphere for her/his own activity, which can release personality and produce the kind of emotional attitude which sometimes possibly does not appear in the physical world. Immersion was also described in electronic interactive art as a phenomenon which operates on the basis of aesthetic experience, where it is connected with feelings of being surrounded by outside influences, or with the "absorption" of perceiver by the work of art. The description of immersion on the basis of interactive art became the foundation for treating it as a general feature of art and also makes it possible to treat art as an immersive environment, where immersion becomes a historical notion, shaped by the historical development (Oliver Grau).

Key words: immersion; immersive technology; aesthetics; electronic reality; physical world; electronic (realis); electronic art; interactivity; imedia; immateria.

1. IMMERSION AS A PHENOMENON OF ELECTRONIC ENVIRONMENT

A human being fascinated by computer display, in some situations can experience feelings of alienation. Involvement in changing content on display can be so intensive, that perceiver can forget about her/his physical surroundings, and seems to travel mentally through the electronic world. In the physical world she/he becomes similar to a biological machine, the existence of which is testified by its physicality. Something important is happening in this environment opened by the display, which involves and immerses consciousness. Indeed, this attention and engagement cross some kind of a border, which coincides with surface of a display, and they spread in the electronic environment. In the electronic community, man

lives with intensity of real emotion and self-presentation, liberated in immaterial world of electronic reality – electronic *realis*[1].

On the ground of interactive technologies, the phenomenon was described of human involvement in electronic environment: immersion, which can be so intensive, that it prompts the domination of human attitude, and it redirects intentionality from physical world into the electronic environment. Generally, we can describe the immersion as a process of varied and changeable engulfing, or drawing into, of a human in the electronic reality, in result of which human intensifies her/his activity, and begins to treat the electronic environment as a valuable and real kind of space, which consists of both useful and emotional values.

> **"Immersion –** An important feature of VR systems. The virtual environment submerges the user in the sights and sounds and tactility specific to that environment. Immersion creates the sense of being present in a virtual world, a sense that goes beyond physical input and output. How presence and immersion coalesce remains an open question in VR research."[2]

The effect of the process of immersion can influence on the change of human attitude in relation to physical world. Some saturation with contents originating from the electronic *realis,* and difference of this content from the one founded in physical world, can have impact upon the implementation of personality, emergence of inter-personal relationships and emotional stimulation. This impact can also be related to emergence of interests and habits, finally creation of relation between human and the electronic environment, which can cause the situation in which someone begins to identify with the matter of electronic world.

The phenomenon of immersion can be described in three dimensions. First is the technological one, where immersion is connected with advanced immersive technology, mainly as CAVE – Cave Automatic Environment and HMD – head-mounted display.[3] These

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[1] We use the notion "reality of the electronic *realis",* to underline the notion of electronic environment as a kind of alternative reality in relation to the physical world. Electronic environment can release or assimilate human activity to similar degree and extent, as it was primarily directed into the physical world. We dismiss the notion of simulation and artificiality in relation to the electronic environment, and choosing the notion of electronic *realis,* we treat it as a notion describing the electronic sphere of being (www.sanart.org.tr/PDFler/81.pdf).

[2] M. Heim, *The Metaphysics of Virtual Reality,* New York, Oxford University 1993, pp. 154-155.

[3] CAVE is a kind of room, on the walls of which appears the picture surrounding the perceiver (projected by ceiling or hand projection). Inside of this room appears a three-dimensional electronic space, we can say interior to physical space and separated from it, filling and displacing it. CAVE produces space, which we can describe as parallel to the external space of the physical world, where time-space and physicality can change meanings. Space in the CAVE turns around a human, who "moves it". The perceiver is in the center of world orbiting around him. We can call it a reversal of polarization of a human and reality, when subject adapts for himself the space surrounding him.

technologies are used for creation of a spatial electronic environment, surrounding a human. Second dimension, the cultural one, results from a plain computer's application, and relates to 3D computer environments.[4] These environments create an electronic world, produce an intensive human involvement in electronic reality, treated as a sphere for real experience. This dimension concerns the immersion as a frequent phenomenon and grows with development of computerization.

Third dimension, which we try to describe discussing immersion is the area of art, where immersion can be perceived in general, and mainly in interactive electronic art. Immersion in art can concern such an intensive kind of aesthetic experience, that we can see it as a kind of identification with the work of art, or perceiving it as some kind of reality. We describe historical roots of immersion, as a general feature of art, and we try to understand immersion as a characteristic phenomenon for art, attributed to art from its beginning.

In these three described dimensions of immersion, we can look for common features from the philosophical perspective. Elements of this philosophical level of immersion description belong to phenomenon of immersion in every one of above mentioned dimensions.

According to HMD – wearing headset, the perceiver "sticks her/his head" into another reality – into an electronic world. HMD can produce deep immersion, has the ability to cut off stimuli from the physical world, so in effect the perceiver cannot have the possibility to refer the electronic world to the external world, behind her/his headset. Effect of a headset can limit physical space to a distance of a few centimeters within the headset. "Closing" in a HMD is simultaneously "opening" to an electronic space. Headset introducing the perceiver into reality of electronic *realis,* overrules in this sense the space of the physical world. We can say that HMD protects the perceiver with a technological brain capsule, surrounding mind, persuading to forget about assumed existing physical world as real (G. C. Burdea, P. Coiffet, *Virtual Reality Technology,* John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 2003).

[4] 3D computer environments seem to be an unusual example for describing the process of immersion, because they do not need advanced technology on the side of the user. Such technology is commonly available, still develops new standards, focusing users in mass and global scale. Community of the Net arising with growing richness of inter-personal relationships, builds community, and transfers into the electronic world a part of the personality of each participant, i.e. emotional life, or involvement of spare time. The participant seems engulfed by such environment in a stream of human interests and relations, episodes and facts. 3D environment immersion can be so intensive, that even if a human is active in the physical world, mentally she/he can stay in the electronic world, where she/he finds a real essence, and plans her/his own future. Trough the display human gains the connection with the electronic world, which is so firm that it seems, that display is like the last border to cross for complete transferring of oneself, and being there, in electronic *realis.* 3D environment exists not for watching, it is for being in it. A human turns to the electronic world, sitting in front of a computer in the physical world, from which she/he cannot finally break away (S. Turkle, *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet,* New York, Simon & Schuster, 1995, pp. 11-19 and C. Bailey, *Virtual Skin: Articulating Race in Cyberspace,* in M-A. Moser, D. MacLeod (ed.), "Immersed in Technology", MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England 1996, pp. 31-33).

From the philosophical level we try to distinguish the following characteristics of immersion:

1. **As a process of absorption of the human by the reality of electronic *realis*.** It concerns a penetration into electronic environment which begins for someone as a kind of reality. Here appears additional question: does the problem of immersion concern only the electronic environment? Can this process be discussed at the wider ontological plane, and concern others kinds of realities?

   We relate here the immersion to a process of experience of reality of electronic *realis*, and to the phenomenon of human mind, based as a superstructure on intentionality. Immersion would not be described only as way for orientation in electronic environment but as the feeling of need for belonging to such reality. Immersion seems as a process of embedding and forgetting, and in certain case it can be understood as realizing of someone's mind. Deepness of immersion influences comprehending and sensual experience, and in this way confirmation of someone's nature, proceeding further in exploration. We can additionally distinguish surface and essential immersion. The former relates to incidental participation in electronic environment, or for example to aesthetic experience, and the latter one is considered as a desirability for continuous and systematic being in electronic *realis*. Essential immersion can be a chronic state, frequently unconscious, which involves human also in physical world. This kind of immersion seems like "necessity of plugging in", and discovers values in electronic *realis*. We can add, that similar influence can be found in media effect. Usually we wait for the medial information though we usually know that media create a kind of "shadow of reality". More or less we accept medial reality as a set of facts, the acceptance of which can be stronger than understanding, that media create "non-reality". Perhaps media also create essential immersion, but by the lack of electronic interactivity, act in a different, proscenic way. On the one hand media leave a belief, that the perceiver has an inner power of control of the medial picture, sometimes sociotechnically transformed and separate from physical world, looking as a picture reduced in proportion to needed medial moment, and on the other hand it seems, that the perceiver has not enough ability to gain a buffering distance distinguishing medial reality from physical world, if it is possible at all. Majority of perceivers can use only medial reality, which they choose, because they have no access into physical world and its verification. Interactive media can immerse one in the alternative reality – not only giving an information, or picture of physical reality.

2. **As a human breakaway from physical world.** It is a process where human is vanishing in reality of the psychical world, and growing in electronic *realis*. This process includes a re-direction of intentionality, and is connected with human choice between realities, and direction of implementation of one's own activity. Electronic *realis* is not possible to replicate in physical world, it becomes a common sphere, which is enriched and popularized every day. It is the sphere in which human participates in many ways and for many reasons. Immersion in electronic *realis* can be compared to breathing, without which human can lose ability for activity in physical world. Immersion fits "reality" to human needs, can block development of new connections in physical world, and creates relations, which increase in electronic *realis*. The main aim of electronics is not to create a tool, but to be a foundation for comprehension of an environment or even more a kind of reality, which grows up from electronics. Possibly, sometimes, experience in the electronic *realis* can give human more than life in reality of physical world. It may be seen as a more valuable experience in relation to other kind of experiences.

3. **As a subjective and objective aspect.** It concerns mutual accommodation of a human and her/his world. Immersion can have two poles: subjective and objective. The former concerns a human, who implements her/his own activity, and the latter concerns the reality into which human is directed. The subjective pole of immersion can be understood as a way of being, coexistence in relations, experiencing reality. This is an attempt of description of the immersive nature of human, who searching for environment, which could allow for deepest and fullest existence. Objective pole of immersion is connected with dynamical description of electronic reality, which opens before a human, and is able to assimilate humanity. Interchangeability of those two realities: physical and electronic one, or their parallelism or equivalence can influence not only the disqualification of physical world, but can model it in a sense of comparability with electronic *realis*. We can call it a secondary level of modeling of reality of the physical world, which evolves from domination of the rules included in the electronic *realis*.

4. **As a foundation of existence.** It is related to conscious emergence in electronic *realis,* which elicits qualities not arising in the physical world, i.e. connected with phenomenon of telepresence or electronic identity. Immersion could be understood as attraction of human nature, drawing in of human, where it is possible, into environment, where the immersion is stronger. Physical world, in this case, seems

a world specifically freezing before a human nature, veiled by impenetrable physicality.

We would not consider the possibility of existing of any reality, i.e. physical world, ideas or values. It seems that for human it should not be necessary to need some philosophically determined knowledge about the reality in which she/he directs his/her own intentionality. Human is not determined by what exists, but is determined by what is the subject of choice. Immersion penetrates reality of electronic *realis,* diagnoses it, and elicits differences with physical world. Transcending into different sphere of existence in history, searching for reality has been shaped by human imagination and needs. Human not infrequently reconstructed his/her own world, i.e. in the aspect of work of art, medias, philosophies, or even electronic *realis,* which extract from uncertainty of existing, looking for a foundation of for human existence – it is possible that secretiveness of metaphysics not only inspiring for philosophical meditations, but provoking for creation of a human world.

2. IMMERSION AS THE FEATURE OF ART

Art seems to be created for co-existence with human, to constitute alternative sphere of reality, to establish a sphere for aesthetic or spiritual experience, including values, feelings, imaginations, hidden demands, often not found in a physical world. We try to say, that art seems an uncommon area for human immersion – includes elements which are not proper to physical world, and having human dimension: notions and desires. Works of art are created with intention of a kind of influence upon the perceiver, in some case is described as a process of immersion, which is related to discovering work of art, its recognition and emotional influence.

Art appears as a historical source, where immersive environment was created. Combining the understanding of the physical world with its imagination, from its beginning art has included human world – in some cases using physical world, maybe even negating it. Human aspiration to alternative reality in opposition to physical world, which can be described in art, can be connected with intentional balance, where in some moment of aesthetic experience the perceiver intentionally penetrates created world included in the work of art. In this case, immersion of art could be called the closest and the oldest human known immersion, which has accompanied the human from the beginning. Immersion of art leads to description of a work of art as a kind of human-created environment, a space for human sensibility and mind, multidimensional environment, created for the spiritual sphere. Talking about

traditional art –generally meaning proscenic art, it is possible that we can also describe phenomenon of immersion, or something similar to this process, founded on ground of aesthetic experience. Nevertheless, immersion is expressed to greater extent in the electronic art, i.e. cinema or television, and especially in interactive electronic art, e.g. interactive installations or in Net Art.

We intend to understand the phenomenon of immersion as the general feature characterizing the art, but we would observed and describe immersion on the ground of interactive electronic art.[5] It could lead to the statement, that owing to the interactive electronic art we are able to indicate immersion as a new category of art description in general and historical sense, which was perceived in some way, but was not called immersion, and nowadays, with the rise of interactive electronic art, has gained the universal definition, as a common feature of art.[6]

In a book *Virtual Art. From Illusion To Immersion,* by Oliver Grau,[7] the historical aspect of immersion is presented. The Author indicates the evolutionary dimension of the notion of immersion process from the origin of computer arts (virtual art). Describing the phenomenon of immersion, Grau begins from the power of illusion in art. Illusion is treated as the feature of art, where the immersion has its genesis. Illusion accompanies or belongs to art, in some sense it outgrows from the art. Illusion founded in art enables the initiation of the process of immersive space creation. Such space is shared by the work of art and the perceiver. The illusion remains on the side of object, while the immersion begins to be a space, the illusion is an effect of *appliance* of technology, procedures, e.g. artistic values existing in the work of art. Immersion is an involvement in aesthetic experience, in which work of art approaches and engulfs the perceiver, fully influencing mental and sensual cognition. In history some tricks or strategies appeared which served for creation of an immersive effect. It is connected with application of perspectives or artistic techniques and in effect the realization of artistic values. Accordingly, art seems concerned with immersive teleology, directs artists to creation of such environments, which are able, in some case, to absorb or involve the perceiver. Immersion appears as an aspect of art, which can be treated not only as a feature, but as an aim: the perceiver is waiting for immersion – art possesses it, and gives the immersion to perceiver.

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[5] www.medienkunstnetz.de/themes/overview of media art/immersion.

[6] R. Ascott, Telematic Embrace. Visionary Theories of Art, Technology, and Consciousness, University of California 2003, pp. 274 and 284.

[7] O. Grau, *Virtual Art. From Illusion to Immersion,* Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, London 2003.

> "This immersive illusionism with such powerful images appeared to transport the observer to the historical place and occupied the observer's mental images, fixing them unforgettably in the memorial exposition of the faithful."[8]

If art is a source for creation of the immersive space, in this case problem of immersion should be settled on the ground of aesthetic experience. We can also discuss immersion as a criterion, meaning ability of work of art for creation of immersive space. If immersion can be a common and general feature of art, in such case it concerns every work of art, but ability and intensity of immersion are different. Possibly, immersive nature of work of art can be the most important in the process of aesthetic experience and its valuation. In this case the external appreciation or objective description cannot result from noticed aesthetic or artistic values, but from emotional deepness of immersion and after that spiritual experience, i.e. reflecting the involvement of perceiver in work of art, especially connected with her/his identification with the work of art as a kind of reality.

In historical approach to work of art, we can talk about process of immersion in such described categories of work of art as: perceived values, comprehension, interpretation, intentional cognition of contents included in the work of art. Grau describes a few historical examples of work of art, both pictorial and architectonic ones. He indicates its ability for producing immersive space. Described examples, such as Willa de Misteri (I B.C.), frescos from Pope's Palace in Avignon (1343), interior of Willa Farnesina (1516) and further examples of paintings, graphics and examples of panoramas indicated by Grau. Historical, special example of work of art, evoked by Grau, producing immersive space, is the panorama by Anton von Werners, entitled *Battle of Sedan*[9] (surface of 1725 square meters), which was presented in Berlin in 1883. The application of surrounding perspective, panoramic perspective and suitable illumination, made such kind of space, that work gave the effect the perceiver felt as being within, in real battle. Perceivers instinctively turned away from the walls of painting, imagining to be touched by horses, sensed that air was saturated by dust and smoke. Painter's illusion made immersive space of battle, and generated immersion of perceiver in environment of work of art, where the picture and imagination had changed in kind of reality and contemporariness.[10]

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[8] O. Grau, *Virtual Art. From...,* Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, London 2003, p. 44.

[9] www.medienkunstnetz.de/themes/overview of media art/immersion/6/.

[10] O. Grau, *Virtual Art. From Illusion...,* Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, London 2003, pp. 91-98. In reference to history of cinema we can recall the idea of stereoscopic cinema by Sergei Eisenstein, which was realized in the fifties of XXth century, in the shape of IMAX.

Contemporary example of immersive electronic art is a panorama entitled *derelictedATMOSPHERES* (http://www.derelictedatmo.net/contact_fr.html) by Barbara Siegel. Work consists of multichannel video and the digitalized photos of XIXth century French castles. Perceiver meets with visualization black-white photographs, making surrounding picture. Each photograph is projected to the surrounding screen for a few seconds. In total a few dozen photos are projected in several minutes. After a few minutes, being inside the panorama, the perceiver can get some feeling of old castle's atmosphere, gardens or rooms. The effect is so intensive, that it can arouse the sensation of closeness around the perceiver, who seems without way out into the exterior space of the work. Multiplicity of presentations thickens the atmosphere, which condenses inside the panorama – fragment of space created by panorama become "lent" by historically closer time, closing the perceiver inside, keeping her/him in power of work of art, which continuously emanates and saturates consciousness. Little effects, such as animation of a black cat moving from time to time on projected pictures and specific sounds, additionally improve the effect of immersion. *derelictedATMOSPHERES* is unusual connection between photography and contemporary multimedial projection. The work is a hybrid of artistic values, where black-white photos gain contemporary dimension, owing to exploitation of artistic medium consisting in the use of electronics *appliances.* Panorama and visualization, combined together, seem to create an immersion underpinned by values of nineteen century photos, as if art could multiply its influence in common exploration of immersion.

Interactive electronic art is changing a technology of illusion, gaining validation of creation of the electronic *realis* of work of art. Immersive environment changes character from pictures into an electronic space, so in effect we conclude, that phenomenon of immersion, in basic or essential meaning can be found in interactive electronics. We can say, that idea of illusion remains the same like before, but now, contemporary interactive electronics have changed the possibilities of creation of illusion and quality of immersive space – immersion of electronic work of art approaches to "reality" of electronic reality.[11]

From another side we can also notice reference to Eisenstein's idea in the film *Steps* (made on the basis of *Battleship Potiomkin),* by Zbigniew Rybczyiiski, where he presented a group of American tourists who pervaded into the film – they transferred themselves into it, and participated in the scene of attack on Winter Palace.

[11] An example can be found in the work of art by Charlotte Davies, *Osmose* (http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/osmose/) – an installation based on HMD technology. Pending the aesthetic experience the perceiver approaches to electronic reality, beginning aesthetic experience on the boundary of two worlds: reality and electronic *realis.* Crossing the border becomes an osmosis of electronic world into the perceiver. Oscillating, balancing between these two worlds, perceiver appears into one of these, remaining on its boundary. Perceiver seems to examine possibility of committing

Another example can be an immersive installation by Paul Sermon, entitled *The Tables Turned* (http://creativetechnology.salford.ac.uk/paulser-mon/table/). This work constitutes an electronic space as a meeting place. A meeting is possible through produced space in the Net or, through video channel, as it is the case in this installation.[12] Installation consists of two separate physical rooms, where perceivers are placed, and of third room – electronically created – common for all perceivers. In this third room perceivers meet all together, i.e. meet under their electronic character (pictures, like in this installation or as avatars in other cases). Through technology of electronic coalescence of pictures, perceiver can behave and change her/his attitude and activity to each other, similarly as in physical world – *they meet at the table and attend their business* – their life proceeds in third electronic room, life activity is transferred into the place in the electronic *realis,* not into a place in the physical world. Physical world depreciates value, human transfers her/his activity into electronic reality. Installation introduces such intensive immersion, that it causes to induce e.g. telemacity – during the aesthetics experience, a common play, holding hands, even a kiss were recorded – everything was acted in electronic space. In the physical space, when someone is watching people being in one of two separate rooms in physical world, it makes an impression, that perceivers performs non-coordinated movements, and adopt funny poses, and strange

himself to one of these realities. Comparison fascinates by difference and the mutual osmosis of these two worlds constitutes feeling of reality, continues tendency tempting for choosing between spheres. Alienated in electronic space, the perceiver can lose consciousness of demarcation between two realities, where his/her being is absorbed by immersion of electronic space. Human movements and behaviors are familiarized in electronic space – human learns how to exist *de novo,* moving and thinking, to observe electronic world flowing trough by her/his, similarly to spirituality – in a sublime reality, prepared in response on human breath. Osmotic existence, vibrating unity with the electronic world surrounds human *sensorium,* as if it had always been fitted to the immaterial, electronics world. *Osmose* not only leads to the contact with simulation of the kind of world, but it immerses the perceiver in electronic reality. It should not be important how the work of art presents itself in electronic world, but how immersion is valuable and which kind of implication results from it for human life connected with electronic *appliances.* Additional dimension of work of art is comparison of those worlds, in which human explores an lives in similar way – as an universal entity – pervading spheres, choosing between them and appreciating them.

[12] Paul Sermon is an author of many immersive and/or telematic works. One of best known is *Telematic Dreaming* (http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/telematic-dreaming). This work consists of a bed, on which, during aesthetic experience, is sited the perceiver. A video picture of another person is projected on this bed, and this second person is placed in the other part of this installation, far away from the perceiver. Both perceivers in a two places, perceiving each other as human-pictures lying on the bed, commonly exists in the space of installation, i.e. hybrid space. Both perceivers can see also their common projection on the screens placed in each of the places constituting wholeness of installation. It results from technique of coalescence of pictures. This intimate situation – arranged in a bedroom – gives additional impression concerning identification with human-pictures, roles of projection and electronic interactivity.

movements – although they are separated in physical world, they look and present attitude to someone who does not exist near them in physical space.

Immersion described on the ground of interactive electronic art includes process or ability for transformation of the form of work of art by perceiver, who is involved in the process of interactive perception. In the case of art which has no electronic interactivity in it, immersion is connected with non-interactive involvement of perceiver in work of art, such as it is possible when we talk about a cinema, a television or a novel.[13] Such works still remind a picture or a text, and such kinds of art cannot be a source of interactivity in the meaning we find in interactive electronic art. Perception of proscenic work of art leaves some impenetrable distance between perceiver and work of art, moving her/him from the work of art, at producing a space, in which perceiver will never penetrate and explore, remaining "external" to it. Thus we can say, that electronic interactivity changes proscenic pictures into interactive space, and also changes proscenic view in active perception – perhaps interactivity could be considered as a category of art in the epoch of electronics. We have two observations: first, that immersion has been discovered in interactive electronic art, and can be treat as a typical quality or characteristic feature found in contemporary interactive electronic art, and second – as mentioned above – that by this observation we can perhaps define immersion as an general feature or aim in art, which has been not recognized and identified in art in the past.

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[13] Marie-Laure Ryan also describes an immersion as a general and historical feature of art. Ryan claims, that immersion specially can be found in literature, mainly in prose. Comparing literary work of art with an interactive electronic one, in relation to ability of raising phenomenon of immersion, Ryan states that immersion in literature could be deeper than the immersion found in interactive electronic works of art. Literature makes the perceiver create the mental holistic world of novel, and causes personal involvement in it. On the other hand, interactive electronic work is not able to evoke so coherent presentation. According to Ryan, electronics less than literature opens the work of imagination before the perceiver, and a novel opens various possibilities for mental creation. Ryan distinguishes in literature "spatial immersion", which acts directly during experience of a literary work of art, and relies on a partial identification of perceiver with a character from the novel or with imagined presented world – "transferring oneself into the work of art", and complementation other features of a figures and elements of the novel's world. Second kind of immersion, distinguished by Ryan, is the "temporal immersion", relying on experiencing the work of art by the perceiver in real world, independently of direct experience in any time. We can say, that this kind of immersion stems from the effect of impact of aesthetic experience in a time, stems independently of the matter of novel, and perceiver's own creation, on the ground of elements of novel's world and acts of characters. It is connected with one's personal involvement in the novel according to the rules of participation in imagined world. And third, "emotional immersion" is connected with a transfer of literary personality into the physical world, as a pattern connected with appreciation, confessing of ideas or embodying character's behavior in life in physical world. (M.-L. Ryan, *Narrative as Virtual Reality. Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media,* The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London 2001. pp. 120-162,352-353).

In this way we tend to call all the art as immersive, and also, that when we want to talk about immersion in art in such general sense, we have to stress, that notion of immersion was established on the ground of interactive electronic art. In this case we can start the analysis of immersion from contemporary interactive electronic art, and go back in history of art, trying to show, that immersion as a phenomenon has its origin at the beginning of art, not very perceptibly visible before, as if art matured in this sense.

3. HUMAN IMMERSED IN REALITY OF ELECTRONIC *REALIS*

We propose that human has been searching immersive environments, e.g. art, which originate from the beginning of human necessity for creation an alternative kind of reality, opposite to physical world. In this sense, the art can be treated as eliciting immersive nature of human. Moving in the space of electronic interactive work, the perceiver does not remain only the observer – she/he discovers the world, not a picture of a world, meeting and experiencing new situations, and not only noticing the form of presentation. Process of perception of interactive electronic work of art refers not only to such kind of discovering of work, which is possible in perception, imagination or interpretation, but also to creation of new elements of a work of art, and changing its content. We can say, that work of art specifically elapses in a process of interactive perception, its continuous "births and deaths". Electronic interactivity confirms dynamic relation between work of art and the perceiver, and continuously elicits new qualities, enriched esthetic experience. After entering into the structure of interactive work of art perceiver discovers a world full of possibilities, which react and still influence the new context and fulfillment.

We can suggest, that the structure of interface can decide about feature or quality of immersion in electronic art. In works of arts having an interface resulting from *appliance* of space detectors or VR technology, there is a tendency to comprehend such work as a source for arising real, three-dimensional space, surrounding the perceiver. In turn, the display (screen) and a picture, as long as devoid of interactivity, need not elicit intensive immersion, remaining just pictures. In situation when interactivity appears, the picture can lose its fundamental meaning and become a source of process of penetration being more a space, than a surface, and draw the perceiver into "deepness of a display". In this case, a display seems to be as a window, admission into the electronic world, and the display is not for watching, but enables an admission.[14] Structure and invention of interface can determine ability of work of

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[14] M. Morse, *Virtualities. Television, Media Art, and Cyberculture,* Indiana University Press 1998, p. 8.

art for process of immersion, enabling the attitude emphasizing electronic *realis,* rather than simulation.[15] It is obvious that, we do not talk about technological aspect, e.g. role of *appliance,* but about attraction of perceiver's attitude and the immersive nature of human, who searches for various interfaces which open for her/him a kind of "passage", do not remain just a picture.

It seems that immersion leads to necessity of decision making, which is faced refer every human using artifact of technology – *appliances.* It is possible that this processes is connected with internal nature of technology, which appears and determines human beings.[16] Immersion can be connected with a feature of electronic world, which is found in works of art, specially

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[15] One of the works by Polish artist of interactive art, Krzysztof Mazur (www.interactive.pl), entitled *Bed* is an installation which includes the projection of woman, projected on a bed. By the perceiver's movements of hands over the bed, woman (projection of woman) on the bed changes, presents her physicality or her intimate condition of pregnancy. Such "cybernetic" woman has no "programmed secrets", and in this sense pervades into the consciousness of perceiver unpretentiously, just straight show him her internal self. Work projects strange closeness of relations belonging only to people. We can say, that it is an interactive study of feminine, maybe some electronic, interactive act. In this work one can notice specific transformation of *appliances* into subject, as if the electronic woman would say: "I am not only the program, I become a person" (Krzysztof Mazur, *InterAkt,* Centrum Sztuki "Solvay", Krakow, Poland 2003).

[16] The work of art, which refers with the idea of perceiver's immersion into the electronic environment is the work by Tony Oursler, *Hello?* http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/hello/video/1/. This video-installation presents the immersion as a phenomenon, or its effect, which we can describe today in the Net. It concerns a cyber-cultural and existential dimension arising in epoch of electronic media. Work presents a face of human, who monologues, facing the perceiver. The picture is visible from the inside of a half-open chest. Inside, on the bottom and sides of that chest are spread the cloths, and a pillow on which the face is projected. The projection on the pillow gives the effect of dimensionality of the picture, creating some a picture of a person. Video is replayed constantly in a loop. Face is directed straight on the perceiver who bows over the chest. Face from the chest directs a monologue to the perceiver, and seems to be imprisoned in some sphere, someone who is "on the second side", and exists in the electronic form, and by this monologue is tied with the need of contact with someone outside. It is possible that he tries to return into the physical world, but in this case he is returning as a picture of a human. Person from the chest looking for contact with a physical people, remains in a separate and distant sphere. Metaphorical access is possible only by a gap, open lid of the chest, when can notice the human face existing at the "other side". The person calls the perceiver, talks about his loneliness, refers to his existence, which is so separate, that does not give any possibility of a contact with other people. The person is closed in one of two spheres with no bridge in between, he is imprison in one of them. The work of art inspires for the interpretation, that the person from the chest and the perceiver, as if watching each other, have no common access between them. Additional interpretation is connected with sentimental feelings of necessity of returning into physical world – the person in the sphere of pictures – in a light of our interpretation – exists in the electronic environment, which someday before had dragged him inside and broken off from the physicality. Work includes an idea of immersion of absorbing the identity of human by some other sphere, the electronic one. Immersed in electronic reality, the human cannot to get out of it easily. Perceiver walking by this chest maybe quite unaware of the possibilities of losing physical identity, "burning bridges" and alienation from physical world. *Hello?* seems a nostalgic and moving work, showing someone, who someday made a choice and is placed at the "other side". We can find here an idea of necessity or determination of choice that human had made. It refers to the existence category in epoch of electronics.

in interactive, electronic ones. The return from electronic *realis* can awake continuous memories of electronic environment – human consciousness and activity can still remain in electronic *realis,* even though a human acts in physical world, but experiences in electronic one. Human, who has gone away from a computer, still seems absorbed. Immersion of electronic *realis* causes, that human has been gaining a second nature. It is possible that she/he recognize nature which was unknown. Electronic world gives us a renaissance of emotions and feelings, when humans emerge, penetrate through the interface, when the interconnection of the Net leads into a new kind place. Return way can become an unwanted necessity. Abandoned physicality, closed by metaphysical veil, remains loose, when human finds owns her/his own world by transforming a picture into the human world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR – Michał Ostrowicki (Dr hab.), Department of Aesthetics of Institute of Philosophy, Jagiellonian University. Associated with Department of Intermedia, Academy of Fine Arts in Cracov. Fields of interests: aesthetics, contemporary art, electronic art, electronic environment, cyberculture. Recent publications: *Wirtualne realis. Estetyka w epoce elektroniki* ["Virtual realis. Aesthetics in epoch of electronics"], Universitas, Krakow 2006 (www.ostrowicki.art.pl)