The complete documentation for the Masters Project and my process of research can be found on my web blog [www.machinatorium.wordpress.com] inside the sub-category MASTERS PROJECT (MA-P).

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INTRODUCTION

“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”
George Santayana, The Life of Reason, Volume 1, 1905

If you compare the Learning Agreement - written out within the previous MSN2-Unit - and the final outcome presented in the MA exhibition, you will see that I decided to change and enhance the former ideas at some points. Therefore, part of this Critical Evaluation will be a description and explanation of how and why the initial idea changed and had to change. In addition to that, this document will contain a summary of the progress and progression of my last project of this course.

SYNOPSIS

“The aimed visual outcome is an enthralling visualisation of human expansion, growth and destruction. With the help of projections, depicting a variety of expanding and diminishing layers, I want to create a spatial environment for the audience to experience the genesis of shapes and forms. By occupying space and filling/emptying the space, I aim to inhabit space with my work. An additional thrilling element for this animated matrix are all the little details and aspects to explore and investigate within the animation, a clockwork-like machinery with interconnected fragments and elements.” (from the Learning Agreement)

This statement from my Learning Agreement is not that different to the final work. On the contrary. You will agree that there are lots of similarities. One obvious aspect that differs from the Learning Agreement is the evolutionary character of the matrix. My starting point for this project was the overall image, the illustration of the complex structure with all the varying parts and separated elements coming together in one image. By setting up this depiction, I realised that it will be difficult and time consuming enough to animate this structure as a running complex. The evolution and growth of this apparatus was just not achievable and quite difficult to imagine as there are massive and strong construction parts, where the idea of growing and arising from nothing is a rather complex task on its own.

FIELDS OF INTEREST

Nevertheless, the basic thoughts and original ideas for this project did not change. By writing out three main visual fields of interest in my Learning Agreement, I tried to explain how I was expecting to realise and focus this project. I believe that all these topics have become part of the final outcome:

• **Time & transience – Animated processes and interlinked sequences**
The whole complex is a running machine, the gears are working together, there are interlinked parts and a collage-like conglomeration of different contextual and visual layers acting jointly.

• **Information & design – Stylistic simplification and graphical explanation**
Within this project I aimed to create my own visual language as an eclectic conglomeration based on a variety of inspirations, mainly from the fields of information design. By this I had a closer look at the world of pictographs, symbols and icons (→RESEARCH) which helped me a lot to visualise my ideas for this project.
• **Space & expansion – Visual complexity and joined networks**

I also had the possibility to elaborate my special interest in simplifying complicated structures, making them traceable and comprehensible with the help of the tools of visual communication and animation.

So, I brought life into a complex and interdigitating structure by using simplified shapes and graphics. And of course, I published this work in a very special way, I found a spatial solution for this animated film (→**SPACE**). An overall difficult and challenging but exciting project.

**RESEARCH**

“Everyone spoke of an information overload, but what there was in fact was a non-information overload.”


The research-part of this Unit is mainly based on collecting and looking for content in the field of graphics, animation and space, for adopting and converting the content for my own project. I continued my research-scheme from the MSN2-Unit by having a closer look at a variety of artists, designers and their work, to become aware of similar projects and styles. Therefore I set up four main categories, keystones of my framework for bringing together and ordering the different results:

• **STYLE /// Visual Research**
• **ACTION /// Animated Examples**
• **CONTEXT /// Space & Positioning**
• **SUBSTANCE /// Form & Content**

I think these four topics were the fundamental fields that I concentrated on while looking for inspirations and examples, while substantiating my contextual and conceptual background. As before, I outlined all these sources and inspirations within my blog and in addition to that within a visual summary. All these visual approaches can be seen as possible solutions, as an abstract of questions and different ways of creating and producing similar ideas. But, I am very satisfied with these results as they will help me not only for this project, but in general to classify myself and my work.

To be honest: I guess that one very important section is missing in this enumeration which is the field of sound and sound design. But for this project I was relying on the skills of an external sound-designer (→**COLLABORATION**). And as the time was too short for me to set up a proper sound-mood-board, we decided not to focus on other examples, but giving him the possibility to experiment and play with the sound, similar to me and my way of playing with the visual outcome of this project (→**CONTENT**).
MASTERS PROJECT // Critical evaluation

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Subcategory RSM2+MASTERS PROJECT

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Peter Kuper

Says war is in the big city

Michel Gagné

In search of new worlds

Lars Arthén

the world needs an end

Hendrik Dorgeloth

a clever and colorful little

The language of comics

Word and Image

Kenny King

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Architectural Fantasies

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Virtual Information Architectures

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On abrupt and minimal universe

Julian Opie

An explosive formal language...

Bruce Nauman

Exploring spaces

The machine age

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Inner & Outer Space

Time, existence, space

Yuli Gudesha

Semenes - The creation

Kawakami - Number

Appearance (Playsketchings)

Baraka Koldewijn

Augmented Sculpture

Pieter Vermeersch

Garden of painting & photography

Stage Fright

Jean-Luc Guion, Steve Macdonald & Hassan Majeed

Joe Colombo

Business Stash

Spiral Evolution

Science for a changing world

Triso Typeface

Regular patterns

Renee Guggisberg

Project for a New American Century

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“Design is choice. The theory of the visual display of quantitative information consists of principles that generate design options and that guide choices among options. The principles should not be applied rigidly or in a peevish spirit; they are not logically or mathematically certain; and it is better to violate any principle than to place graceless or inelegant marks on paper. Most principles of design should be greeted with some scepticism, for word authority can dominate our vision, and we may come to see only through the lenses of word authority rather than with our own eyes.

What is to be sought in designs for the display of information is the clear portrayal of complexity. Not the complication of the simple; rather the task of the designer is to give visual access to the subtle and the difficult – that is, the revelation of the complex”.


While finishing the project, I thought again about my personal motivation, the reason for me to do this project. By this, I realised that there is probably another layer behind the justification written out in the Learning Agreement. The best way to describe this project is to call it a conglomeration of current ideas and thoughts, all the surrounding elements that I consume and get in touch with every day... and day by day over the last years. A massive, in a way chaotic pile of information and knowledge.

Although this matrix is a precise clockwork-like mechanism, this machinery is neither asking specific questions nor is this installation giving any answers. There is a kind of duality between the precision of the animation on the one hand - as all the gears, machines and elements work together and interact with each other - and on the other hand an overall overflow of information, patterns and connections It is probably my current way of seeing, consuming and interpreting the world around me. I know that there is a surrounding pattern, the order of the market, a profit-orientated capitalist system controlling our life, as well as a huge network of information and well, yes, confusion, connecting the different societies and cultural developments. I am forced to find my own way of living in this world by processing all the data, by understanding and learning the common cultural and political rules of the system, doubting and breaking them if necessary.

This moment of confusion (mentioned above) and the confession of not understanding this whole massive ‘moloch’ is a very likely reason, why I also used not only elements of the current time. The basic image is a clockwork, an analog and by this old-fashioned, traditional image of time and transience. But by this, there are known and reliable parts although composed within a unique matrix.

Of course, there are some topics and animated shapes that focus on special areas, especially within the additional screen. This second and more precise container was helpful to display more or less detailed and specific topics. But in general, all the interlinked parts do not have to make sense at all, at least not as a unit. They are not necessarily necessary for the working machine, but they are necessary for me and my way of depicting and tracing an image of the world around me.
MASTERS PROJECT // Critical evaluation

SPACE & CONTEXT

“There is no motion in nature. Everything that moves does so because the Now moves. If the Now would not move, nothing would. All that would be left would be a frozen (stationary) cut.”
Otto E. Rössler, The World as an Accident

Concerning space and context, I aimed to inhabit a space with my animated patterns. I wanted to fill empty space with a visual matrix, so that the audience will be part of an overall experience of my work. And it took me a while by considering a variety of solutions to develop and realise this final piece. This final work is the result of a variety of different approaches and thoughts – by talking to different people, making tests in the space, by creating 3D-simulations and draft drawings of possible solutions.

In the end, I decided to create a virtual environment containing different layers of content and contextual solutions – based on my idea of macrocosm and microcosm based on the different audio-visual layers:

1 Background (Projection)
There is a background movie or animated background layer containing the main architecture of the complex with basic and repeating elements.

2 Random elements (Projection)
There are four additional layer which are part of this macroscopic universe, but to create a more accidental composition, they will start based on a random pattern.

3 Close Up (→MONITOR)
This is a microscopic element, depicting little clips of human behaviour and life.

4 Sound (→COLLABORATION)
Sound is again a macroscopic element as the audience will be surround by the variety of acoustic effects of the film.

At this point, I am quite curious how the audience will react and if they are somehow engaged while being within my space - will they be inspired, scared, interested, agitated or just distressed? My intent is to trigger the audience – with the detailed animation containing random and by this unpredictable elements and with the spatial and audio-visual installation. I am looking forward to testing the application during the MA exhibition to find out how people react to my work.

MONITOR

As the bodywork of my piece is an abstract machinery, an interlinked collage of machine parts, technology and urban shape, it is impossible to show single people within this complex - only by playing with their size (an additional collage-like element) which was something that I did not want to do from a creative point of view. One of my first ideas that I had within the MSN2-Unit for this problem was based on panel-like structure of graphic novels and comics.
As mentioned before (→CONTENT) I wanted to display some topics more detailed and with the help of people and elements of human life. Therefore it was mandatory to look for a way of depicting detailed scenes and topics in an additional container – in this case a separated screen as part of the projection wall.

The idea of mixing multiple projections came up while listening to a lecture by Tom Simmons who presented a work by Sophie Lascelles: ‘The Knoll’ from 2006 – a mixture of a 16 mm film and a 35 mm slide projection, projected on a cut out card (3 minutes on a continuous loop, 3 x 2 m, variable according to space).

“The image, shifts and bends, and as you look closer becomes grainy. Between the branches, the trees fall inwards, disorientating you; the surface comes away from the wall. You examine the mechanics of the installation: projectors, slides, film, cables, cut out paper; the illusion holds.” (http://www.daniellearnaud.com)

I quite liked the idea of using different types of projection and while creating the layout for the animation, I had the idea to use a monitor, not only within the animation but as part of the whole installation, a real screen within the projected screen.

A challenging but interesting solution, especially as the intensity of brightness and the overall resolution are different on these two screens.

COLLABORATION

“A global market, omnipresent mass-media, ambiguous authority, trans-national enterprises - today’s society is full of contradictions. (...) Moreover, the computer developed into a vital element of the design process and made design tools available to virtually everybody. Nowadays, a graphic designer’s competence is sustained by project coalitions, collaborations with other specialists and the thorough exploration and analysis of form, media, technology, traditions and applications...”

Graphic Design Museum, Breda, Netherlands

For the sound design part of this unit, I worked together with David Indge, student of Film and Video, based at EPIC. As before (within the MSN1-Unit), I was in charge of the whole project and it was up to me to keep everything together. But because of my lack of knowledge in the field of sound and sound-effects, I agreed with David that he is in charge of the sound-design in general. The fact that our last collaboration worked out that well, was the reason for me to rely on his skills and his way of creating a sound-scape for images. And as the timetable was very tight again, we worked together in a very intensive and concise way: Within tutorials with Tom Simmons I explained my basic ideas to him, showed him some examples and draft in-between animations, for him to get an idea about the contextual and visual outcome. I explained my concept and my ideas about the visual content, so that David could start recording, collecting and creating the variety of sounds and sound-effects for this piece.

Again, I think the best way to describe David’s and my teamwork is the term of a complementary collaboration. As experts within our specific field, we were working together, contributing our skills,
especially when we talked about the spatial solution for the sound together with Tom Simmons as well as with Phil Archer.

Concerning the outcome of this collaboration, I think the results are really great. The sound-design is well-done and definitely fitting to the mood of the films. I just can repeat the words from my last collaboration with David: The fact that he decided to do most of the recordings by himself instead of using just an existing library was an absolutely reasonable and in the end thought-out decision. For me, the haptic and objective character of the whole machinery is not only expressed by the images but as well by the sound-composition. And of course, the spatial placing of the sound, using different speakers and different channels, was a good and helpful decision by us to inhabit the space.

Finally, I am glad to have made contact with David during this course and if I will definitely try to stay in contact with him for future projects.

TECHNICAL CHALLENGE

While thinking of how to present this work technically, for example using a DVD-player, a Flash-application or just a computer with Quicktime-films (QT), I luckily talked to Phil Archer. He suggested to me to use Pure Data (Pd)*, an open source graphical programming language, that offers several advantages: Instead of compressing the final films, i.e. in the FLV-format or any mpeg-format which always causes a loss in quality, Pd is able to load QT-films as they are. Depending on the performance of the computer, I had the possibility to add film and sound not only in a adequate quality, but also with additional possibilities as using films as layered elements within one big outcome-container. As QT-films can contain alpha-channels, I was quite excited of using this technology for my project.

In addition to that, for this course I had the aim to also develop and improve my technical skills. This idea did not really work out as I was using and by this improving my already existing knowledge. I definitely became more confident in using my tools and planning to solve design- or animation-related problems more easily and focused on the outcome. But, within this process of the project, I was happy when Phil suggested to use this new software as a presentation tool. I have to say, that without Phil’s help it would have been impossible for me to code this framework. By this, I think I can say that this part of the project was a kind of a collaboration between Phil and me. I tried to understand the basics of this tool – as I said, I quite like this way of presenting my work and I could imagine to intensify my knowledge in this software – and I think that some parts of coding with this software are quite straightforward. But nevertheless it is a very new and unfamiliar field of work for me, so I was glad to have the help of Phil.

I think for the whole project the idea of placing elements randomly, is not only exciting and interesting for me, but also a necessary part of the installation. By this, it is not only up to me and my direction how things happen. There is a chaotic and accidental trigger inside the machine – a creativity within the system.

* Pure Data (or Pd) is a graphical programming language developed by Miller Puckette in the 1990s for the creation of interactive computer music and multimedia works. Though Puckette is the primary author of the software, Pd is an open source project and has a large developer base working on new extensions to the program. It is released under a license similar to the BSD license.
TIME

Setting up the final installation was especially time consuming. The problem was for me, that there was not only the setup of the hardware - which was difficult enough as most of the equipment was occupied by the East International Festival until a couple of days before our deadline – but also the preparation of our space. I lost almost a day by painting the floor and as our space was a total mess after the BA’s left, it was a lot of work to do before we had the chance to use the space for our installations. I do not really understand why we, as MA students – which normally means the most experienced and advanced students of an Art School – are not allowed to use the really great spaces for example in the St. Georges building, all MA students together and not distributed all over the place. Although Shaun organised a lot for us, it was still very annoying for me to take care about my own space so much. Of course, as I had a rather difficult installation, it was okay to participate in this process of building the space, but as I said before I lost lots of time by just waiting for equipment and doing work that I just did not expect. I think the main problem in this case was, that nobody told us about that before so I did not plan any time for these tasks.

I am probably wrong, but I had the feeling that I had less time for realising this final project which could be a reason why the MSN1-project for example is quite more elaborated, at least the backup work and conglomeration of the whole process of production. At this point, I have to say that I am very disappointed and in a way annoyed about the behaviour of the Art School and their organisation of full-time courses in general. If this school offers a full-time course, calling it a possibility to study in an “open and stimulating environment” for a year, it is not understandable why they reduce the opening times of all the facilities after the BA students are leaving the school for summer holidays. It is out of questions that people should have the possibility to go on holidays, to have a break. And that there is lots of maintainance work to do for the next courses, is for sure. But if all the stuff is busy and are just available for a very short time within the week, I am doubting the idea of a full-time, one year course. The library, the centre of research, equipped with a great selection of books and magazines, is only open for two days in a week for the MA students. That is pathetic.

To be honest: The last quarter of this course, the most important time for us, was the worst time for me (and lots of other MA students) being at the Art School. I would not say that these circumstances have influenced my project in a negative way. It was just more complicated and unnecessarily difficult to find solutions for some of the problems.

I was really enjoying this Digital Arts Course, working together with the whole stuff and with the support of Shaun Camp. I am very thankful for that. By this I can recommend this course and its structure. But from my point of view this Art School in general is not very professional and not at all interested in their student’s needs and in their artwork. Therefore, I am not sure if I can recommend other people to come to the Norwich University College of the Arts.
RESULT

“Not every end is the goal. The end of a melody is not its goal, and yet if a melody has not reached its end, it has not reached its goal. A parable.”

Friedrich Nietzsche

I can say for myself that I have created a work that I really appreciate. The overall image, the animated matrix with all the details is a visually exciting outcome and the spatial solution in general works out quite well so far. Nevertheless, I like this project not only from a creative or aesthetical point of view. As I said before, I was improving and strengthening my existing software skills within this project. In addition to that, by learning the basics of Pure Data, I also get in touch with a new and exciting way of presenting my work.

Based on my career as a student and as a professional graphic- and motion-designer so far, I am used to work to close deadlines. This final MA project had a very tight framework and especially the last week was rather tough. But I guess, this is part of the game. At this point, I am not exactly sure how the final installation will look like. Work is still in progress and I just hope that everything will work out.

In general, I am not quite sure yet how this project will continue and how I will go on. But nevertheless, this work was and still is a great possibility for me to show people my skills, my style and creativity, and of course my awareness of spatial and contextual questions.

So, “not every end is the goal” and therefore this last project is not the end, but another step on my professional career as a designer / artist / ...