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The Form of Identity in Virtual Space.

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Abstract

Within constructed spaces our identities are evident in our interaction with objects, language and practice. The spaces that are understood as „virtual" are additions to an environment we have to locate our bodies within. Objects of technology, an engagement with language or a practice of art utilise our bodies as the zero point for experience of space.

„Virtual space" is constructed through the use of objects we associate with the idea of „virtual space" such as consoles, computers and phones. The critical evaluation of virtual space has battled with the idea of the „disincarnated" experience of content, where the body is not the starting point. Virtual space is populated by objects that have physical form. Much like the impossibility of a person surviving on information alone it has become evident that the idea of a virtual disembodied utopia must come back down to earth.

The discussion of the form of our identity in virtual space has had to redefine what virtual is, and how form can participate in constructing space. The discussion of form has had to contextualise a concrete practice and a beginning point within the body. The ideas and theories of Lakoff and Johnson, Carr, Talbolt, Fei, Dibble, Rendell, Turkle, Barthes, Davies, Sontag, Hockney, and Merleau-Ponty are evidence that there is an embodied point of view and human experience of „virtual" space.

This thesis will use concrete spatial strategies of an artistic and auto-ethnographic practice to show that virtual space and the form of identity are concrete components of everyday environments. *Form* plays pivotal role in deconstructing or constructing space. Through the use of panorama, as an object of technology as well as a strategy, space is constructed using form.

The term avatar used to discuss the „form" of identity in virtual spaces, and in particular what we currently recognise as „online," software driven, or connective virtual spaces. I have recognised that virtual space as not separate but augmentative and I will discuss how the avatar has been utilised within my practice to define virtual space as augmentative to everyday spaces.

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