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Abstract

Art genres are a way of dividing a homogeneous field. In his vision of dialogism, Mikhail Bakhtin segments the entire world into speech genres, including ideas, texts and things that are part of cultural practices. In its high degree of abstraction, this most general idea of genre serves the purpose of Bakhtin's programme: to recognise and preserve human ideas. More concretely, genres are tied to the tradition of literature and art or, in the narrower field under consideration, to the practice of new media art. In these cases, they are used to construct and understand artefacts. The discussion consists of three parts. In the first, man's cognitive attitude towards the world is presented as openness to sensory impressions and as the use of deductive logical reasoning, which is compared to the functioning of the computer. In the second part, genres are presented to introduce order into playful creativity (Scott Rettberg, Lev Manovich, Espen Aarseth). Genres are heuristic tools that enable relative stability in our functioning and coordination in different contexts. The concluding third part is dedicated to the research of digital cultural heritage, which is currently in danger of disappearing due to the rapid development of information technologies and changes in platforms and standards. The paper argues for preserving the memory of the information revolution in fixed objects, which must still capture at least a certain part of the original message conveyed through their reception in museum preservation and presentation. Thus, collections are understood as a process that uses an archive of objects to reconsider and reconstruct the contemporary moment.

Keywords: born-digital cultural heritage, art genres, new media art, modelling, Vuk Ćosić

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Genre Rules as a Framework for the Study and Sustainable Preservation of New Media Art

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Summary

Humanity faces an important task: preserving the steps we have taken and are still taking as part of the information revolution. Ubiquitous computing, telecommunications and computer-based automation reaching as far as cognitive-like agency in generative artificial intelligence are changing how we understand and manipulate our reality. Experimental engagements with new communication technologies found in new media art provide early insights and eloquent arguments about the human transition into the digitised reality populated with information.

The paper consists of three parts. First, the human relationship with the world is epistemologically considered as openness to sensorial input and the use of deductive logical reasoning. The sensory experience can be considered in a Humean empiricist manner. Only sensorial inputs exist (that become ideas as copies). There is no causality or unifying order in reality; as much as we can hope for are associations of empirical perceptions (i.e., mental contents). However, the self-reflective attitude of the phenomenology of Husserl and others explicitly acknowledges the relational nature of the mind's contents and attempts to preserve the otherness of the target of our intention.

On the other hand, humans can project and predict the consequences of any given functional constellation and calculate causation mechanically, e.g., by using computer-based artificial intelligence (in the technical sense of the term). In computer engineering, the logical implication is the relation between implementation and specification, the realised end-product and the initial requirements that set limits to the design process. Multiple implementations satisfy the requirements of a given specification since, in logic, the implication "if something, then something else" is irreversible. John Searle has emphasised that there is a crucial discontinuity between human understanding and logical deduction in a computer. Willard Van Orman Quine understands a human as a natural transformer of a meagre input from senses into a

torrential output of descriptions into various languages founded in communities of speakers. The rule-governed idea of games as playful alternative and separate worlds, simulations which are sometimes supported by computers, reminds us of the idea of play in a reduced state as construed by Johan Huizinga. This concept may provide important insight regarding algorithms in the contemporary world.

In the second part, playful creativity is shown to be framed by genres and heuristic discursive tools that allow for relative stability in our dynamic interaction with different contexts. We face the world through constraints and affordances based on chosen sets of practical rules. Johan Huizinga and Roger Caillois speak about a reduced conception of play: although playing games can be primordial, it is sometimes just a process detached from the immediate contexts providing the logico-mathematical or computational kind of information. The remediation of Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin is the case in which later media borrow from the earlier ones. Scott Rettberg's attempt at mapping the domain in his monograph *Electronic Literature* (2019) lists five core genres: combinatory poetics, hypertext fiction, interactive fiction and other game-like forms, kinetic and interactive poetry, and network writing. Bolter and Grusin's account, as well as Rettberg's, emphasises continuities with previous media and art forms. In *Software Takes Command* (2013), Lev Manovich rejects such continuity by arguing that the computer is a meta-medium; what one produces with it are simulations. The universal Turing machine, therefore, becomes a universal media machine. In his 2001 monograph, *The Language of New Media*, Manovich considered the five principles of new media objects and explained the new media object as a set of interfaces to access a multimedia archive. Espen Aarseth's approach in *Cybertext* (1997) considers three possibilities: the single-user cybertext, which is a double creation of a hybrid mix of text and game; the multi-user discourse, where multiple users coordinate their contributions to the joint verbal – or artistic – output by following netiquette, an etiquette, rules of behaviour for a new digital community. The results of creativity in the multi-user genre category are the positions of the subject within a digital community around a platform. Aarseth's third option is to consider the elusive notion of genuine machine-based creativity.

The article's conclusion emphasises the pressing issue of preserving the digital cultural heritage. The ephemeral digital cultural artefacts and their algorithmic nature can be preserved by modelling them according to their genre-based features. Here, we look more closely at the third type of born-digital work, according to Aarseth.

For the exhibition for the 200th-anniversary of the Slovenian national poet France Prešeren (1800–1849), well-known net.artist Vuk Ćosić realised the commissioned work *Nation – Culture* (2000), based on the now-obsolete Yahoo-type web portal, *Mat'Kurja*. In 2022, the project was reconstructed and presented at the Museum of

Contemporary Art Metelkova (MSUM) in Ljubljana. As in the case of software design specifications, to model an artwork, one has to define the necessary properties of the reconstructed version for it to emulate a similar (or the same) artistic idea. From this, the insight follows that the end result will be one possible implementation. The *Mat'Kurja* web directory in the Slovenian language used by many in Slovenia in 2000 is now gone. After twenty-two years, the project was reconstructed by experimenting with machine learning algorithms while trying to preserve the same idea in new circumstances. The tweets in the Slovenian language were used as training sets for the GPT-2 large language model (with other datasets, in particular, digitised Slovenian poetry used to fine-tune the model to be able to generate sonnets). The critical “nation minus culture” element in 2022 was most prominent in the use of hate speech in tweets by Slovenian right-wing politicians. Another key concern for Vuk Ćosić was the significance of the latest computer- and network-based technologies for the culture in the widest sense, their social and political aspects. In 2000, the project *Nation – Culture* already entailed Slovenia’s most advanced web technologies. Not in the sense of innovative and advanced algorithms but because Ćosić (mis)used the key portal to the World Wide Web in the Slovenian language by sourcing search-stream data. In 2022, a similar techno-transgression and a deep social dilemma was the capacity of computers to output human-like language, e.g., as in the case of the widely discussed and used ChatGPT. In 2022, Ćosić worked with computer engineer Marko Plahuta to train a large language model on Slovenian tweets – the most advanced model at the time. Therefore, alongside the critical message regarding the communication media, an intense interest in the details of information-technology development is an essential component of the *Nation – Culture* project.

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