

EKPHRASIS

KEYWORDS

new media art, screen, skin, scar, taboo

projection

DOI:

1 A MIXED MEDIA VIDEO INSTALLATION

Video documentation of Ekphrasis can be found at <https://vimeo.com/207632081/>

Password: scar2017

*IMPORTANT NOTE: the video documentation is **not** anonymized. Please refer to the images at the end of this paper for anonymous stills.*

This paper presents the piece *Ekphrasis* (elastic screen, servomotor, string, metallic frame, Arduino microcontroller, custom software, projector). *Ekphrasis* is a video installation consisting of close-up of videos of a heavily scarred body projected onto an elastic screen. The screen has one string attached to its centre, which in turn is attached to a servomotor. The motor pulls the screen in a controlled random pattern, stretching it and letting go, sometimes carefully, sometimes violently.

The piece proposes a reflection on the representation of body, from the representation itself.

Death can be thought of as the ultimate postmodern taboo. We live lives constantly sparkled, seasoned by fantasies of immortality, yet systematically determined by the assumption of mortality. In this context, the body unfolds in a contradictory fetishism: the idolization of the perfect body coexists with the stigmatization of the imperfect one. And the most imperfect body is the scarred one, a body that is marked, representing a life not lived properly.

The installation aims at escaping this dichotomy. A heavily scarred body is shown, not as a reminder of mortality, but only as a body: the body as a metaphor of the body itself. The most human body is the non-human body, technologically mediated perception as objectification.

Together with remediation, new media art has systematically attempted to achieve immediacy by ignoring or denying both the presence of the medium and the act of mediation.

In *Ekphrasis*, however, the medium and its remediation are made explicit by the seemingly external manipulation of its physicality. Yet, it is the installation itself that deforms the projection screen. Instead of a remediation, the piece proposes an ontological side-step where the acknowledgement of the medium becomes a relevant part of the piece.

The piece exists in the dialogue between representation, object, and time. A body with scars that communicates its past represented in a deformable screen that reflects on its own role sustaining the representation.

In the same sense, a body with scars presents itself in a dual time. Scars always talk about their origin. However, in Baudrillard terms, the Accident becomes "a strategic reorganization of life beyond the perspective of death". The non-fatality of the Accident allows the body (us) to under into a relationship with death.

In *Ekphrasis*, the projection screen also is the skin of the installation, and the mechanic stretching re-enacts the external action of the Accident. The Accident becomes performance, becomes a commentary of itself.

This commentary is aesthetically relevant. The screen stretches and it does resemble pain. It is let loose and it reverberates. The re-enactment is reversible, a reversible process commenting on an irreversible one. The Accident is an aesthetic subject that mortally wounds the taboo. In Deleuze words "not at all for ideological reasons but because the literary machine alone is determined to fill the conditions of a collective enunciation that is lacking elsewhere."

2 IMAGES OF *EKPHRASIS*



