

Collaborative Art Workshop in Virtual Environment

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Abstract. The proposed workshop will bring together VR artists in a collaborative workshop in visual arts, taking place exclusively in virtual environments. It will investigate the potential of the virtual tools in collaboration in a creative exercise with a non-firmly structured goal and the prospects of such platforms employing art in learning processes in public set-ups.

Keywords: Virtual Reality, Virtual Environment, Artmaking, Creativity, Visual Arts, Network.

1 Introduction

The past two years have acted as a catalyst for the usage of digital and VR platforms, thus showing the way towards an everyday life where we work, collaborate, communicate, and create independently if we all are in the same room or not. Although we have used such tools for years, we are at a stage where we use them unprecedentedly [1]. Simultaneously, as a virtual parallel world, Metaverse old has already been offering “space” for the development of art, exhibitions, education, collaboration, and the creation of whole worlds [2].

In such a time when our life has become more virtual-only recently, Meta was announced, introducing Metaverse to a broader audience, hoping to become as popular as Facebook – Art will keep up by maintaining its role of putting questions and challenging our culture and society. However, when we mean Art, we mean the finished outcome, which we will experience in some form of an exhibition. We tend to leave out the research behind it, one which expands in time, effort and experience and includes purposeful and purposeless creativity.

As the usage of digital tools increases, the artmaking process is inevitably incorporating faster, more “non- traditional” media. Therefore, it becomes imperative for the artists to come out of their lonely art studios and collaborate closely with technicians or other artists who may have higher expertise. O, of course, the collaborative process could and can take place in physical space; however, since 2020 and the explosion of the

usage of online platforms, the collaboration has expanded more and more in the digital realm.

Therefore, one question arises: how does creative collaboration work in a virtual environment. How efficient could this environment be for the process, the offered tools, and the final outcome? In physical space, the directness between parties facilitates the process. However, although the virtual platforms are being updated, it seems that there is still a slight learning curve for their users, one which may detain the communication, at least at the beginning of the procedure.

2 Purpose and Objectives

The proposed workshop is part of a PhD research on the process of artmaking in VR regarding the usage of existing platforms and their effectiveness for the creative process in visual arts.

2.1 Objectives

1. Offer a definition of creativity in relation to the artmaking process in VR in comparison to analogue media
2. Initiate the creation of an interest group bringing together artists and computer scientists to discuss the gaps that need to be bridged to provide VR platforms with the required support port for the creative process
3. Investigate the procedure of collaboration in a VR environment when the purpose is a creative exercise without a structured goal
4. Give the opportunity to the artists to present their work to a broad audience with expertise in XR media and thus open a discussion on Art and XR
5. Trial the potentials of collaboration and exchange of ideas in the art process in a virtual environment, and research the further potential for learning through art, either in a general context or specifically in art.

2.2 Process

It will bring together VR artists from the Zabłudowicz Collection and the Pangaea Sculptors' Centre, based in London, UK and the researchers at the XRLab of the University of Westminster.

The proposed workshop for the iLRN will be the last stage of a three-staged empirical study.

- Stage 1 – it will investigate the platforms used by the artists in their creative process, as well as their preferred procedure or combination of

platforms and other media. It will initiate the first group discussion on creativity and artmaking in VR

- Stage 2 – it will explore creativity in VR through individual exercises in two aspects:
 - (a) creating in a desktop platform where there is a margin of familiarisation with the tool (Unity & ProBuilder)
 - (b) creating in a VR platform which offers an embodiment closer to the movement of the natural body (Open Brush)
- Stage 3 – this is the proposed workshop for the iLRN. It will inspect the aspects of collaboration within a creative exercise in a virtual environment.

In particular:

- All participating artists will be logged in the iLRN virtual campus
- All collaborative processes will take place in the iLRN virtual campus
- The Workshop will take place in the *Innovation Gardens*, where the presentation of the exercise will be presented in the main room, as well as the outcomes from Stage 1 and Stage 2.
- The participating artists will be divided into groups of 3-to 4 and will be invited to work together to create a narrative of virtual environments, as they will be imported into FrameVR.io. They will have a room to themselves in the *Innovation Gardens*, as well as a *Mural* workspace created for the purpose
- Each artist will have a scene loaded in FrameVR.io, which will have a built-in Stage 2 Workshop. Each group will aim to create a narrative between their scenes and add more elements, such as videos, images etc.,
- Each constructed narrative of scenes of environments will be accessible to the public of the virtual campus.

3 Context and Theoretical Framework

As mentioned in the previous section, the proposed activities are a part of a more comprehensive study regarding the creative process of visual arts as it would occur in a virtual environment. The workshop output will support and evaluate the methodology and the long-term aims of the research. Having the chance to expand the workshop on the

iLRN campus, the aimed production of the study will fall at the core of the conference's mission on the expansion of the learning and immersive technologies. In particular:

- It offers the opportunity for interdisciplinary collaboration between the audience of the iLRN and the participating artists for future creative and educative projects.
- It aims to collect initial data for creativity in virtual environments, thus, supporting the research on the assemblage of the artmaking VR toolkit. This toolkit could allow artists who work remotely or in groups not easily accessed to create art, collaborate, and communicate their work to a broader audience.
- It aims to create an Art and VR network, enforcing the presence of the values of the artistic method overall and in particular in education or educative public set-ups, thus contributing to the aims of Track 3 of iLRN.
- The workshop's outcomes could support the further broadening of the VR collaboration, communication and learning opportunities within more disciplines in the STEAM community.

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References

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