

The cultural contribution of new media art events: developing 'digital cultural capital' in London

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1 December, 2009

Abstract

This research focuses on the measurement of the cultural contribution of new media art events to London. It develops the concept of 'digital cultural capital' by adapting the concept of 'cultural capital' devised by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu for the digital age. The objective is to give relevance to social and cultural studies, specifically in terms of digital culture and the arts.

In this dissertation, new media art events include art exhibitions and installations, art fairs, festivals, conferences and other public events that provide information, education and entertainment based on art and technology over the last ten years in London.

London is possibly the most multicultural city in the world, with over 300 languages spoken, London is a creative hub of international communities with the 'creative industries', employing over 550,000 people, the equivalent of 12% of all working Londoners (GLA, 2008). London's 'creative industries' contribute massively to the economy, growing almost 7% year on year from 1992 to 2004 (ibid). London's artistic diversity is astonishing, with over 184 museums, but it has not got a single museum fully dedicated to new media, digital, kinetic, or electronic arts.

Studying this area is relevant in adding knowledge to the relationship between art and technology, in order to improve new media arts' management in cultural and arts organisations in London.

The research approach adopted in this dissertation includes the use of 'Grounded Theory Method', with qualitative data collection reflecting the author's participation in the field of research for the last five years.

The findings of this research provide evidence that new media art events contribute to the development of 'digital cultural capital'. This research includes the opinions of eleven key people in the field, from university professors to contemporary art writers, new media art curators, representatives of major art venues in London, media specialists, artists, and events organisers. Using the 'Grounded Theory Method', the choice of interviewees was made according to the immersive experience and network generated through work experiences and volunteering work. The academic informants were chosen because they share the same field of research and have published works that influenced this research. A multiple exploratory case study evaluates the cultural contribution of three new media art events, and a timeline highlights the main new media art events in the last ten years in London.

The main findings drawn from this study are the potential opportunities that the production and promotion of new media art events have to offer to the development of culture in London, including education for the production of quality content and new experiences for audiences.

This dissertation recommends that the concept of 'digital cultural capital' should be further explored in future research that investigates digital culture and the arts from a social perspective. These discussions are essential to the future of the 'creative industries', arts and cultural organisations and art policies in London and the UK as a whole.