

Peruvian Video/Electronic/Art

by José-Carlos Mariátegui, curator

If we may say that the viability of the species depends on, among other things, its variety---that is, in biological terms, on its variability---the same could be said of the recent development of electronic arts in Perú.

This development has been hybrid and diverse. One of the main characteristics of the works done using electronic media in Perú is that they all differ one from the other. There are no trends definable. Possibly its recent "second age" (over the last 5 years) makes it a distinct case in comparison with other Latin American countries such as Brazil, México or Argentina, in which the tradition of media arts has been much longer established.

The significance of electronic art in Perú lies in its allowing a new means of broadening and extending the creative universe, of developing new, distinctly Peruvian ideas and thoughts in opposition to the traditional artistic proposals that had made Peruvian art a useless effort, considering its social context. For the artists selected here, video and electronic arts act as non-traditional media that provide a unique opportunity to express their thoughts and represent their very personal perceptions of reality.

One of those creators who introduced the use of electronic media to Perú was Francesco Mariotti, a Peruvian of Swiss origin. In the last years of the 1960s---a time in which the fascination with technological resources in the arts was just beginning around the world---he began working on innovative projects. Mariotti's use, from the time he began his work, of what is currently described as mediated or interactive art presented a clear understanding of scientific theories in connection with artificial life, cognition, complex system theories and concepts about nature that are nowadays closely related to electronic arts.

After this auspicious beginning, the traces of electronic arts in Perú, beyond some sporadic and isolated interventions, disappeared almost completely for about 2 decades. The harsh situation for creators---the minimal infrastructure for research and production---meant that only a few succeeded, through great professional sacrifices, to raise the needed funds to get access to expensive technical equipment. A pivotal event occurred in 1995 when the Italian artist Gianni Toti came to Perú to present a series of his video artworks. Toti, known as the "father of video poetics and video synthesis," can be described as an organic intellectual who confronts theoretical depth and cultural action in his untiring search for new languages in artistic and scientific creation.

Toti's debate with artists and theoreticians helped to modify the solitude of electronic arts in Perú. In 1998, and taking as a historical reference a video-art show that took place in 1977 (presented by Alfonso Castrillón and Jorge Glusberg), the Second International Video Art Festival took place in Lima. Fortunately, thanks to the help of international organizations as well as post-production and computer facilities, local creations had begun to be produced. Since then, this festival has occurred annually, with a massive response from the public, which demonstrates the great interest that these new manifestations of art and technology can produce. Many of the innovative artistic proposals in Perú in the last 5 years have been realized with or have been associated with the use of new technologies.

While it is still possible to argue that electronic media can be considered elitist in some poor countries, the means for their use has been extended to the vast majority of Peruvians. A key to their further expansion has been the creation of media centers with the technical facilities and know-how to help develop creative ideas.

The intent to document social action by various means is evident in the works

of Roger Atasi, José Carlos Martinat and Iván Lozano di Natale. In these cases, research on a project is presented as part of its process. A great number of the works presented here also confront the creative situation in an expository context or in a traditional artistic setting---for example, the works of Angie Bonino or Iván Esquivel, which tend to be conceptual and critical or even political. On the other hand are digital artists such as Ricardo Velarde, who applies his technical knowledge and aesthetics to develop his atypical 3D animations.

These young artists find in media arts new ways of interpreting local contexts in the search for artistic, creative expression and resistance.

Resistance is always possible; it provides the context of the works being developed in the electronic arts scene in Perú, which engages its resistance through ideas from art and science within the so-called technological/globalized culture. Peruvian creators analyze technology in relation to social changes in a digital evolution toward the development of a more humanizing world.

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