CURATING POST-HUMANITY?
ART IN BETWEEN UTOPIA AND DYSTOPIA

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Cardiff, July 2, 2009

ABSTRACT

The paper will analyze contemporary conceptualizations of the future that are increasingly removed from the optimistic technological approach of the futurists. It will compare the 20th century vision of a technologically based utopian world – that would represent the panacea for the problems of humanity – to a contemporary dystopian vision in which the 'maimed' post-human body would represent a temporary hybrid response to the cataclysmic events of post-humanity in a world in crisis.

The visual representation of the new aestheticized dystopian crises, both in film and fine arts, is one that still concentrates on technology as a suitable response. This is a technological response to crises that, in the contemporary dystopian visions, can ensure only a temporary survival, before collapsing humanity in a crisis worse than the one that technology originally attempted to solve. In the post-postmodern world of contemporary dystopia, technological solutions are presented as ‘delayed failures’ that provoke the final collapse through a technological betrayal of human hopes and ‘essence’.

The dystopian vision sees the new technological hybrid-body as a shell that needs to be constantly curated as a consequence of humanity’s departure from the perfect image bestowed by the creator – “homo est clausura mirabilium dei” (man is the closing point of the marvels of the universe) in Paul Virilio, Virilio Live: Selected Interviews, 21.

The paper will conclude by arguing that the curatorial role in presenting these visions of the human body is not one based on utopia or dystopia, nor based on the perfect existence of an original image of the body to which one should adhere or that should be ‘curated’ of its sinful acquired imperfection. The curatorial role should envisage the post-human body as that of an evolutionary process within which failure in a crisis is but one of many possible outcomes.

KEYWORDS

Post-humanity, cyborg, dystopia, utopia, Futurism, crisis, evolutionary process
BIOGRAPHY

Lanfranco Aceti works as an academic, artist and curator. He is Visiting Professor at Goldsmiths College, department of Art and Computing, London; teaches Contemporary Art and Digital Culture at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Sabanci University, Istanbul; and is Editor in Chief of the Leonardo Electronic Almanac (the MIT Press, Leonardo journal and ISAST). He is the Gallery Director at Kasa Gallery in Istanbul and worked as the Artistic Director and Conference Chair for ISEA2011 Istanbul. He has a Ph.D. from Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, University of the Arts London. His work has been published in Leonardo, Routledge and Art Inquiry and his interdisciplinary research focuses on the intersection between digital arts, visual culture and new media technologies.

Lanfranco Aceti is specialized in contemporary art, inter-semiotic translations between classic media and new media, contemporary digital hybridization processes, Avant-garde film and new media studies and their practice-based applications in the field of fine arts.

He has worked as an Honorary Lecturer at the Department of Computer Science, Virtual Reality Environments at University College London. He has exhibited works at the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) in London and done digital interventions at TATE Modern, The Venice Biennale, MoMA, Neue Nationalgalerie, the ICA and the Irish Museum of Modern Art.

Previously an Honorary Research Fellow at the Slade School of Fine Art, Dr. Aceti has also worked as an AHRC Post-doctoral Research Fellow at Birkbeck College, University of London, School of History of Art, Film & Visual Media and as Visiting Research Fellow at the Victoria and Albert Museum.