Editorial

Themed section of this issue of *Iluminace* has its origin in the "Interface Symposium" held at the Czech National Film Archive in Prague on November 1, 2019. The symposium marked a special occasion, for it commemorated the 30th anniversary of this journal. We built upon the tradition established during the last major (25th) anniversary, which was celebrated by two lectures by David Bordwell, and brought notable film and media scholars to Prague. This time, we decided to organize a symposium around a topic that is both current and firmly established within our field of study, and that also unites theoretical and practical concerns. The notion of interface presented such a transversal theme that it allowed us to invite leading media theorists (Jay David Bolter, Miriam De Rosa, Daniel Strutt) as well as figures from the emerging "artistic research" scene (Chloé Galibert-Laîné, Kevin B. Lee, Metahaven).

In film and media studies, interface is generally understood as a structure that mediates encounters between two or more diverse realities, and that is increasingly responsible for our everyday contact with the outside world in the digital reality. In 1997, Lev Manovich described cinema as a "cultural interface", a basic language that enables computer users to access and interact with digital images, sounds, and texts, and sparked a huge debate that more or less continues to this day. Whereas Manovich's privileging of cinema over other prominent media of the 20th century or his necessarily reductive vision of cinematic language have been criticized over the years, his concept remains a useful tool for analyzing the emerging media forms, from computers through smartphones to virtual reality, which bring with themselves a promise of a new perception of the world yet are still entwined in older means of expression. The presentations delivered at the symposium focused on ways in which the early notions of interface can be actualized or transformed face to face with the current technological development on the one hand and the evolving means of cinematic expression on the other.

Of the six presentations delivered at the symposium, three were developed for publication, each concentrating on a very different aspect of what cinema as an interface is and can be.

The study by Miriam De Rosa can be seen as a contribution to the spatial turn in film studies. De Rosa focuses on the *Spatial City* installation by Milan-based Studio Azzurro, first presented at Expo 2010 in Shanghai, and through it deepens reflections on space-image as a specific viewing experience influenced by the environment. The environment of the *Spatial City*, De Rosa argues, works as a sensitive interface which actively interacts with visitors, their memories and impressions of the city, creating the experience of exchange.

In the second paper, Chloé Galibert-Laîné introduces the notion of "netnographic cinema", an umbrella term that includes contemporary experimental films which document an online community by appropriating and re-editing media produced by members of that community, thereby resonating with the aims of traditional ethnographic cinema. By comparing two netnographic films made from the same online material — Penny Lane's *The Pain of Others* (2018) and a desktop documentary that Galibert-Laîné produced in response to Lane's film, entitled *Watching the Pain of Others* (2019) — the author articulates why such "netnographic" films can be understood as "cultural interfaces", as defined by both Lev Manovich and Indigenous scholar Martin Nakata. On the one hand, she argues that Manovich's theoretical framework offers an original way to approach the netnographic practice, allowing specifically for a problematization of its cultural implications. Symmetrically, she also shows that focusing on these films can enrich our perception of what "cultural interfaces" are and what they do — thus allowing for an expanded understanding of Manovich's theory in light of postcolonial and indigenous studies.

The third article, written by Daniel Strutt, speculates on the cultural and subjective value of Virtual Reality content that focuses on spiritual, religious, or 'mystical-type experiences' (MTEs). Drawing issues of critical theology and media technology together with a consideration of the aesthetics of mystical or metaphysical experiences, the author asks what specific types of VR content might offer an enhanced interface to sensations that approximate mystical or transcendent experience. In reaching an understanding that even an "authentic" mystical experience is essentially virtual and technological, and accepting that all such mystical "interfaces" are best understood as practices of ontological self-reflection, this article finally asks what the usefulness is of this technical form (the VR head-mounted display) at this specific time of social and environmental crisis. Could VR in its increased immersivity, interactivity, and interfacial complexity potentially serve as a better medium for ontological reflexivity — as an enhanced "interface to the infinite" in the words of Laura U. Marks — or does it, by making space, objects, bodies, and information more material and operational, actually foreclose virtuality?

Besides these three original articles, this issue also includes an extensive interview with a keynote speaker, Jay David Bolter. The interview returns to the concept of remediation, which Bolter introduced in 1998 together with Richard Grusin, and tries to look at the changes related to digital culture through it. Through remediation, Bolter explains, for example, the experience of virtual reality — he recalls that references to VR as the "last medium" have repeatedly shown how important the context of other media is for under-

standing the meaning of a given medium. To understand the current saturation of every-day life with digital culture, which he presents in his latest book, *The Digital Plenitude*, Bolter goes back to the period after World War II. He sees this era as the beginning of the disintegration of cultural hierarchies and the birth of new (prod)user communities.

All of these encounters between cinema, interface, and digital reality strive to convey the idea that cinema as a form of vision, expression, and mediation still persists — wheth-er reflected in the ever-emerging forms and techniques of mediation or transformed through specific artistic practices. We hope that this collection not only contributes to the international debate on cinematic and other interfaces permeating our reality but also sparks diverse creative solutions that could help us survive in this reality.

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