
Breaking AndyWall: Transgressive and Playful Exploration on the Dynamic Role of Users in Art and Design

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Abstract

'Breaking AndyWall' is an interactive art installation in which participants can destroy various art pieces that are socially considered as 'great art'. As participants enter the site, they find Andy Warhol's Marilyn Monroe projected on a big painting canvas. Several wooden hammers are on the floor, and by smashing the canvas with the hammer, participants can gradually break down the art piece. When the image eventually becomes completely shattered into pixels, another piece of art will show up on the canvas. Through the same interaction, participants can destroy several famous art pieces in transgressive but playful ways. This project provides an experiential space to contribute to the discussion on the dynamic roles of users in art and design. By invoking an actual experience of destruction and reconfiguration of iconic art pieces, this project challenges the understandings around creativity and design. More information on this work can be found on the website(http://www.laewoo.com/breaking_andywall/).

Author Keywords

Interactive art, Research in Art Practice, TechArtTheory

Laewoo Kang(Leo) is an HCI researcher as well as a multimedia artist. By considering art practice as another mode of thinking, Leo explores diverse topics in art, theory, and HCI in artistic and empirical way. Leo uses multiple and diverse medium that exist in today's world such as technologies, academic/essay writing, painting, and sound. His recent artistic/academic projects are mostly about how contemporary technologies can be interpreted in aesthetic, sociological and philosophical ways. Leo is currently working on the Ph.D program at Information Science, Cornell University. His art/artistic practice can be found on his website:

<http://www.laewoo.com>



Figure 1: Breaking AndyWall, Interactive Art, Leo Kang, 2015

Introduction

Understanding the concept and the role of users has always been a core topic in technology and design studies. This study space becomes more complex when we observe people interacting through interactive media both online and offline. Diverse platforms such as Youtube, Facebook, Arduino with the emergence of DIY culture allow people to actively engage in various roles (producer, collaborator, designer) in design process rather than being passively engaged in media consumption [1]. This phenomenon changes the relationship between a media producer and a user from separated to more inter-dependent, and consequently,

the process of co-construction becomes more observable [2]. Therefore, understanding a user's shifting role [1] as well as extending the meaning of 'participation' [3] in design are underlined in recent Human Computer Interaction areas.

This project joins this academic discussion in an artistic and empirical way. By providing an experiential space where people can destroy and reconfigure famous art pieces that are usually labeled with 'Do not touch' in our society, this project promotes playful and transgressive understanding on the relationship between audience (user) and artwork (technology).

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Selected Solo Exhibitions

2015 <Breaking AndyWall>, Gallery
Planet, Seoul, Korea
2013 <I Want To>, The Olive
Tjaden Gallery, New York, USA
2012 <100 Desires to See the
Sky>, Fine Art Library(Cornell),
New York, USA

Selected Group Exhibitions

2014 <Scale> CHI 2014, Toronto,
Canada(Collaboration with Park. T
and Jackson. S)
2013 <I Want To>, The World
Maker Faire 2013 New York, USA
2010 <Re-New>, Digital Art
Festival, Copenhagen, Denmark
2010 <NIME>, Nime Conference,
Sydney, Australia

When audiences enter the exhibition place, they find one famous artwork, Andy Warhol's Marilyn Monroe, projected on a big painting canvas. Several wooden hammers are on the floor, and by smashing the canvas with the hammer, participants can gradually break down the image. Through the same interaction, participants can destroy diverse iconic art pieces by those who are usually recognized as 'famous artists' in our society including Roy Lichtenstein, Mark Rothko, and Takashi Murakami. Participants in this project are not only the destroyers who tear down the wall between intricate art and the audience, but also the active and independent participants who express, interpret, modify, and reconfigure the art through their own behaviors.

Dynamic Roles of Users in Art and HCI

The intervention of users and spectators into creative works, and their changing relationships with creators have been actively discussed through the history of art and design. In the classic art tradition, the meaning of the art piece was supposed to be read as the artist originally intended. Therefore, its interpretation was usually univocal, and the relationship between art piece and audience was built in a one directional and hierarchical way [4]. This limited relationship was challenged throughout various postmodern art movements including Dada, Fluxus, Avant-Garde, and Behaviourist Art. By encouraging the spectator's active intervention in both interpreting and participating in artworks, these movements understood artwork as a con-construction between creator and spectator where the audiences can project their own interpreted world [5,6]. In recent studies in art, the concept of relational and social aesthetics have been introduced to highlight

interpersonal exchange, social engagement in the process of creating artwork [7].

There also have been similar discussions that explore the relationship between users and designers in technology studies. In the traditional technological determinist and essentialist perspective, a technological artifact has a guaranteed and essential usage set by the creator. However, a series of recent research in Science and Technology Studies maintains that the function of technology is co-constructed with users and other social factors [8,9]. By extending the role of the user to which consumes, domesticates, designs, and reconfigures, these studies advances how users and technologies interact with and frame each other.

In recent HCI work, several design concepts and practices have been introduced to push the boundary of traditional concept of users and designers. In Critical Design and Adversarial Design perspective, a user's role is independent from designer's intention, who can understand and interpret the meaning and purpose of design work in their own ways. The purpose of these design approaches is not to create a functional or profitable artifact, but to critique prevailing social and political notion embodied in design by triggering awareness, revealing assumptions, provoking actions, producing debate, and even entertaining in intellectual, humorous, and aesthetic ways [10,11,12].

Technical Details

This project is comprised of a white canvas, wooden hammers, a computer, a beam projector, and a general computer microphone. We also created a custom-designed software in Processing for projecting the selected images and making them respond to the

volume of the hitting sound. The microphone is attached in the backside of the canvas, and the spectrum of the sound is analyzed by the software in order to filter out unnecessary environmental sound like audience chatting. This filtered sound is mapped to the z-axis of the pixelated images in real time, which ultimately creates responsive breaking images with the sound (Figure 2). Additionally, the color of the image randomly responds to the hitting sound to create the aesthetic and dramatic breakdown.

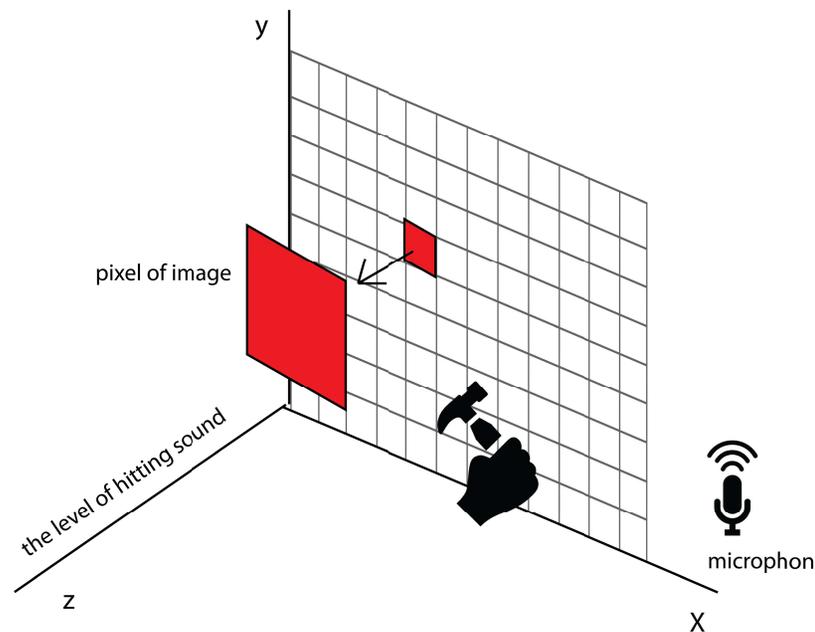


Figure 2: Sound Mapping of Breaking AndyWall.

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