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Activating the Didactic, Self-Reflective Fairytale through Hypermedia As a Model for the Art Education Activist

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Abstract

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The struggle for meaning, reflection, and self-understanding is an important process of human development. Throughout human history didactic art – art wherein the central purpose is to instruct the viewer - has been developed to aid this human function. Focusing primarily on the didactic art of fairytales, however, one can see that the dominant role of reflection and self-understanding is lost in contemporary translation. The role of the viewer/reader of the fairytale, contemporarily, has been switched from one of inner reflection to that of passive absorption. This thesis project will argue that reflection and self-understanding (on the part of the viewer) can best be restored to the fairytale through the use of hypermedia, as well as the artist adopting an art-activist approach to art production.

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Thesis Project Introduction

For any individual, the struggle for meaning, deep reflection, and self-understanding is an integral process of development. Throughout human history didactic art (art that is intended to instruct) has emerged in many different forms to aid this process. In the realm of theatrical arts around 406 B.C.E., didactic art could be seen publicly in the tragic plays of Ancient Greece. The Greek chorus was made up of singing and dancing members that were viewed as one entity; they interacted with the audience, spoke for the general population (the play's public opinion), and offered background and summary information to help the audience follow the performance; this could be clasified as didactic art.

From 1100 to 700 B.C.E., red and black figure Greek vase painting functioned on some level similar to that of didactic art. Despite the commemorative role of the Geometric style vase (for example), it was also used to signify mythology and socially-relevant values; one could view these as possible visual-aids for life, the hereafter and contemplation in relation to myth. Another example of didactic art that existed around the 14th century could be a Buddhist tapestry that was created for the Yuan court in Tibet. Religious in nature, the tapestry depicts the principles of moderation through the images of the pig, rooster and snake. Their significance - antecedents against the excess of stupidity, lust, and hatred - is primarily to provide a perspective of moderation achieved through a meditative state (transcendental patterns and imagery to be passively internalized by the viewer). More obvious forms of didactic art are seen in literature. Also in the 14th century *The Canterbury Tales*, written by Geoffrey Chaucer, developed themes of courtly love, treachery and avarice. The characters introduced in the *General Prologue* of the book tell tales of cultural relevance and circumstance; this is a more direct form of didactic art which employs humor and satire.

In 1812, the Brothers Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm, also known as the Brothers Grimm, published a collection of German farytales entitled *Kinder-und usmärchen* ("Children's and Household Tales"). These fairytales are also forms of didactic art, incorporating a component of text and illustration, that were inteded to be read to children at bed-time. These fairytales presented life-problems in a simplified form for the developing individual (or child). More recent examples of didactic art that were based on

older forms of didactic art have been created: Salvador Dali's and Robert Rauschenberg's depictions of the cantos within *The Divine Comedy* (Dante Alighieri, 1307 to 1321 C.E.). Through a contemporary and more visual translation of Dante's sin-caste system, Dali (in 1960 C.E.) and Rauschenberg (for eighteen months between 1959 and 1960 C.E.) provide two levels of didactic art that co-exist simultaneously (the original and the contemporary translation).

Between 1960 and 1970 C.E., United States artists of the Fluxus movement were creating viewer-powered art called "Event Scores" and "Fluxkits". These were intended to be pre-made, which was either contained in a box or written on a script or cards, and the 'art' process occurred when the viewer enacted the Event Scores or explored the Fluxkits. The didactic art (or instructional function) of these were primarily internal, relying on the viewer's inner-reflections based on preset parameters; these forms of didactic art are great examples of instruction applied internally to the viewer. A final example of didactic art can be seen in the public works created by Tim Rollins and KOS (Kids of Survival (created in 1982 C.E.). Rollins and KOS are publicly known as an art activist group operating primarily in New York. As art activists, Rollins and KOS identify immediate social problems and concerns, and develop awareness of that problem/concern through public exhibition, performance and installation. Being largely successful, Rollins has taken the KOS method to various public school systems, working with art students to use the KOS technique to raise awareness for their local concerns. Even though Tim Rollins and his collaborators (high school students from the South Bronx, NY) typically make works based on classic literature, it is his methodology of instruction that he employs that classifies their work as didactic art. The art making process is achieved after group reflection occurs between Rollins and his students (on a specific socially-relevant concern), and the work is intended to reach to the past (classic literature) to provide contemporary awareness of social issues.

However, the dominant role of didactic art in contemporary society has shifted to that of media-savvy entertainment and mindless preoccupation, rather than its intended role of instruction. The role of didactic art has not been one of entertainment, but more so a form of self-actualization for the individual. For example, fairytales (a common example of didactic art) confront the individual squarely with basic human predicaments,

and speak to the individual's inner pressures in a way that is generally accessible. When an individual interacts with a fairytale, it addresses the deep inner conflicts originating in our primitive drives, and extreme emotions in early childhood. The fairytale potentially offers experiences, which could be shaped into solutions, in such a way that the viewer can internalize them.

All of the previously mentioned forms of didactic art, despite the medium in which it exists, are intended to provide parameters in which self-actualization, learning, and behavior consideration can occur; a fairytale is good example of didactic art that provides these parameters. However, through the contemporary media/entertainment role of the fairytale, the original significance of inner-reflection/analysis is lost. The best example of this contemporary loss of self-relevant content can be seen in the *Three Little Pigs* fairytale. Published versions of the story date back to the late 18th century, but the story is thought to be much older. The didactic quality of the *Three Little Pigs* lies within the pigs' evolution of concerns throughout the story; even though the first and second pigs die in the original story, it is not attributed to laziness. But, rather, to the pig's inaction in their own evolution. Despite the original didactic quality of the fairytale, the story was assured its place in world's folklore thanks to an immensely popular, 1933 C.E. Walt Disney animated cartoon. In the Walt Disney version, the pigs all survive despite their laziness and inaction, and depend more on the oldest pig to take care of them. Also, the second half of the story where the wolf attempts to trick the oldest pig has completey been removed from the Disney version, and is replaced with the popular *Silly Symphonies* musical number "*Who's afraid of the big bad wolf;"* the wolf has also lost his symbolism in exchange for trite, and predictable villanous behavior, coupled with a humorous demise.

The prevalent belief that individuals must be diverted from what troubles them, the emphasis placed on the narrative only, and the predominance of entertainment (musical soundtracks, animation, stylized appearances) in the fairytale acts as a catalyst that removes the individual's inner reflections (quintessentially, their entire role), as well as their existential relevance as an active viewer/thinker.

A 'problem' is thus created when the unconscious didactic qualities of a former didactic art object have been edited-out, replaced, or otherwise lost to media. This thesis

project could potentially address the previously mentioned problem by serving as a model for what I call the 'art education activist'. The 'art education activist' is an art educator who creates art to address their perceivable academic and social concerns, which in turn becomes didactic art. The 'art education activist' also encourages individuals to take the central position in enlightening themselves and their own community.

When looking at the applications of new media within the field of art education - specifically focusing on hypermedia as a fine art medium to be taught, utilized, critiqued, and studied – the medium itself has the potential to create a multi-dimensional biome where anyone can be the artist/viewer (and consciously contemplate themselves as a subject). Hypermedia has the potential to establish a psychological relationship between work and viewer, where the viewer is more a co-author upon an unfixed and open work, through interactivity. When considering the didactic potential of hypermedia, there are two main factors that inhibit this medium from being internalized by the viewer, as well as creating a more substantial communication between the viewer and the work itself.

One factor is the inherent problem of media itself contained within a predominantly entertainment environment, which promotes a media-induced stupor as a substitute for experience. This media, and the media jurisdiction, is concerned with the principles of controlling 'what we don't see' as opposed to controlling 'what we do see'; individuals are provided with what they need not to be exposed to, as opposed to exposing individuals to what they should be watching (experiential, reflective, didactic media). If media were presented in a way that would engage the viewer - for example media that potentially offers experiences through coauthoring or interaction – than the viewer's mind would be engaged with more reflection, internalization, and ultimately development would be derived from the media. As most media exists contemporarily, it functions on the level of passive viewing for the viewer rather than active viewing.

The second factor is one of unfamiliarity on the part of the art educator with hypermedia, as well as the common 'miseducation' of hypermedia when classified/instructed as an applied art (as opposed to a fine art medium). Within these confines, the art educator becomes a simultaneous irreparable and contributing problem where the role of the teacher, in respects to hypermedia, is simply to teach the software skills as an entertainment/applied art medium.

Project Conceptual Framework

> The arts have the potential to address the problem of seeking clarity and authenticity amongst the hopelessly confusing, complacent repetition of truths. Encounters with the arts also motivate the viewer to restore some kind of order, to repair, and to heal."[1]

It is my intent to establish that a use and understanding of hypermedia, on the part of the art educator, can potentially be the resolution to the problem of lost, self-reflective content in didactic art (specifically fairytales). The contemporary forms of most fairytales have a preoccupancy with audio and kinetic entertainment, and bombard the viewer with images. This doesn't promote any didactic response on the part of the viewer, but more so "has the effect of freezing imagination,"[2] rather than engaging imagination. To fix this 'problem' is to re-activate a work that has been literally stripped of its reflective, didactic qualities by engaging the viewer in experiences which promote self-development; thus, the role of the artist and educator combine, promoting an educational understanding in viewer interpretation/awareness.

Within the parameters of the project I'm referring to the work of Maxine Greene, a professor of philosophy and education at Columbia University and 'philosopher-in-residence' at Lincoln Center Institute for the Arts in Education. Greene's work speaks about the importance of an educational understanding, on the part of the viewer, to fully appreciate an artwork; she refers to this as 'knowing to notice'. Greene states that, "an artwork becomes clearer when the viewer knows something about the structure of the work… we recognize the work in its concreteness."[3] Greene champions the interaction between the viewer and the art object as an ideal way to view art, and to use art. Maxine Greene also promotes ideas that I'm using in the thesis project that speak to the

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[1] Maxine Green, *Variations on a Blue Guitar: The Lincoln Center Institute Lectures on Aesthetic Education*, (PA, Teachers College Pr, 2001), 240.

[2] Simon Biggs, "Speaking With the Other", *Osnabruk Germany, European Media and Art Festival Catalog*, (January, 1994): <http://www.littlepig.org.uk/>

[3] Maxine Greene, *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change*, (CA, Josey-Bass Inc., 1995/2000), 209.

restorative power of art. In order to restore a piece of art's didactic content, an older piece of didactic art must be repaired; Greene refers to this as "revitalizing petrified art."

In addition to Maxine Greene, I will also be referring to the work of Bruno Bettelheim, who headed the orthogenic school at the University of Chicago. Bettelheim is internationally credited for his important work in children's literature analysis, as well as developmental consciousness theory. More specifically I'm using his work that concerns the developmental subject matter of popular fairytales, and the lack of this content inherent in contemporary fairytales. To revitalize a former work of didactic art that has been stripped of its self-reflective content, Bettelheim's work is essential, as it remarks to the alteration/censorship of the original fairytale. In addition to this, Bettelheim has specific essays concerning how the unlearned child views itself. His books and essays, which are concerned with the validity of the fairytale as a comprehension tool, provide a legend for individual development (that is derived from the fairytale's aesthetic-symbolism).

I will also be relying on the works of Simon Biggs, a professor of interactive digital media at Sheffield Hallam University (England). Biggs internationally web-publishes essays that pertain to hypermedia theory, and hypermedia art production. In order to recreate a form of didactic art I'm utilizing Biggs' theories on 'hypermedia as multi-dimensional biome'. Biggs champions the idea that "anyone can be the artist/viewer when using hypermedia," and that it promotes "secondary authoring by the viewer through interactivity."[4] Determining the medium, and the medium's philosophy, is paramount to Biggs as it pertains to hypermedia design: this is also necessary to the thesis project.

Finally, the work of Hans Gadamer, an important contributor to the field of hermeneutics (interpretation theory), is also necessary for the thesis project. Through his major work *Wahrheit und Methode* (*Truth and Method*), Gadamer champions interaction between the viewer and work of art calling it "participating in the play of artwork."[5]

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[4] Simon Biggs, "Speaking With the Other," *Osnabruk Germany, European Media and Art Festival Catalog*, (January, 1994): <http://www.littlepig.org.uk/>

[5] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (G. Marshall Donald, and Joel Weinsheimer London: Sheed & Ward), 2001.

Also, Gadamer's work in the field of hermeneutics provides a basis for self-actualization through experience; this is important in the development of the thesis project model, as well as to the medium's philosophy of allowing the viewer to consciously contemplate themselves as a subject. Due to the thesis project's necessity for a psychological relationship between the work and viewer - which Greene, Gadamer and Biggs all promote – all of the major theorists I'm working from suggest that internalized thought (or co-authoring) can best be achieved through interactivity.

Thesis Project Solution Approach

It was my intent to produce a hypermedia installation that would provide an educational understanding of the fairytale. In doing this I had to set forth parameters for the viewer so that they would realize that the self-actualizing content of the fairytale was lost. Also, it was important for the viewer to arrive at the understanding that the fairytale, with which they had been previously familiar, was really an altered version; it was easy for the viewer to get caught on the aesthetic attributes of the fairytale (rather than self-actualizing attributes). In addition, the hypermedia installation would be contained within the confines of a thesis web site, which would also accompany my written component, research, and supportive information/links.

For the project proposal, I created a smaller model of the hypermedia installation that would focus specifically on the revitalization of *The Three Little Pigs.* In the creation of the thesis proposal model, I attempted to revitalize an older form of didactic art along the lines of Maxine Greene's theories of 'revitalizing petrified art'. In doing this, I utilized the imagery of an aged map to promote viewer interaction/exploration. The proposal model itself was constructed with an emphasis placed on interaction and co-authorship (principles of Simon Biggs and Hans Gadamer). Within the format of the map, there are islands which acted as points of departure from the narrative, aesthetic-symbolism of the altered, 'unlearned' fairytale (identified by Bettelheim). From these points of departure, the interrelationships of islands (or symbols) are explored;

interpretation was intended to be achieved through viewer interaction with these devices (Gadamer, Greene).

The viewer, through the interaction and development of the work itself, would be placed in a position of consciously contemplating themselves in respects to the story (theory as proposed by Simon Biggs). Even though the original narrative 'route' of the fairytale was present, the option to engage in free exploration could occur at anytime (the narrative and non-narrative merge). It is in the exploration between the islands where I hoped to revitalize the unconscious didactic qualities that have been unlearned, altered, or lost in the viewer's submersion in the isolated narratives.

To revitalize a 'petrified' form of didactic art, I had to present information that not only persuaded the art educator to learn these mediums (as well as appreciate them for their true didactic/reflective potential), but also I had to create a model that validated hypermedia to the educator. I had to create an environment where the viewer could consciously contemplate themselves as a subject, and one that was conducive for a psychological relationship between work and viewer to be established.

The main areas of research included investigating hypermedia as an interdisciplinary medium, which allowed for co-authorship and experience-based interaction. I also had to find an example of didactic art (contemporary or popular) that has been lost to contemporary entertainment media (and one that was larger than the *Three Little Pigs*). In addition, research to support the validity of 'experience through interactivity' and an 'educational understanding' versus passive absorption had to be completed. This project would entail the role of the art educator changing to that of an art activist (by the recognition of a problem and formulation of a solution), so I had to construct a working timeline to compare/contrast the fields of art education to the innovations/mainstreaming of digital media; I also had to construct a survey that cataloged the recent influences (artists, exhibitions, institutions, software) in hypermedia.

Introduction to www.didartic.com

I reserved the domain name http://www.didartic.com to launch an ongoing web project that began as my Art Education thesis project. The word "didartic" is a pseudonym that I created that represented the fusion of hypermedia art with didactic content. In addition the hypermedia project (as of the end of the 2004-2005 academic year was the first project on the site) I also devoted the entire content, hypermedia linkage, virtual gallery, and reference material to the subject of Didartic (not just Internet art or conceptual illustration [by which didactic art has commonly been known]). I hoped that www.didartic.com would eventually become a web center, which would be available to myself (and others) to update regularly. Some of the content that possibly would be included in the final website is a documentary on the progress through this project, and possibly a virtual gallery for web exhibition.

Selected Fairytales

The fairytales that I have selected for the final thesis project are ones that are popularly known, but are simultaneously unknown from their original didactic format. In their contemporary translation, these specific fairytales primarily promoted entertainment through completely altered stories, which took away their self-reflective qualities; I refer to these fairytales as 'unlearned'. In addition, the fairytales that I have selected for the thesis project are ones that are most pertinent to the rural United States; I felt that these specific fairytales are quintessentially unlearned (and were a current social concern), and like the classic literature that Tim Rollins and KOS utilize, they must function primarily as points of departure (to raise public awareness). The social concern that I have identified is primarily one of the rural public being incapacitated by their anxieties, seeking pleasure instead of personal safety, choosing ineptitude over self-assertion, and the inability to achieve a basic level of certitude (and comfortable living); I often saw that within my immediate environment and culture, happiness and certitude was dependant on external people, factors or possessions.

These problems needed to be addressed; our media dominated country far too often paints an incorrect picture concerning what is happiness, stability in life, self-dependence and even sexual proclivity. Since these were my social concerns, I chose fairytales that spoke to these specific, unlearned issues; *Jack and the Beanstalk, Little Red Riding Hood,* and *Hansel and Gretel* are my sources of didactic art to be revitalized. These three fairytales had (and still have) immense cultural familiarity to the rural United States, as well as being conceptually and aesthetically related to each other; each of theses three fairytales presented scenarios that required the individual to become mature by a means of a self-powered, step-by-step progression.

In the original and unlearned context, for *Jack and the Beanstalk*, Jack really became self-assertive, self-dependent, and abandoned childish reliance. Red Riding Hood, in her tale, realized the mistakes of her pleasure seeking and a lack of self-control, and faced the consequences that occur when the responsible is forgotten. Likewise, Hansel and Gretel's certitude and happiness are dependent on factors outside of themselves, and when those factors are not provided to them, their anxiety in turn disabled them from action; they survived their circumstances when they modified their behavior into pragmatic behavior.

I decided to present these fairytales as one large fairytale; I combined all three. I chose to do this due to the size and scope of the proposal model, but also to be able to reiterate the step-like progression from one level of maturity to another. The following is an outline that dissects the chosen fairytales into what Bruno Bettelheim considered as their basic characteristics (exp. attributes of the hero/villain, symbolism). Also, the following outline will propose what needs too occur for the viewer to re-learn the fairytale:

I. The Bettelheim Fairytale: Hansel and Gretel

A. Characteristics of the Fairytale

1. Briefly Stated Existential Dilemma: *Relinquishing Codependence*

Fairytale where heroes struggle with dominate anxieties - in what they perceive to be impoverished and depraved environments - which are caused by the removal of their eternally-dependant

gratification. Through their own regression and denial, the heroes place themselves into progressively worse scenarios until their unrestrained-greed and dependence are no longer a viable course of action. The heroes must now abandon ego-centricism and subscribe to goal-directed behavior, based on intelligent assessment, to free them of their circumstances.

2. The Evildoer is Punished: *The Embodiment & Polarity of Evil*

In Hansel & Gretel, the Witch and the Mother are simultaneously symbols of evil that are present in the fairytale. Both threaten the children's gratification, as well as test the hero's self-abilities; however, the Witch is the greater of the two representing more threatening peril – the hero's consumption due to their inaction. The Witch is a mortal embodiment/perversion of the extremity of the hero's vice. Whereas the hero's provided-gratification comes from their mother/food, the Witch's gratification comes from the eating of children.

3. The Virtuous Win: *The Embodiment & Polarity of Goodness*

The heroes are characterized by ego-centricism and an over-dependence on their parents/food to the point of exhausting their resources for living. The heroes' virtue is developed when they have to survive the circumstances they have created by depending on themselves, not others.

B. What do I need the viewer to understand/experience?

Self-disabling codependence on others for gratification needs to be replaced with the understanding that dependence on one-self is not only necessary in life, but intelligent action versus childish inaction.

II. The Bettelheim Fairytale: Jack and the Beanstalk or Jack and His Bargains

A. Characteristics of the Fairytale

1. Briefly Stated Existential Dilemma: *Gaining Independence*

Fairytale where hero struggles to achieve maturity - while the story cautions through circumstances, restrictions and rewards against the

destructive consequences if one fails to develop higher levels of responsible selfhood - by being forced to abandon childhood precepts for adult self-assertion. This is achieved through the hero's relinquishing reliance on others for what the self can and should do, exhibiting initiative towards conflict, and willingness to take risks to better circumstances.

2. The Evildoer is Punished: *The Embodiment and Polarity of Evil*

The Ogre is a mortal embodiment/perversion of the extremity of the hero's vice. The Ogre acts as a punishing figure for the immature and stupid things that Jack does, threatening him with consumption for his trespassing and thievery. The Ogre more so represents the eventuality of Jack if he continues to depend on magic, not himself.

3. The Virtuous Win: *The Embodiment and Polarity of Goodness*

Only when Jack takes the axe and realistically deals with the 'life problem,' by relinquishing reliance on childish precepts, does his virtue appear and the Ogre is thwarted.

B. What do I need the viewer to understand/experience?

True independence is achieved not only when one abandons childhood precepts by relinquishing reliance on others, but more so exhibiting initiative towards life conflicts, and taking action to better one's circumstances.

III. The Bettelheim Fairytale: Little Red Riding Hood or Little Red Cap

A. Characteristics of the Fairytale

1. Briefly Stated Existential Dilemma: *Self-Preservation & Control*

Fairytale where the hero struggles to achieve maturity - with the ambivalence between the conscious desires to do the right thing versus unconscious desire for pleasure - through circumstances that require decisions to be made between pleasure-seeking (flowers) and obligation (Grandmother). Hero learns the consequences of her actions too late to alter the circumstances, which she herself has created.

2. The Evildoer is Punished: *The Embodiment and Polarity of Evil*

The Wolf is a mortal embodiment/perversion of the extremity of the hero's vice. The Wolf acts as a seduction figure for Little Red, tempting her with the joy of dawdling and pleasure-seeking. The Wolf is representational of pure temptation and manipulation to what Red desires, and uses this to consume the hero and her Grandmother.

3. The Virtuous Win: *The Embodiment and Polarity of Goodness*

In the truest version of the tale, which is more cautionary than fairytale, Red doesn't learn of her mistake until too late. This can be altered however.

B. What do I need the viewer to understand/experience?

Despite independence, one must strain for a balance between pleasure and responsibility in life. If a balance is not obtained, self-safety and preservation can not be achieved.

Art Education Thesis Project: Test Version

Between the proposal model and the first test version of the thesis project, many changes had to occur. The proposal model is one third of the size that the final piece should be, and the points of departure (or fairytales) are different. The new direction in which the work has moved can be classified into four categories: Concept, Mechanics, Process and Aesthetics.

Concept

I decided that the final form of the thesis project would be a synthesis of Game Art and Internet Art, which is a playable web installation that is accessible to the public through the Internet. By utilizing Bettleheim's aspects of character development from the previously mentioned fairytales, I created a consistent initiative for the viewer - that is not linear like most fairytale narrative and videogame structures - that fueled the viewer's exploration. Within the test version of the project the viewer had the capacity to evolve their character through fifteen stages of cyclical evolution based on solving a Logic System, rather than the fairytale hero's 'moral' choices or repetitive experience gathering (like popular videogames such as *Pokemon, 1996*). In doing this, I placed the viewer's emphasis on exploration of the environments and textual scenarios of the virtual spaces, rather than on the narrative, with the potential for character advancement.

The Logic System that I utilized to govern the piece is Modus-Ponus, which allowed for free exploration on the part of the viewer, but still required them to make active decisions throughout the piece. In Modus-Ponus there were multiplicities of textual choices that I set forth to the viewer, but in order for the viewer to evolve their character, an 'Appropriate Affirmation' of the dilemma is required. This didn't limit the viewer's choices or exploration because at any time the viewer could take a route of 'Appropriate Negation' towards the dilemma, which in turn appropriately avoided the problem allowing free travel; however, the dilemma still existed to be resolved via 'Appropriate Affirmation.' This is how the viewer had the potential to internalize the choices they made not as moral or behavioral decisions, but more so as logic decisions that revitalized the selected fairytales' content.

Mechanics

The biggest problem that I finally resolved, was selecting the fairytales to revitalize, and more so, the finalized format for exploration. The work that I performed this semester - in designing, scripting, developing, and launching the prototype - is all mechanical-proofed for the final thesis project. I used several different software applications and scripting languages to get the desired effects of 3D space, sound, game interactivity, and viewer performance mapping. All of this was necessary as a precursor because of the physical limitations of web publishing, as well as the necessity to create a template for the upcoming semester's work. This was done to free-up time in order to work more intuitively and experimentally with the atmospheres and text; all of the 'math' and scripting was completed. The following is a list of the software applications and scripting languages that I used for the test version with brief descriptions:

Newtek LightWave 6.5 – 3D modeling, texturing, animating, and rendering software
Adobe Photoshop CS – 2D image editing, layout, and creation software
Adobe Streamline 4.0 – raster to vector image conversion software
Macromedia Dreamweaver MX – web design and publishing software
Macromedia Flash MX – vector and raster multimedia and animation software
Actionscripting 1.0 – Macromedia scripting language
Javascripting 2.0 – interactive object oriented programming language
HTML – Hyper Text Markup Language / web site scripting

Process

After I created the 3-Dimensional environment using LightWave 6.5, I exported camera movements inside the software application to still images; I used these images to simulate 3-D movement. I then took those images and converted them from raster to vector images (Adobe Streamline 4.4) to lower their web-loading time and size, and then loaded them into a multimedia program (Flash MX). It is in this software application where I assigned programming attributes (Action Scripting 2.0) to make button clicks traverse 3-Dimensional space. After this was completed with a scene-by-scene, Modus-

Ponus filtering system I created, all was exported for web integration and testing (Macromedia Dreamweaver MX and HTML).

Aesthetics

Up to this point I was careful not to permanently decide on the image base or style that I wanted to use; I wanted to leave this open so I could work intuitively the following semester. I didn't decide on the presentation, title, environment or overall story of the web-prototype yet, but the idea of presenting it somewhat like a videogame - with contained advertising, image systems, interactive styles, and spatial tendencies - intrigues me. The only thing about which I was certain was that I wanted to maintain was the appearance of the characters, which represented the viewer in the piece. I decided to make the characters cyclically evolve over fifteen stages or scenarios, after which the viewer evolved back into their starting form. The characters evolved in regards to complexity, color, and physical shape, and eventually I would have liked to work more detail into each of the fifteen stages. The characters also shared a dominant physical attribute of the eyeball; I wished to play with this even more the following semester for its symbolic and metaphysical significance, and most likely have had it repeated elsewhere and used differently.

Art Education Thesis Project: Conclusion

Just as there are changes that occurred between the proposal model and the test version, there were also many changes that occurred between the test version and the final thesis project. One of the most significantly changes is the removal of Modus-Ponus as criteria for viewer input/interaction. I have abandoned Modus-Ponus, or what I more accurately would describe as 'linear progression', for a free-form interaction on the part of the viewer.

Also, in the test version questions blocked the viewer's further navigation, literally requiring the viewer to make text-based decisions; this was also abandoned. The question prompting, which ultimately controlled the character's navigation throughout the piece, wasn't allowing for secondary authoring; the viewer really had no options for interactivity (it prevented it by providing dogmatic, pre-decided choices). Now, with total movement and exploration control in the viewer's hands, the viewer is interacting more with the environment, and "knowing to notice"[6] more.

Another way that I improved the direct connection between the viewer and the piece, and thereby increasing the "play"[7] between the object and the viewer, was to abandon the notion of an external character evolution. Within the fairytales that I have used that are unlearned, the aesthetic symbols are what over-powered the didactic qualities of the piece; I found that providing more aesthetic symbols between the viewer and the hypermedia piece, such as a visual character that represents the viewer, was not in accordance with Simon Biggs' theories on "secondary authoring by the viewer through interactivity;"[8] the character has been completely removed, leaving only the viewer and the hypermedia piece. In facilitating the viewer to re-conceptualize the three fairytales, and abandoning the game-dependant functions of the hypermedia piece (leveling, external characters, finite endings, and one-way communication), I have implemented an environment and evolution-functionality that is more successful in engaging the viewer with experiences that promote self-development.

In addition to the removal of the Modus-Ponus logic system, the navigation questions and a character that represents the viewer, I have created additional parameters in which the viewer can truly explore the environment (which in turn will allow the viewer to construct conclusions internally). The environment is now one of a gallery setting – such a space automatically places the viewer into the position of observation -

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[6] Maxine Greene, *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change*, (CA, Josey-Bass Inc., 1995/2000), 209.

[7] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method.* (G. Marshall Donald, and Joel Weinsheimer London: Sheed & Ward), 2001.

[8] Simon Biggs, "Speaking With the Other", *Osnabruk Germany, European Media and Art Festival Catalog*, (January, 1994): <http://www.littlepig.org.uk/>

that is hoped to provoke the viewer's thought-process through space, sight and sound. The gallery space, which strips away all dominant aesthetic symbolism of the three fairytales, is a simple space which utilizes text-art from Bruno Bettelheim's text *The Uses of Enchantment (The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales).* These specific quotes from the book *The Uses of Enchantment* - which can be found on the walls, floor and ceiling of the hypermedia piece in a variety of animation and color - speak for the didactic qualities that were lost in the contemporary translation of the fairytale. Quotations from the text concerning the individual fairytale content, which were quintessential to each specific fairytale according to Bettelheim, are also incorporated into the final thesis project.

In addition to text, sounds which I have developed to simulate tension and emotions, have been integrated into the installation. Some of these sounds heighten the emotional response of the viewer to explanatory text, while other sounds reference the fairytale in a social setting (providing social parameters to existing concerns of the fairytales). In other places the sound is utilized to heighten the visual content through juxtaposition, or to provide antecedents to subdue the viewer's responses, and contemplate.

Finally, a significant change is the incorporation of people in the gallery, which function as stationary objects that are visually similar to people, but act more so as multiple interactive chorus devices. The desired effect is that the text-art will address the unlearned content of the fairytales, the sounds will place dominance on the environments that are to be re-considered by the viewer, and the chorus provides an additional external viewpoint. The chorus, much like its didactic function in Greek theatre, will identify the discrepancies between the original fairytales and what is seen by the viewer during the hypermedia piece; they provide a 'public viewpoint' or knowledge-base.

In whole, the hypermedia piece is now more of an environment that speaks to the viewer internally, not dogmatically, and requires only their presence to engage themselves as a subject. The test version was too reliant on imposing aesthetic symbols of the three unlearned fairytales; the evolution-functionality now works more internally as well, mainly due to the removal of an animated character that represents the viewer, by allowing the viewer to come to the conclusions of self-development (through noticing the

exploration of the hypermedia piece's environment). I found that by keeping the gallery space dark by default, and through the exploration of the chorus objects lighten the environment, the viewer is better able to understand that an improved-change is occurring. The viewer can now traverse the hypermedia space at their own pace, without a finite ending or rewards, and come to the conclusions based on their effort in engaging themselves (and what they know as a subject).

In conclusion, I argue that the final thesis project can provide parameters in which self-actualization through experience can occur. Due to the all of the final implemented changes, the viewer is now better able to consciously contemplate themselves, and more importantly, their thought-processes as a subject. The didactic quality of the fairytale has been restored to the fairytale, by promoting internalized thought that is achieved through co-authoring (or interactivity), within the environment of hypermedia.

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