Observatorio Iberoamericano de Arte Digital y Electrónico

Full Professor Daniel Alejandro Argente Raimondo

Instituto Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes, Universidad de la Repùblica

Montevideo, Uruguay

danielargente@gmail.com

Abstract

Currently Ibero-America lacks, unlike the Anglo-Saxon countries, of a systematization of the history of media art in that region. There are fragmented accounts, non-centralized information, sparse and scattered bibliography. We are interested in approaching the different efforts that have occurred or are taking place in our region, to build a common story and history, that integrates and discovers its origins and map out its main exponents and current trends.

Building a non-hegemonic and decentralized view of those that currently prevail.

We will focus on the different efforts that both Latin America and Spain are making through academic and non-academic projects, and initiatives such as the creation of the "Red y Observatorio Iberoamericano de Arte Digital y Electrónico" (Ibero-American Digital and Electronic Art Network and Observatory).

Which integrates various countries and institutions in the region, with the aim of building a network that articulates efforts with the objectives of generating that narrative, systematize media art collections and strengthen regional links.

Keywords

Ibero-America, Digital and Electronic Art, Observatory

Introduction and background

Currently Ibero-America lacks, unlike the Anglo-Saxon countries, of a systematization of the history of media art in that region. There are fragmented accounts, non-centralized information, sparse and scattered bibliography. This panorama showed us the need to promote a project that centralized this information and allowed researchers, academics and artists to have a place of reference.

As a consequence of the problem expressed above, we have promoted the creation of an Ibero-American Digital and Electronic Art Network and Observatory emerges as a reflection that was developed throughout the participation and organization in different festivals, meetings and especially in our academic activity for about 20 years in this territory of the knowledge and practice

As a starting point, I would like to highlight that in 2011 was organized, together with the Groisman Chair of the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina, the International Seminar of Hypertext Narratives, NH/T [1], which was carried out during six editions, taking the headquarters between Argentina and Uruguay. This seminar had a great regional impact, especially in Chile, Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay and in the last edition, Spain joined the organization from a node in Valencia. The aim of this seminar was to reflect on the problems of digital culture and to raise awareness of academic research and artistic production in the territory of electronic and digital arts, mainly in the region.

This experience allowed us to reflect on the absence of a complete picture of what was happening in the region in terms of academic, artistic, cultural and non-formal research and education.

There is no doubt that the festivals, meetings and seminars are aimed at generating the essential and necessary meetings between peers, allowing us to update ourselves on the different artistic practices and research in our territory of knowledge, but they do not fail to present us with a fragmented reality, forcing us to make an extra effort to put together the parts that allow us to have the big picture of what is happening in the different areas previously expressed.

From these reflections comes the idea of creating an instrument that could create a map as complete as possible of contemporary reality, to progress gradually in own research and in different goals that we will later specify.

Another of the findings that emerged from the aforementioned events is the lack of a history of Latin American media art. The existing examples are few and do not present an adequate systematization in general.

The Observatory was initially submitted for consideration by the authorities of the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, of the University of the Republic, Uruguay, by the Chair of Digital and Electronic Art and approved by its Council in the same year. This approval was not a minor fact insofar as it allowed us to articulate and generate agreements with

different academic institutions of the Ibero-American context.

In 2016, in the latest edition of NH/T we presented this initiative having a very good reception from the artistic and academic group present at the seminar. Starting in 2017, we began to disseminate the proposal among the different academic responsible for undergraduate and postgraduate courses that focus on this subject in different Academic Institutions of Ibero-America.

In Spain we found an enthusiastic reception of the project by Dr. José Ramón Alcalá, director of The International Museum of Electrography - Innovation Center in Art and New Technologies (MIDECIANT) of Cuenca[2], with whom it is agreed to coordinate efforts around the Observatory and add his experience directing this institution and in particular his research on the Media Art collections in Spain. Alcalá is currently one of the most active partners in this initiative and has done a great job of connecting those Spanish centers and artists, allowing us to expand our operational base.

I can not stop mentioning one of the most important contacts that Alcalá contributed by connecting us with Dr. Reynaldo Thompson[3], from Mexico, who is doing a thorough research on Media Art artists in Latin America and who was creating his own network of artists and researchers. As a result of these contacts, the Network and the Observatory were reinforced from various places and experiences.

Partners

IENBA-UdelaR, **Uruguay**; Maestría en Diseño Interactivo, UBA, FADU, **Argentina**; Maestría en Tecnología y Estética de las Artes Electrónicas, Universidad Tres de Febrero, **Argentina,** Departamento de Artes Media Lab UFG - Goiás, **Brasil**; Departamento de Arte y Empresa, Universidad de Guanajuato, México**;** Facultad de Arte, UAEM, **México**, MIDECIANT. Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha. Cuenca. **España**; Facultad Barcelona, **España**. Facultad de Arte, U de **Chile**; FFHA - UNSJ, Maestría en Comunicación Digital Interactiva, UNR, Rosario, **Argentin**a; Facultad de Artes, San Juan, **Argentina**; Universidad de Caldas, **Colombia**; Facultad de Arte, Universidad Central de Ecuador, **Ecuador.**

Objectives of the Observatory

The tasks initially proposal of the Observatory[10]:
"Aims to become a tool that makes visible the Ibero-American fabric dedicated to training, artistic and cultural production, linked to digital and electronic media.

In turn, it will form a network of institutions and regional actors, which will allow the articulation of different actions together, which may have the character of dissemination, meetings, research and teaching, among others.

Create a geolocated database, hosted on a website created for this purpose and will be managed by an interdisciplinary group formed by representatives of the entire network. "

The need was considered for the creation of a regional map on the individual and institutional actors, which serves to promote and favor multidisciplinary networks, and which promotes critical processes on the contemporary artistic and cultural reality.

And although this initiative arises from the Academy, it does not intend to be closed in this area, dissolving that frontier, and in this way favoring the exchange with the community through actions of training, dissemination and collective artistic production, appealing to the practice of the Extension from the university perspective.

The updating of contents will be open to the contributions of researchers, teachers, students, artists and social actors linked to the object of study. "

Actual activities

- The regional database is being completed based on the inputs made by the different local referents and the research being carried out by the Observatory.
- Presentation to national and international calls to finance the research of Media Art in Latin America from different perspectives, the collections, their history and their present.
- Interinstitutional agreements have been consolidated that are allowing the teaching and student exchange between different Faculties.
- The Creation of a non-indexed publication that updates the material researched in the Observatory.
- Support for artistic research activities, such as the HOLOSCI(U)DAD(E)[4] Project, among academics and artists from Brazil, Argentina, Colombia and Spain.
- Support for festivals and regional meetings of digital and electronic art.
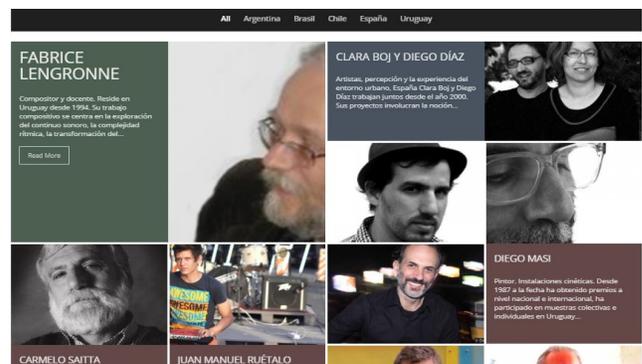- Collaborative research between departments of different Universities

.

Figure 1. Example of the website map showing the data represented by country [10]

Some documents and initiatives to reconstruct the history of Digital and Electronic Art in Latin America.

A thorough bibliographic search and tracking of the websites that exist and have the initiative to archive and reconstruct the history of the pioneers of the media art and to list the current artists, evidences the scarce presence of Latin American artists in particular and of Ibero-America in general. We have rescued some examples of information that is currently available on the web:

Rodrigo Alonso, Argentine theorist and curator published in the Leonardo Electronic Almanac, 13: 4, April 2005 the work entitled "Art and Technology in Argentina, the first years" from which we extract the following paragraphs by way of example.

"The relations between art and technology have an extensive history in Argentine art. The experiments with light and movement of the 1940s were the precedents of the different currents that developed during the 1960s, including kinetic art, video art and some incursions into expanded cinema. Mechanical and electronic devices, lights, machines, new materials, photographic and cinematographic projections, sound systems, video and computers appeared frequently in the works and reflections of young artists, stimulated by a favorable political climate and a fluid dialogue with the circuit international art. "[5]

The High Andean Technology Center of Peru, directed by Carlos Mariátegui, is currently developing an investigation on the current situation of technological art in Latin America.

"ATA (High Andean Technology) has been developing research in the last 6 years exploring the diversity of production in art, technology and new media in Latin America. In recent years, ATA has developed relationships on unrepresentative areas of Latin America, as well as produced research on innovative forms of production in the region.[6]

Without trying to be exhaustive in the search for similar attempts in the Latin American environment, we would like to mention the special issue of **Interartive # 89**: Special Issue: Art + New Media in Latin America [7]

The research carried out by the Universidad 3 de Febrero in Argentina is also noteworthy, creating a map of digital and electronic art.

PAM / Plataforma Arte & Medios [8]"is an online space for documentation, analysis and dissemination of artistic practices that use media and languages from science and technology (analog and digital).

Given the growing number of artists who work with non-traditional materials and experimental and hybrid languages (sound art, interactive installations, mapping, etc.), it is necessary to document their work and provide tools to contextualize these proposals theoretically and historically.

The Uruguayan artist **Brian Mackern**[9] is another international reference. In addition to his pioneering work in the Latin American net-art world, he has an outstanding performance as a curator, and mainly as a historian within media-art. His work in this field, already discontinued but continuously cited, can be seen on his page http://netart.org.uy. In this site, it presents an interactive map, paying homage in its design to Torres García, and which allows us through its navigation to have access to a base of Latin American artists distributed by countries.

Appendix

Objectives and lines of action

Iberoamerican Cartography
- Identification of the main actors and creation of Databases.
- Perform a search and permanent list of artists, festivals and events related to the theme of the observatory.
- Continually explore the options for institutional curricular teaching in the field of primary, secondary and tertiary education, as well as decentralized initiatives that address and promote these artistic and cultural practices.
- Explore the possible sources of public and private financing in the region, related to the support and promotion of research, training and production, related to the proposed theme.

Consolidation of the network of participating institutions and implementation of academic programs among the members.
- Create links of academic cooperation with other university services and national or international organizations linked to the subject of digital and electronic art.
- Empowerment of existing academic research groups and support for the creation of new ones in order to promote the production of specific knowledge on the proposed topic.
- Encourage the creation of undergraduate, graduate and permanent update courses through the institutions involved.
- Encourage the creation of exchange programs for Teachers and Students among the participating university institutions.
- Codirection of Doctoral Theses on the topics and their related lines of research.
- Encourage the creation of scholarships and exchange visits for study and specific research.
- Support for the study of new proposals for the musealization of current Electronic and Digital Ibero-American Art.

Knowledge dissemination
- Through congresses, conferences, seminars, workshops and specific courses, in order to stimulate debate and exchange.
- Creation of specific editorial lines for the creation of own publications.
- Organization of Exhibitions, Exhibitions, Festivals and Recognitions (Awards).
- Establish a ring that nucleates the networks and existing websites of the participants.

Ibero-American Heritage of Digital and Electronic Arts.
- Identify and catalog existing collections.
- Digitization of the Ibero-American heritage of Digital and Electronic Arts.
- Conservation and restoration

Spaces of creation and innovation
- Support and link to the MediaLabs, production centers, workshops and Iberoamerican graphics laboratories
- Impulse to the creation of new spaces of creation and production in Ibero-American countries
- Support for the dissemination of young Latin American creators

References

[1] https://seminarionht.org/
[2] http://blog.uclm.es/mideciant/
[3] Reynaldo Thompson has focus his research and most recent project on cataloguing and open data base on the art, science and technology production of latin american, specially during the raise of new technologies appropriated by creators in this geographical area. The mission of the database is therefore to assist in research for technological innovations and art historical research relevant to an emerging discipline. The mission for the project may be identification and preservation of some of the most innovative and universally significant digital and augmented artworks for purposes of cultural and historical research and for the visualization of the contribution of Latin American technological artists of the contemporary generation and of the future.
[4] http://www.espai214.org/holos/
[5] reference from http://www.roalonso.net/es/arte_y_tec/primeros_anios.php
[6] http://ata.org.pe/investigacion/
[7]https://interartive.org/2016/12/interartive-89-special-issue-art-new-media-in-latin-america
[8]http://arteymedios.org/
[9] http://netart.org.uy/
[10] http://observatorio.enba.edu.uy/

Prof. Daniel Argente

Full Professor of the Chair of Computer Languages, of the National School Institute of Fine Arts, UDELAR. Coordinator of the Bachelor of Digital Art and Electronics and Coordinator of the Degree in Languages and Audiovisual Media of the National School Institute of Fine Arts of the University of the Republic, Uruguay. He was part of the R & D Advisory Committee for the Social and Artistic Area in the CSIC in 2016.
Member of the organizing team of the International Seminar on Hypertext Narratives and the Network and the Ibero-American Observatory of Digital and Electronic Art. Integrates the performative group of sound art This is not Magritte, from the Nova Express group and the MAUA sound ensemble. He has exhibited digital infographic works, interactive installations and sound performances in France, Cuba, Venezuela, Spain, Argentina, Brasil, Chile and Uruguay.
Its main lines of research are new media art, focusing on robotics, virtual and expanded reality and artificial intelligence in art, as well as its research work "Expanded Video Game".