ART, AESTHETICS, AND (NEW) MEDIA  
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The present interdisciplinary research project aims at assembling a significant set of theoretical contents and critical study of the creative practices located within the interrelations between art, media and technology. This kind of practices, which may include, video art, digital art, new media art, media art, software art, digital cinema, or electronic art, have generally been labelled from artistic-related disciplines, especially Art history, often only focusing on the technological aspect of these artworks. Nevertheless, this positioning does not consider other aspects, like communication (art as a media) and contents, or popular appropriations. These aspects, in contrast, have been interesting for Cultural and Media Studies, provoking in a certain way a fracture from an academic and elitist perspective of art and media.

On the other hand, in the western countries there are different conceptions of what is considered art or not, (for instance, an art director or a videogame designer in the United States is considered an artist whereas in Spain they are not considered artists at all), therefore, in many cases it is difficult to separate these practices from the others. Although these debates are as old as Modernity, when industrial processes changed the way of producing objects and gave birth to cultural industries, they are currently taking place again, since digital technologies are very easy to use, not only by companies but also by people in general therefore complicating the picture a bit more, given that anyone can potentially be a cultural producer. However, apart from these general considerations, there are many other aspects in common between what is considered art (high culture) and media or popular culture, in the media and technology landscape. All these aspects are related to the aesthetic dimensions of media in our contemporary societies, or in terms of Castells, the Information and Communication Society.

In order to explore all the questions summarized above, this project is divided into four main sections, structured in four levels of study but necessarily interrelated. The first one, focused on the definition(s) of such a slippery object of study, includes a set of theoretical approaches from a varied number of disciplines and definitions of art practices related to media and technologies. The objective of this introductory section is to overcome the discourse limits in order to approach our object of study in a much more open way. The second section focuses on the classification of the different kinds of these creative practices in order to construct an educational tool for students interested in media art. The third section is focused on the cultural and creative industries, paying special attention to the relationship established between high culture and popular culture. Finally, the fourth section offers a reflection on the aesthetic and philosophical dimensions of the so-called “new” media, (the experience and perception of media) in particular through artistic practices and trying to find out if the “new” adjective makes sense regarding these aspects.
1. Definitions and theoretical approaches to the object of study (conceptual level).

- **Definitions.** Exploration of the different definitions of the terms used by the international community (digital art, new media art, media art, media, new media, digital, art-science-technology). Development of a brief genealogy of different terms (regarding the theoretical frameworks) throughout history and agreement to use a determined terminology.

- **Theoretical frameworks.** Comparison of the different theoretical frameworks regarding our object of study and identification of limits and coincidences (Art history, Media History, Media Studies, Sociology, Aesthetics, Cultural Studies, Visual Studies, History of Science, Science Technology and Society, Cyber Culture Studies). Construction of a suitable framework which considers as many aspects as possible.

- **Methodology.** Review of scientific literature and empirical work, consisting in content analysis of journals, conferences, festivals and museums, and interviews to artists and scholars.

2. Typologies and taxonomies: ontological approaches to the object of study (practical focus)

- **Models and classifications.** Exploration of different ways of classifying artistic projects, identifying the less limiting options. Analysis of “good” and “bad” practices of taxonomies in this field.

- **Construction of a tool, database-like.** Implementation of a “wiki” with information on media art projects.

- **Methodology.** Empirical research based on analysis of databases of artistic projects, analysis of educational and museum applications, drawing up of a basic scheme of categories, and implementation of the tool (wiki).

3. Political economy and cultural implications (structural level)

- **Cultural and creative industries.** Exploration of different definitions of these concepts and the limits of them. Analyzing symbolic creation in popular culture (bottom-up dynamics) and the “social distinction” (Bourdieu) in high culture (top-down), as well as the hybridization and interaction between high culture and popular culture, what Jenkins describes as “convergence culture”.

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1 This section of de Project is a subproject with a teaching dimension and it has been formulated as a project on innovation teaching processes, funded by the innovation office of the Open University of Catalonia. They provide us with technical support.
• **Creativity and innovation.** Examination of these concepts as values which are increasingly demanded in our contemporary and technified societies. Revision of economic and structure models of interaction and collaboration amongst art, media, cultural industries and scientific research.

• **Methodology.** Review of scientific literature and empirical work through content analysis of websites of media labs, festivals, and magazines of art critique.

4. Aesthetic and philosophical dimensions of the so-called “new” media (phenomenological approach)

• **Principal features of new media.** Exploration of the main features of current media through analyzing all the agents implied in a) creation-production, b) experience, c) context of exhibition.

• **Key aspects.** Exploration of the notions of simulation, reality and virtuality in new media artworks. Reflection on the concepts of representation: visual vs haptic approaches (e.g. Hansen Philosophy of New Media). Analysis of Space and time perceptions (Giddens, Massey, Harvey…). Research on the notion of open work: shared authorship and collaborative and collective projects. Intermediate experiences of the self: identity conceptions. Embodiment and the notion of play in new media.

• **Methodology:** Review of scientific literature and empirical research through analysis of artistic projects.

**ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS**

- Monthly meetings
- Paper writing and presentations
- 3 PhD thesis
- Final report to the Spanish Ministry of Science and Technology
- Organization of a conference in June 2009