

VIRTUAL VISIT TO THE MUSEUM: A DIGITAL TOURISTIC PROPOSAL

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ABSTRACT

This article is the result of an empirical research developed in the Master's Program in Cultural Studies of FUMEC University, which addresses the virtual visit to the Inhotim museum as a proposal of mediation between technology and tourism through the marital experience of a virtual visit versus face-to-face experience. The theoretical framework presented seeks the representation of cultural elements through the digital-imaging technology of the screens, projecting through the imbrications between culture and technology a reflection on the experience of visiting an environment through algorithmic constructions. Finally, the article discusses the cultural validity of this experience, with a special look at the cultural constructions of the technological contemporaneity that are materialized through digitalized and mathematically (pre)-conceived information.

KEYWORDS

Culture; digital tourism; technology; virtual visit

VISITA VIRTUAL AO MUSEU: UMA PROPOSTA TURÍSTICA DIGITAL

RESUMO

O presente artigo é resultado de uma pesquisa empírica desenvolvida no programa de Mestrado em Estudos Culturais da Universidade FUMEC, o qual abordou a visita virtual ao museu Inhotim como uma proposta de mediação entre tecnologia e o turismo, através da experiência conjugal de uma visita virtual *versus* a experiência presencial. O arcabouço teórico apresentado busca a representação de elementos culturais através da tecnologia digital-imagética das telas, projetando através das imbricações entre cultura e tecnologia uma reflexão sobre a experiência de visitar um ambiente através de construções algorítmicas. Por fim, o artigo discute a validade cultural desta experiência, lançando especial olhar para as construções culturais da contemporaneidade tecnológica que se materializam através das informações digitalizadas e matematicamente (pré) concebidas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Cultura; tecnologia, turismo digital; visita virtual

VIRTUAL VISIT TO THE MUSEUM: A DIGITAL TOURISTIC PROPOSAL

This article is a result of the field research carried out in the master Master's Program in Cultural Studies, where the action-research method was used because it is situated in the sphere of social practices that emphasize praxis and the construction of critical discourse. This practice, somewhat neglected in academia, has become structurally fundamental to conducting research. The insertion of the researcher in the researched environment allowed the construction of an analysis based on the search of the representative senses. The foreign element inserted in this methodology was the digital variable, which displaces the role of the researcher, once a portion of the research took place through the mediation of the screens, a situation which, substantially, connotes to turn the researcher back. This displacement demanded a deeper reflection on the technological variable.

To conceptualize a museum at the core of this article requires to, initially, re-signify these temples of sacredness and artistic enjoyment. Like all spheres of knowledge and social life, museums – even the most traditional among them – have underwent the impacts of computerization. Google Arts and Culture, by digitizing the collections of leading museums on a global scale, sparked a silent revolution: museums and their productions are within the reach of any user on the planet. As if by magic, one can jump from a collection by Amílcar de Castro to an exhibition by Caravaggio. With a simple command, one can jump from a room of the Jüdisches Museum to the Chiado Museum (Arantes, 2008, p. 69).

Although a great part of the literature considers museum as a space of enjoyment and endowed with sacredness towards the arts, a brief navigation through Google Arts and Culture demonstrates that the sacredness of these temples of enjoyment is in check (Ascott, 1997, p. 159)

Santaella and Arantes (2008, p. 20) present a definition of museum, derived from their experience in technological museums (Oi Futuro Project) that reveals an interesting fecundity:

museum: a laboratory of experiences from interactions with objects and where we can reflect on their social dimension, about the relations on the materiality of things and the experiences they have made possible in past and present times, museums offer an opportunity to reflect on objects and their privileged role in society, allowing us to re-think and perceive them and ourselves in a renewed way. (Santaella, 2012, p. 20)

This concept of a museum as an open space to experimentation and new possibilities of enjoyment, setting the tempo for cultural experiences to the technologies that allow a new way of living, to contemplate and to engage with the exhibited objects, represents a definition of museum in its virtual aspect.

When interacting with a museum through Google Arts and Culture, it is necessary to get rid of all the sacredness that determines the Western conception of museum. It is also necessary to envisage a new way of enjoyment, where the interaction between the screen and the public creates different but non-disposable ways of experiencing and undergo the objects available in a virtual museum.

Benjamin (2012, p. 123) already had, in the middle of the twentieth century, the need for new aesthetic ways before automated copying. This concept can be redefined before the proposal of a virtual visit to the museum, being necessary to think in a digital aesthetic. Only through a digital aesthetic, it will be possible to conceive the enjoyment and the aura in a virtual contemplation. Google presents its virtualization tool as a virtual space, where it is possible to enjoy such digital enjoyment. There is no concern with simulated representation, but it is clear the proposal to redefine the ways in which enjoyment takes place in a virtual dynamic. The perception that a digital aesthetic is possible opens the door for a digital aura to be designed (Jameson, 2001, p. 73).

The museum, as presented by Google, is a logical unfolding of a networked society, and for Latin American artistic reality, the possibilities of building agglutinating and re-educating projects, starting with Google Arts and Culture, are endless and still little explored. The very possibility of using this tool as an instrument of income creation and media dissemination is still in a larval stage (especially in Brazilian museums). It is no longer possible to think that the digitization of museums is a media attempt at symbolic exploration. Museums, in their virtual forms, are a reality that deserves attention (Jameson, 1997, p. 73).

Therefore, to conceptualize the museum within a digital dynamic in which the institution can be virtualized (Google Arts and Culture tool allows the virtualization of any museum, without any cost), is to define it as an open space to experiences, interactions, hybridizations without a definite time-space relationship so that contemplation and enjoyment can occur. It is to locate the museum in a space that loses the sacredness of *locus* to the detriment of the screens. The physical experience of being there and experiencing the museum itself is still far from being fully supplanted by the virtual experience (Leão, 1999, p. 99). However, it is no longer possible to define the museum without taking into account the impacts and re-meanings resulting from its virtual version. This conceptual dynamics allows the virtual visit to the museum to be related to a digital tourism proposal (Brandão, Alvelos & Martins, 2012, p. 98)

OBJECTIVE VIEW ON THE VIRTUAL VISIT TO THE MUSEUM

The virtual visit to the Inhotim museum occurred through an empirical experiment carried out with a focus group, composed by four men and five women between the ages of 24 and 61, whose objective would be to make a virtual visit to the MoMa, Louvre and Inhotim museums and the Inhotim museum was also visited in person. After the face-to-face and virtual experiences, each participant in the focus group presented a discursive report about the experiences of visiting a museum, virtually and on-site. The objectives of the research were presented and the methodology and ways to systematize the research were clarified for the group. After this report, the virtual visit to the Inhotim museum was initiated, which took place in three stages: the first, a free visit to the landscaping of the institute and, later, three preselected galleries were visited, to the detriment of the visit in person that would take place in those same galleries.

The starting point for the virtual visit to the museum was the Google Arts and Culture tool, which uses Google Street View¹ device techniques to allow the user to move around the museum. Associated with this availability of locomotion, information about the works as well as the digitization of these are added so that they can be enlarged on the screen.

As to the cultural appropriation of this tool, it is interesting to note that Google does not link it to its homepage, nor is there a tutorial on how to operate it. Google Arts and Culture is a continuation of the group's tools, replicating the forms of navigation and control already established in other devices such as Street View, Earth and Maps. Google has used this operational methodology, creating a status quo access that is being rooted in the global digital culture, just as the primitive signs are spread automatically, without a systemic learning about the tool. Digital acculturation was latent in the portion of the focal group aged up to thirty-three years. These participants, even though they did not know Google Arts and Culture, were able to recognize, in the graphical visuality of the tool, a continuity of their routine activities in the network.

The ability of Google Arts and Culture to reduce distances was the first factor that caught the group's attention. The first contact with the tool showed how technology can be used as a mediator for cultural experience. All members of the group were already fully aware of the role of technology in reducing the distances between individuals (telecommunications). However, cultural experience has proved to be a novelty.

Technology, as a distance mediator, as a possibility to contemplate (or access) a museum, was considered a great discovery by the group. The entire group's lack of awareness of the existence and functioning of the Google Arts and Culture tool as a device that allows the visit to be extended has increased the euphoria about this possibility. Within this bias of the disruption of the museum's *locus* and tourism through technology, the question raised by the group was in relation to the non-disclosure of this tool. Fabiana Barbosa's comment addresses this question: "how is it possible that a tool allows people to have access to the world's main museums is not disclosed, and does not even appear on my Google homepage?"

Perhaps this is the big question that this article could not clarify: indeed there is no marketing and advertising policy for Google Arts and Culture tool, Google's help and contact system is targeted to each tool, and, surprisingly, Google Arts and Culture is missing from the online help list. It is believed that the tool has a great potential of become a digital cultural exponent because there is no way to limit its ability to disclose and disseminate the cultural products of humanity. Thus, it should be better publicized and should also be part of Google's online help system.

The second question raised regarding the tool as an object that makes the virtual visit to the museum possible is that "it is no longer possible to separate technology and culture". It is important to emphasize that this analysis was carried out in relation to the object and not to cultural production. The heart of the debate was related to the

¹ Google Street View is a Google Maps and Google Earth feature that provides 360 ° panoramic views, horizontally, and 290° vertically, and allows users to see parts of some regions of the world at ground level. Available at <https://www.google.com.br/maps>

ways in which the tools of access and mediation are creating a virtual meaning of human representation, generating a tendency towards the universality of form and acting in the networks, creating a mediated tourist possibility.

It is interesting to note how the Google Arts and Culture tool awakened a notion of cultural belonging through the mastery of digital tools because at the end of the discussion about the relationship between culture and technology, the group concluded that being online (browsing, accessing social networks, researching climate, tourism, academic articles, among several others) is related to a tool that survives in the networks.

Taking a general look at the experience with Google Arts and Culture tool during the virtual visit to the Inhotim museum, this being the first contact of a large part of the group with a tool that creates a virtual reality, it has been found that these mechanisms are taking root in contemporary cultural relations, and that digital culture is in a process of consolidation. However, it was Google's ability to acculturation through Arts and Culture that caught the attention.

The speed that most of the group presented in identifying itself culturally with the tool, after few minutes of use, represents a phenomenon that reflects the immediacy of the digital images, especially the ability of these images (when mediated by a tool such as Arts and Culture) to become sign extensions of the body. Google Arts And Culture is not only (re) meaning access to artistic spaces, it is realizing a universal acculturation of technology as a means of access and cultural representation.

THE VIRTUALIZATION OF VISITS TO THE MUSEUM

The virtual concept of this article is based on an experience of digital networks. The virtual as a simulation of an experienced reality has been part of the culture of human beings since the first drawings in the caves that aimed to portray a reality experienced by the vision or the imaginary. The digital takes the prerogative of experimentation to the definition of virtual, when represented by the human hand or captured by an analog screen, will always represent a cut of real or imaginary space (Canton, 1997, p. 134). In a virtual dynamic, there is no such space-time clipping, the virtual digital materializes according to the algorithmic commands that are triggered. The field research mentioned in this article made this question clear. All participants accessed Google Arts and Culture at the same time, getting completely different experiences from the same digital virtual representation. The way each participant triggered the algorithm allowed the tool to return with completely different spaces and times.

In digital virtual space, the status of the body changes, it is as if the mind were separated from the body to live the experience of the virtual. In virtual accesses, it is possible to live the experience of moving around in an indefinite place, having the real sensation of movement, even if it is static before the screen (Leon, 1999, p. 29).

This is a preponderant question to define the digital virtual: it is an algorithmic simulation, in which the role of the user before the user is essential for the way this simulation will be materialized. It is the decoding of the screens trying to mean an emulated

relationship that intends to become current (in action). Therefore, virtualization is the act of creating algorithmic environments that allow the construction of a system, which tends to materialize, through images, a digital simulacrum. This digital simulacrum opens up many possibilities for weighing contemporary tourism, which leads to the need of working the concept of technology as a mediation proposal.

GOOGLE ARTS AND CULTURE AS A CULTURAL TECHNOLOGY

Conceptualizing and discussing technology within this work requires addressing two fundamental questions: technology, as a tool that allows technical, imaginary and symbolic representation; and finally technology as an inherent evolution in human production, which focuses on the exponentiation of the senses. As the objective of this work seeks the representations for a touristic proposal throughout digital images that could be used as mediators of a virtual visit to the museum, to discuss technology under this view becomes a desirable and needed question.

The experimentation and the field research of this work start from a technological premise, since the virtual visit to the museum can only happen through a technological mediation, especially that occurs in the cyberspace of Google Arts in Culture. This tool that allows people to view works of art in various museums and public spaces is becoming the virtual *locus* where enjoyment and contemplation can occur remotely.

The possibility of glimpsing the concept of virtual aura arises from observation and the almost organic interaction between machine, man and image. Google Arts and Culture instrument, through its embedded technology, a unique possibility of thinking the “here and being of the work” in digital form; thinking about Google Arts Project is to think a contemporary cultural technology.

Technology can be thought of as a tool that enhances the technique of (re)producing something; it is an exponentiation of the senses that elevates the human productive capacity; it is no longer possible to think of human production without thinking about technology, from the moment humanity discovers the stones as extensions of its driving capacities until the advent of the digital age, the development of human societies is a reflection of technological advances, from chipped stones to the advent of computers and personal technological devices (smart phones, tablets, augmented reality glasses, etc.)

According to Gomez (2006, p. 191), technology plays a fundamental symbolic role in societies, and networks are the ultimate expression of a polar inversion that shifts technology from the physical environment to the virtual environment. I would add to this theoretical construction the fact that networks, in addition to provoking this polar inversion, are subverting the technology. Online, technology is the instrument that builds the virtual frames, while being the main tool for the creation of signs, which are born digital and are transferred to memory and to the imaginary.

Barbero (2006, p. 54) presents the technological revolution as the phenomenon that introduces not only an enormous amount of machines into the social routine, but a new kind of relation between the symbolic processes that constitute the cultural process through the production of technological signs (Facebook, Google, Android, IOS). This

symbology of machines instruments a new mode of production, associated with a new way of communicating that transforms knowledge into a direct productive force.

When Barbero (2006) presented this essay, it was not possible to envisage a symbolic production and consumption tool such as Google Arts and Culture. When updating the concepts of Barbero in relation to this technology, it is evident that the knowledge present in a tool that proposes to virtualize much of the artistic and cultural heritage available to humanity is, in fact, transforming knowledge into a direct productive force. How many works, abstractions, theories, cultural and tourist actions can be derived from Google Arts and Culture? Undoubtedly, the possibilities of direct and indirect production, arising from this technology, are immeasurable.

The place of culture is being displaced when technology becomes the mediator of communication no longer in an instrumental way, but instead represents a structure that sustains cultural production. Contemporary technology can no longer be referred to devices, computers and mobile devices. It is significant for new ways of perception, of languages, of imaginaries and of writings (Barbero, 2006, p. 54).

Technology since the advent of modernity is shifting knowledge to an increasingly pulverized sphere, re-structuring cognitive and institutional statutes, reducing the boundaries between reason and imagination, knowledge and information, natural and artificial, art and science (Barbero, 2006, p. 54). Thinking about the virtual visit to the museum materialized by Google Arts and Culture (on canvases), is to be able to present a tacit tool of technological evolution as an instrument that creates a new cognitive form of being able to produce and consume symbolic goods.

This approach brings the technology definition of this work closer to the concept of “Intelligence Technology”, by integrating the human imaginary constructions into a cognitive production force that unites imaginary, hypertext, in a constant symbolic re-signification that is the result of the symbiosis between man and his sensory-cognitive prostheses (Moraes, 2006, p. 23).

It is fundamental to present Google Arts and Culture as a part of the digital technology that allows technical representation, imaginary and symbolic, a reflection of the digital human production which enables the exponentiation of the senses.

Even though it is possible to discuss the real and still significant differences between physical and virtual availability, how could we close our eyes to a technology that allows access to a large part of human culture? How can one not perceive this cognitive shift? How not to put in check the enjoyment and contemplation in its classic sense? How not to think of a digital aura? Is not the “here and be” auricles are no longer exclusive to the work and the artist? The digital aura will be a complex structure, which will allow this unique moment from the hybridizations of all the collections available on a remote access platform like Google Arts and Culture?

Network technology, aligned with computers and mobile devices, through its manipulations of symbols, is ushering in a fusion of body and technology. The interactivity created by technology as a contemporary instrument of communicational mediation, by hybridizing sounds, images and texts, is shifting the axis of human production from

sensory-motor to sensory-symbolic (Barbero, p. 57). From a productive point of view, a virtual visit to the museum is simply a sensory-symbolic experience.

VIRTUAL VISIT TO THE MUSEUM: A TOURISTIC EXPERIENCE

Contemporary technology that enables a virtual visit to the museum is the reflection of an evolutionary path that, in its digital stage, is hybridizing modes and means of production, values, behaviors, languages, habits and social relations. Technology has become, at the same time, the tool, structure and means by which human production and representation can take place, be produced, modified and consumed.

Technology, through its symbolic empowerment, transports the senses and the imaginary into the canvases. Digital image becomes the main symbolic representative of networked technology. All human senses are exponentiated in digital technology through visibility. All the readability of the networks starts by the visual. The digital image is the technological fuse for the expansion of the senses in the networks. Google Arts and Culture is able to lead an observer through the museum, transferring the sense of mobility, textures and sounds only through the vision. Through a screen, this Google tool is able to transport the observer of your Facebook to MoMa, from the Louvre to your email, through the Inhotim Institute.

Within this catharsis created by technology, the representation became a digital anthropological arena. It is possible to define the virtual visit to the museum, then, in one of the maximum expressions of cultural-digital production and consumption, which can only exist and be represented by hybrid technology that encompasses a diversity of knowledge productions and senses that are born digitally to then populate subjectivity, imagery and memory. Mediation is the element that allows the discussion about virtual visit to the museum as being a subjective proposal that unites the imaginary to the memory to create a virtual tourist experience.

To conceptualize mediation has become fundamental to understand the theoretical dynamics of this article. The act of mediating, in its original conceptualization, is directly connected to the means of communication that have become an intermediary between the information and the receiver. However, discussing mediation in a museum visit infers a large number of meanings, values and ideologies that will be represented between the interlocutor and the works present in the museum. Discussing the concept of technological mediation in a virtual visit to the museum represents replacing the interlocutor with a technology that is not neutral in its mediating role (Bauman, 2007, p. 179).

The concept of mediation was introduced in the scope of communications as the exclusive property of the media: *mediation*. Barbero (2006) used a term to give meaning to the decentralization of media communication, thus turning culture into the main way of mediation (Moraes, 2006, p. 81). Understanding the game of technological mediation requires a fundamental premise: to stop conceiving mediation as deriving from the media and that these are an expression of mediation.

Mediation, in a digital technological dynamic, in which it is possible to make a virtual visit to a museum, is the result of a structuring process, which comes from several

technological and social sources. What Google Arts and Culture tool tries to materialize are the various structures that involve the networks, the museum's media, the statement of the artists, the logical and physical structure of museums, the social and cultural interests of the curators and the museum itself.

To remit technological mediation to a representative dynamics of globalization, or to a reflection of technological (late) capitalism, is not the fundamental question to be discussed under the aegis of this work, but rather to present, define technological mediation as a set of means that is allowed through a digital tool which can materialize all these social media, interests and stratagems in an imaginary construction capable of illuminating a virtual access between an institution, its collection and the user. The consolidation point of these three actors is a tool created and managed by Google, capable of mixing these tensions and creating, through digital images, the virtual environment where, in fact, mediation can take place, generating, from it, the visit to the museum.

Technological mediation is able to create and recreate environments, because once uniting the means, such as video, audio and writing, the screens become comfortable to the experience of contemplating and enjoying. By creating a simulated reality, Google Arts Project can recreate a situation that, until then, could only be experienced in person. This mediation differs from the mediation of the printed images, since the digital image allows the recreation of the museum and the work environment, allowing the screen to move as a simulation of the look and the walk.

Human mediation in museums, according to Stelarc (1997, p. 20), is a provocation that instigates the other to perceive different and unusual angles, creating different perspectives of the own thought of the observer, in which the mediator stands as a bridge between the observer and the work, arousing interests and questions.

Technological mediation is meant to be this bridge, but its design is pre-shaped without the ability to sharpen interest. During field research, this question was clarified. Although the possibilities created by the virtual access tool to the museum are almost inexhaustible, the lack of human mediation is latent. However, technological mediation plays the role of being a bridge between spectator and work, but the capacity to stimulate interests and questions is reduced. Perhaps from the structural point of view, this is the biggest challenge (in terms of improvement) for Google Arts and Culture.

Technological mediation has some important characteristics. The possibility of access to works in schools, associations, interest groups, if well explored, allows a closer approximation between art and the public. Within educational actions, technological mediation can create an environment that is propitious to the enjoyment and interpretation of arts remotely. This fact becomes interesting when it is known that a large part of the population does not have direct access to arts and/or museums (Virilio, 1993, p. 29).

A good example of how technological mediation can be a relevant instrument for the rapprochement between work and public was experimented by the OI Futuro – Telecommunication Museum project with the experience of tools and games made available in stations through the museum, which, without the presence of an educator, stimulated the enjoyment and discussion about the works. That experience demonstrated to the museum organizers how technology could be effectively applied to bring the works

closer to the public. The result of these tools acting as mediators was greater interaction between public and arts.

Santaella and Arantes (2008, p. 41) present the mediation in museums as a relationship that must be open to the fortuitous, where groups diversity and their cultural baggage must be taken into account when constructing this relation. The discussion is presented as an elementary way to mediation success, expanding the possibilities and the spectrum of possible shares. Such observations are fundamental to think about this virtual visit to the museum, because technological mediation cannot address, at the time of the visit, issues of diversity and identity. During field research (virtual visit through Google Arts and Culture), the focus group showed some concern about this standardization. However, there was no inference about it being an impediment to the visit.

Arantes (2008, p. 51) presents a construction on the public in the mediated relation, evidencing the role of the statement in a mediation that must take into consideration for those who speak and what is spoken. Arantes (2012, p. 52) also presents the concern that mediation creates between the public and the mediator, since mediation tends to provoke, instigate, impact and transform the perception and the imaginary. This is a critical question, since mediation is not neutral, mediation should always provoke a reaction to the public and to the mediator himself.

In a relationship between technological mediation, the presumption of a neutrality of the mediator must be reflected. The Google Arts and Culture tool looks interesting in this regard. It subverts the subjective mediation to the museum that is responsible for all the information that should or should not be included in the virtual visit. It becomes neutral in relation to content, but, paradoxically, it is not flexible as to how the way of mediation will occur. This homogeneity of ways shows that the tool is fulfilling its role of consolidating the media in a tool that tends towards universality, abstaining from the interests, values and ideologies of institutions.

One of the main desires in a mediated relationship (especially in a museum) is the autonomy. In this respect, human and technological mediation converge, since both are the result of the social and cultural constructions of mediators and media. The mediation relationship is a reality increasingly fissured by technology. With the digital age, computer technology is becoming a mediator of social life. To discuss mediation in a virtual visit to the museum is to carry out a cut of the technological mediation, which is digitizing the living and representing contemporary society

VIRTUAL X IN PERSON: ANALYSIS OF THE EXPERIENCE AT INHOTIM INSTITUTE

The analysis of the virtual and in-person experiences shall be carried out from the discursive compilation presented by the focus group, showing the contemplative subjectivity of the experiences. Perceptions about enjoyment and symbolic consumption in these two moments (virtual and in person) will also be presented.

The focus group came to a perception about the use of digital images as mediators of a visit to the museum: the digital images – for allowing interaction – sharpened the creativity, allowing the ordering and the signification of a digital dynamics for the

construction of a sensory-memory that was not experienced in person. This moment aligns with the already discussed conception of a digital aura. There is a unique moment of the digital images that build memory, transcending the objects' visuality to a enjoyment that is signified in a blind cognitive construction.

The construction of the parallel created by the group demonstrates that the digital enjoyment is linked to the sensorial union. By evidencing the individual cultural background and the heterogeneity of the group, each participant highlighted one or more meanings that could be perceived as fundamental for the understanding and perception of digitized works. However, it was evidenced that the experience of visiting a work face-to-face, after the virtual visit, creates a complementary relationship, which exponentiates the experience of the museum visit.

The fact that the group works the concept of complementation, to maximize the enjoyment of the work, corroborates with the already discussed subject of digital enjoyment. The group behavior emphasizes that during the virtual visit, a enjoyment took place. However, it does not manifest itself in the same way during physical contemplation. However, this is not plausible to be discarded, considered invalid or even non-existent; it is a enjoyment that manifests itself in another way. The Garaicoa gallery experience would exponentiate the analysis of digital enjoyment and still "would open the doors" to ratification of the digital aura.

During the analysis, the experiences of the group on the manifestations of digital enjoyment and the digital aura were subjectively highlighted. It was becoming latent from the in-person visit that the virtual visit, besides having already been pointed out as a valid form of access to arts, also allowed a representative cultural experience. Elements of identity, (re)significations, discursive constructions and productive manifestations were present during the virtual visit and were manifesting themselves in the comparative construction between the experiences.

The ability of digital images to mean environments and landscapes ratifies the imagery cultural dimension, especially in its virtual aspect, which allows immersion and control through technological mediation. Turning the digital image manipulative, following the sense of vision, allows the imaginary to assimilate the virtual experience as it was experienced. This way of digital memorial significance has a great impact on contemporary cultural construction.

By creating an imagery from digital images, cultural production is shifting the imaginary legitimacy to the dynamics of networks. This power overcomes the memory capacity of static images like photography, and interactivity transcends the pseudo-sensory motion of cinema. Under the "blessings" of digital culture, virtual experiences design to represent, through an algorithm, the innumerable possibilities that will be triggered by users. These can compose their subjectivity within the virtual tools.

Digital culture is still experiencing the incipient power of digital imaging. The experience with the focus group has demonstrated that the potentialities of this union between culture, aesthetics and technology are deep and perform towards a digital cultural matrix. Recognition and identity within digital platforms are latent in the digital acculturation experienced by contemporary society. The fact that the group does not deny the

validity of the digital platform illustrates this necessity for the digital feeling belonging. Digital culture is formed mostly by digital images, and virtualization enhances the cultural imaginary through cultural experience (Oliveira, 2007, p. 232).

Many other issues can be addressed and other biases can be discussed from data captured during virtual and in-person experiences. Nonetheless, this analysis was limited to the cultural clipping that evidences the relation of the artistic representations with the technology. The fact that the aesthetics are only punctual during the analysis carried out is a result of this cut, which sought to highlight the tensions between culture and technology. In fact, the possibilities of carrying out tourism in a virtual way cannot be disregarded. The cut of the virtual visit to the museum represents a tiny part of technologically mediated tourism, but it already illuminates the future of technology as a provider of the experience of visiting virtually any environment that is algorithmically represented in the networks (Wiener, 1970, p. 107).

CONCLUDING REMARKS: IN SEARCH FOR NEW LOOKS IN VIRTUAL VISITS

The work carried out with the focal group would confirm the validity of virtual access to museums a real touristic option and opens the possibility of discussing this validity not just for mere sensory-cognitive reasons, but through an acculturation inherent in the digital dynamics that construct the representations and re-signify the status quo of contemporary culture. The validity of the virtual visit to the museum is directly connected to the need for belonging in the networks, which demand the migration of identities to the digital spheres. The readability of the virtual visit is the same that happens in social networks, where the “how” is no longer important, but “what” it represents.

The sacredness of the museum as an institution of enjoyment and artistic contemplation is not shaken by the possibilities of virtual access to its physical space and its collection, the same applies to tourism experience in general. There is a crystalline recognition of complementarity between virtual and in-person access. The comparison between the three galleries shows that previous virtual experience provides greater interest and fosters a close relationship between the work and the public. Having the virtual visit was considered a readable and valid option to access the arts, not affecting the sacredness of the museum as locus of enjoyment, the group’s considerations regarding the virtual tour focused on the Google Arts and Culture tool, and possible ways to maximize their virtualization proposal.

The course of this work allowed conceptualizing the digital image within a digital statute, which maximizes its discursive potentialities associated with the capacity to be able to mean the imaginary and the memory from mathematical constructions. The pseudo-interactivity of these images seeks their readability in technological mediations. To think of the digital image as an instrument of access to tourism is to demonstrate the symbolic capacity of production and cultural consumption through virtualization.

Like all cultural elements, technology has the capacity to (re)signify symbolic relations. Cultural appropriation of the screens presents itself as “a whirlwind in the river”, which requires new concepts of enjoyment and aura, when these appropriations deign to

represent the arts. In front of the experiment performed, the recognition of the screens as an extension of sensory perceptions became latent, being unconsciously recognized as sensory-cognitive prosthetics, capable of transmitting sensations and generating memories.

The hybrid relationship between human beings and devices also highlights the ability to recognize, produce and consume signs through technological mediation in particular through the recognition of the screens as an extension of vision. This hybrid technology-mediated cultural relationship is not immune to human sensibility. Therefore, it is possible to glimpse a theoretical proposal of digital enjoyment.

The digital enjoyment occurs in the communication with the work of art, which, when mediated by a digital technology platform, establishes a new discursive relation, which cannot be discarded nor does it occur in the same way established in a face-to-face contemplation. This new and potentially dialectical discussion between art and the spectator, through a tool like Google Arts and Culture, is what I call digital enjoyment.

The digital enjoyment of a work of art implies a philosophical reflection of the moment of enjoyment, when there is a relationship of authenticity that subverts the sensuousness to a unique existential reason of the work, which only occurs in its digital strand. This ability was experienced by the focal group in the Garaicoa gallery, where the work was only manifested as authentic, capable of representing its cult value in its virtual materialization. This unique, authentic moment that exists without there being a technical reproduction of the original work but allowing the perception of a virtual “here to be” reflects the concept of digital aura. Discussing and conceptualizing digital aura are themes for more in-depth questions. The theoretical latency of this definition – like an oasis – fuels and nourishes this article intellectually. It could not, consequently, be overlooked here.

As in an open-ended novel, fecund to the imaginary and accessible to the most diverse discussions, we propose to close these reflections, opening ourselves to the contradictory and the anti-hegemonic. Only in the context of Cultural Studies, we could follow this methodological path in which we launch a multidisciplinary approach to tourism as a virtual visit, culture, arts and technology, in a relationship that seeks the (re) signification of human representations.

Translation: Fernando Augusto Silva Lopes

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