

Virtual Humans, Analogue Dilemmas

Memory, Presence and Embodiment
in the Age of Simulation

Attila Viktor Pálfalusi
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Supervisors

József Fülöp DLA

Bálint Veres PhD

Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design Doctoral School

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Propositions

1. **Virtual humans and digital actors are not merely technological novelties but culturally charged entities.**

Their emergence reflects deeply rooted social desires connected to memory, identity, and presence, which are embedded in the patterns of media history.

2. **Digital embodiment creates a new type of simulated presence with recognizable historical precedents.**

A media-archaeological perspective reveals that today's digital bodies have antecedents ranging from Roman death masks to Bunraku puppets and the Pepper's Ghost illusion, all of which repeat the same question: how can life be captured, substituted, or resurrected?

3. **To interpret digital bodies, I find the theoretical frameworks of hauntology, the simulacrum, aura, self-design, and prolificity most suitable.**

These concepts allow us to understand digital presence and identity not as authentic existences, but as algorithmically structured, unstable entities.

4. **Thanatechnologies transform death and remembrance into mediated, programmable experiences.** Griefbots and projects such as the interactive testimonies of the Shoah Foundation or holographic "reappearances" (Tupac, Teresa Teng) reshape the cultural logics of mourning and presence.

5. **Practices of digital memory challenge the ethical concepts of authenticity and heritage.** Based on Derrida's notion of the gift, curated heritage often becomes self-interested profile-building, which deprives remembrance of the possibility of sincerity.

6. **Contemporary uses of virtual bodies raise ethical questions of consent, exploitation, and digital identity.**

Deepfakes and posthumous performances activate fundamental ethical dilemmas.

7. **Digital actors function both as aurasimulations and as speculative, unstable archives.**

They not only represent but actively shape contemporary thought on presence, embodiment, and memory.

8. **The installation *Sphere of Influence* embodies the theoretical findings of the dissertation in multimedia form.**

In its formal and functional characteristics, the installation makes the spectral, temporary, and unstable nature of presence perceptible.