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VA 402 FINAL PROJECT PROPOSAL
THE OCULUS

Project Definition

Oculus: Which means single eye in Latin. Also it may represent the watchful gaze of a god or goddess and was especially common during the Neolithic period.

An interactive installation project about the state's control over the people's life's and how people got used in time to being watched/controlled by this unseen authority.

Objectives & Goals

Goal of this project is to make people think about the authority in their normal lives and the unseen pressure of it on themselves. Everybody is got used to do things they were told to do, so that humankind created this unbreakable path of life in which we have to obey the rules by learning, earning money, raising family. When anybody breaks this, he/she will be punished. If you do not want to work and steal food, this is something bad and you are punished in the jail. Everybody knows and behaves accordingly. I think this is the fear of being alienated and punished the fear of authority. So there is this thing we are afraid of, and we behave in favor of. I want to make the sculpture of it and follow us to make sure we are obeying the rules.

Target Audience/User

There is no limit for the audience. Everybody can enjoy watching themselves being observed.

Background Information

Usually I'm affected by shocking or expressive art works. For my VA 402 class, I am interested in interactive media. So I want to combine this area with what I have always been doing, drawing, making sculptures, illustration etc. But my starting point was to find an interesting concept or problem to work on/create a solution for. So I started thinking about the concepts that I have always been thinking about. First of all I started with the beauty concept and how the media affected our perception. From that point I ended up with the authority of the state and its effects on us.

People have to obey some rules, because the needs and functioning of the society is totally different from the individual needs. To live in a society, society members have to make some sacrifices. But in time, this sacrifices turned into some obligations.

No matter where they were born in, every people have to follow some rules and follow a predefined pattern of lifestyle. They go to school, they have jobs, they dress like others, they live in apartments and etc. The power that society has given to the state had grown and took the control. And now this state is interfering too much in our lives. We are recorded on cameras, we are being punished for doing something bad that the state defined as bad, and even we can't watch some things because of the censorship.

According to Situationist International, whose ideas were rooted back to Marxism and the 20th century European artistic avant-garde, capitalist system creates fake realism. Capitalism uses masks to make people get away from the truth. With this mask people can not see the degeneration of capitalism. Situationist International were highly influenced by Guy Debord's book, Spectacle of the Society. This concept of "the spectacle" is application and development of Marxist concepts like alienation, commodification etc. The value of the product is not determined by its usefulness or goodness, it is related to recognizable and prestigious brand name. People are raised to believe that. They are like, trained and put on glasses to see the reality in this way. This relates to my project because I believe that state changes our perception with its mediums like media, school, etc. And with this distorted perception we believe what we were told to believe to be true. And whenever we do not obey this, we are out of the system, we are all being controlled being watched to not to make a mistake. Since the day we were born we had to obey the rules. We had to wear clothes which indicated our sexes, we went to school to enter university, then we worked hard to be successful in life then we raised our own family and make children and make sure that they will follow the same path of life. Whenever somebody do not obey these steps, he/she is out of the society, she/he is the enemy. If a child can not go to a proper school, his/her life is probably ruined because she/he will not be able to enter the university, have good friends and environment and job etc. People have to earn money to survive, people have to follow the pattern to earn money. Everything is under control of the state.

Max Weber defined authority as "the chance of commands being obeyed by a specific group of people. Legitimate authority is that which is recognized as legitimate and justified by both the ruler and the ruled"

Weber, classed three different types of legitimate domination, authority. The first type is Rational-legal authority. It is a form of authority which depends for its legitimacy on formal rules and established laws of the state. The power of the rational legal authority is mentioned in the constitution. Modern societies depend on legal-rational authority.

The second type of the authority is Traditional authority. It is a kind of authority in which there are long-established customs, habits and social structures. When power passes from one generation to another, then it is known as traditional authority. Monarchy is an example of that type.

The third one is Charismatic authority in which charisma of an individual or a leader is important. The leader in this type of authority claims that his authority is derived from a "higher power"

In history, authority concept all started with charismatic authority and somehow turned into rational legal authority. I think when a human is given a divine tasks like ruling a country he in some point misses the control and ruins it. In time, the clans with charismatic rulers who claimed to got their power from god, started to worship their rulers. And the concepts like, religion, state, ethnic diversity, and nationalism were created, and in time this concepts reached their peaks. Now, the world is being control by an unseen power and constitution. Every individual is under control with this ancient concepts, religion, nationalism, ethnic roots and etc. All of those concepts are being created and protected by the state.

The art works with the dystopia concepts created exaggerated future with state's over control on people and how the system corrupted. For example, in Ninety-Eighty Four we observe this kind of situation. Orwel shows a future in which having sex is what animals do, falling in love is something really bad and all you have to do is work for big brother who is always watching us. Or in Brave New World, we see this kind of dystopia. People are made in factories with deficiencies so that they can not be intelligent and riot against the system. They are raised to love their work and hate having fun. In my project I do not want to depict a bad future. I think everything is already like that. There is no need to wait for the future to see these will happen. We are already raised to love our statues and not riot against the system. We all work for the big brother and being watched.

In history the image of eye is being used frequently. In Ancient Egypt "The Eye of Horus" was used as a symbol of protection, royal power and good health. The eye is personified in the goddess Wadjet. The Wedjat "was intended to protect the king in the afterlife" and to ward off evil. Ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern sailors would frequently paint the symbol on the bow of their vessel to ensure safe sea travel. In Egyptian myth the eye was not the passive organ of sight but more an agent of action, protection or wrath. It is kind of a symbol of authority and power of the holy thing.

Another famous eye is the also known as the Eye of Providence. It is located on the American dollar. This symbol means different things according to cultures, but it is almost always associated with knowledge, foresight, power and/or protection. The eye is an organ which sees and observes, it acknowledges us. The symbol of an eye represents this significance. Divine guidance is also represented with the eye which sees everything. The significance of the symbol of the eye remains in the function of the eye and the importance what and how we view things. Many societies function under the notion that they are guided by a higher power, symbolized with a single eye watching over creation.

Picasso also used the eye image in his famous painting *Guernica*. This eye is shaped as a light bulb, it is and evil eye. This evil eye is related to the Spanish word for lightbulb; "bombilla", which sounds like "bomb" and signifies the destructive effect which technology can have on society. It is on the top of the canvas, so it is like the god or state which can see and control everything.

Man Ray used the photo of an eye in his work, *The Eye of the Beholder*. However this work was not related to the god or authority or knowledge. It is a simple metronome with an eye photo on the top of the pointer. At the back of this metronome, there is a instruction which tell us to destroy it carefully after using it. Man Ray did this work after his lover left him. So the eye here symbolises his lover, and he wants the audience to destroy this eye.

Also, when I was researching I found the Surveillance Art concept. Surveillance Art is the use of technology intended to record human behavior like the technology used to surveil. We can observe this art form in many different forms, from short films to architecture. It has a problem with security and enforcing rules. For example, Surveillance Camera Players do performances in front of the security cameras. The one I like the most is called "Amnesia" in which a man holds papers to the camera with some writings on it. It starts with the "I have amnesia" sentence. It points out some affective facts and in the end the message is "I forgot what I do please shoot my videos to make me remember." Andy Warhol's Edie Sedgwick clip is an example for that art form. In this clip, we see Edie Sedgwick from four different angles, telling about her personal problems, about herself or her family.

We see her face like in a documentary film, it is live and we see all the expressions. It is like she is telling all of this to us. Also Adam Rifkin made a documentary about surveillance, in his movie, *Look*. He uses footage from everyday life, from the cameras in the streets department stores, gas stations, changing rooms, public bathrooms. Also the movie called "*Peeping Tom*" deals with the same kind of problems.

Golan Levin also use the eye and authority concepts in his installations. In his work *Double-Taker (Snout)*, he makes a interactive sculpture in the roof of a school which moves around and look at the people. It is about making eye contact with the viewer. He also used eyes in *Opto-isolator*. The sculpture presents a solitary mechatronic blinking eye, at human scale, which responds to the gaze of visitors with a variety of psychosocial eye-contact behaviors that are at once familiar and unnerving. So it raises the question "What if the artworks could understand us?"

Krista Putzen's installation *Professor Dowell's Head* is similar to my project. However, conceptually they are different because *Professor Dowell's Head* is an installation about the 21st technology and it question this improvements like would a robot ever have feeling and understand those feelings, or are they just slaves of the humankind? It is a robotic head with just two eyes. It tries to mimic some humanistic feelings like sadness or happiness.

So in the history of art, eye symbolizes varied things from knowledge to the piece of the lover. It can be used as something personal or something related to authority or divine. In my project it will symbolize the authority. It will be something close to surveillance art, because it will follow everyone without permission and when the followed one realize the situation he/she will get irritated. Since it will symbolize the authority and the control of the state, it will look old and mechanical. Because the state works like a machine and controls its member everywhere. It sends its children to the school to teach what is not harmful for the society and the state. It controls everything, from TV channels to newspapers or schools or hospitals. It is like an eye, it follows everybody and somehow controls its land. So in my project this eye will be the old "Big Brother" who watches us everywhere. Therefore I want it to look old and mechanical. It will symbolize the one of the oldest thing in the history, the authority. So it will look old but still working like a machine. I want to use metals and woods in my sculpture. Metal will give the feeling of cold authority. However, authority is something people want. People want to be watched and feel they are protected by the state. So the authority is somehow a consequence of the people's demands.

Therefore my sculpture has to look appealing too. I am thinking of combining these two elements to make it appealing and fearful at the same time. The wood and metal will create a good contrast. For the sound, I do not want to use special computer generated sounds. Because the sound of the machine will give us the feeling more efficient. It will sound old and mechanical, like the state.

In my project the biggest challenge would be the giving the feeling of fear to the audience. The effectiveness of my project is all about the impressiveness of the statue. Because a huge eye statue can look funny or entertaining if I can not handle it properly. I don't think people ignore it and won't be affected if I can make a impressive statue. Other difficulties would be making the sculpture move. Because I have to make it both artistic/expressive, and mechanic so it would be able to move. I may have some problems hanging the sculpture on the wall but I think these would be solved somehow. If I can handle this project, in the end I will have a robot. At the end of the year, I will be able to make a simple moving statue.

In my project I want people to look around and question why they allow themselves to be followed and watched, why they let a higher authority to put a spectacle on themselves and hide the ugly reality, why they are following a certain pattern of life and still believe that they are unique and one kind of individuals.

Detailed Project Definition

Project room will be one regular room, probably our 1050 studio. In one side of the wall there will be a huge eye which is following the viewer's every step. This eye will look both like a sculpture and a robot, balanced. Because it has to give the feeling of fear and confusion to the audience but it has to move also. My first aim was to create a robotic eye, however because of some problems I have encountered while I was doing the eyeball, I had time management issues. Therefore I simplified my project, which is now just a eyeball sculpture on the wall. The eyeball which will follow the audience, will be able to move vertically and horizontally.

Required Know-How and Resources

I learned coding and used JMyron Library in Processing. Also, I read books about robotic and mechanic engineering and model my sculpture to determine its interactive behaviours.

Difficulties & Risks

I had big problems about estimating the doable and not doable things. Making that big eyeball sculpture was quite difficult and time consuming. I failed more than 5 times when doing it. I should have researched about the material and should not have underestimate the difficulty of it. I could not make the eyelid part of the sculpture. At first I thought it was a disaster but now I believe this eyeball looks more simplified and powerful.

Phases of the Project

1. Research
2. Designing the sculpture
3. Designing the interactive behaviour of the eye
4. Adding the interactivity by doing motion sensors
5. Designing the room

Criteria of Success

If I can irritate the audience, my project is successful.

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