

Christiane Paul

# Digital Art

Third edition



Thames & Hudson **world of art**

## About the author

**Christiane Paul** is the Adjunct Curator of New Media Arts at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York and Professor in the School of Media Studies at The New School, New York. She has curated numerous exhibitions at the Whitney Museum and internationally, written extensively on new media arts, and lectured around the world on art and technology.

## Chapter 2: Digital Technologies as a Medium

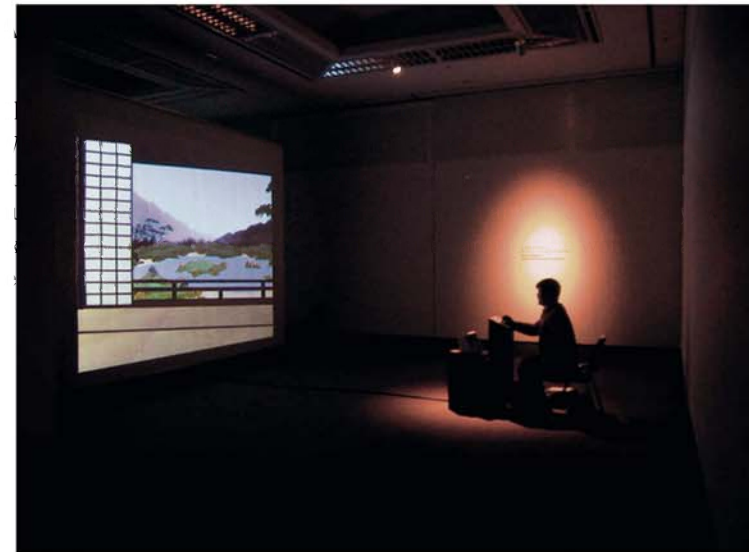
(Excerpt)

As well as immersive VR environments, there is also a category of work that creates complex three-dimensional worlds that do not necessarily make use of a specially constructed environment but take the form of a more traditional screen projection. Beyond Manzanar (2000) by American Thiel and Iranian-American Zara Houshmand is an interactive 3D world based on the actual location of Manzanar, the first of more than ten internment camps built to incarcerate Japanese-Americans during World War II. The life-size image of the 3D space is projected onto a wall within a darkened space, and viewers navigate and change the viewpoint by means of a joystick on a pedestal. Archival photographs from the internment camp are juxtaposed with Japanese scrolls and paintings in a constantly shifting environment that - reacting to the viewers' presence - illustrates a chasm of cultural identity, contrasting a dream world of cultural heritage with a reality of political injustice.

.  
.
   
.

... [In Beyond Manzanar], virtual reality is not used to create a seamless alternate world but to create a clash of the 'realities' of physical location and perception. ...

114. **Tamiko Thiel and Zara Houshmand**, Beyond Manzanar, 2000. Not a photorealistic environment, this work combines the aesthetics of computer games with the techniques of stage design. Viewers move through a landscape consisting of shifting layers and creating alternate realities: opening the door in a building of the camp, they may find themselves in a Japanese paradise garden that suddenly disappears if they try to enter; following a road, they may find their way blocked by barbed wire.



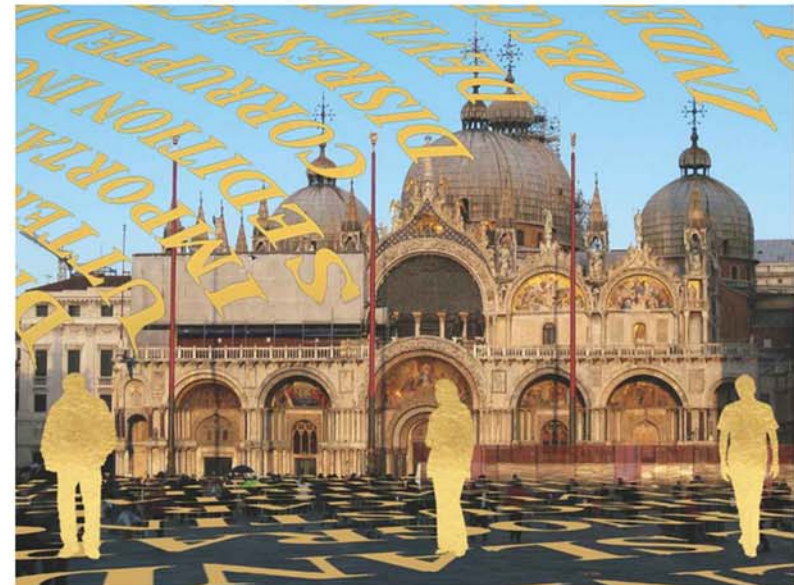
### Chapter 3: Themes in Digital Art

(Excerpt)

*Augmenting the real: Augmented reality and mixed reality*

Smart phones and tablets, along with the development of software platforms, have also opened up new possibilities for artists to explore Augmented Reality (AR) - the 'augmentation' of physical spaces and architectures by mapping virtual imagery onto location-specific latitudes and longitudes. People can experience this virtual imagery as a layer superimposed onto physical locations via their mobile devices through browsers such as Layar and Junaio. Among the most active artists in the area of AR projects have been the Manifest.AR group and its key members Mark Skwarek (b. 1977), John Craig Freeman (b. 1959), Will Pappenheimer (b. 1954), Tamiko Thiel (b. 1957), Sander Veenhof (b. 1973), and John Cleater (b. 1969) [210, 211]. In 2010, Manifest.AR 'hijacked' the foyer of the Museum of Modern Art in New York as part of their exhibition 'We AR in MoMA, organized by Skwarek and Veenhof, which presented augmented reality art within the context of the traditional art museum, thereby both highlighting and questioning the physical boundaries of the institution and the virtuality of digital art. The group engaged in this form of institutional critique again when it showed works in the 54th Venice Biennale (2011). Questioning the Venice Biennale's status as one of the world's most important forums for the dissemination of current developments in international art, Manifest.AR constructed virtual AR pavilions as counterpoints to the actual pavilions in which artists represent their nations in the Giardini in Venice. Playing on the 54th Biennale's 'ILLUMInations' theme, the group positioned its intervention as one unbound by nation state borders, physical boundaries, or conventional art world structures. Tamiko Thiel's *Shades of Absence* (2011) [213] consists of virtual 'Pavilions of Absence' in which images of contemporary artists whose works have been censored in the twenty-first

century are reduced to gold silhouettes. By touching the silhouettes, viewers can bring up a website with information on the censored artists, and instructions on how they themselves can add new names and information via the Web or Facebook. Given that AR can render the invisible visible, it does not come as a surprise that this media form is often used in contested territories or for activist purposes.



213. Tamiko Thiel, *Shades of Absence: Public Voids*, 2011