The Effectiveness of Digital Usage in Preserving Art and Its Aesthetics

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Abstract. This research paper discusses the effectiveness of digital usage to preserve an artwork, where the concept of art has now been integrated with many digital aspects. In this current knowledge era, an artwork is produced with the help of digital computer either for duplication, alteration, and distortion through the combination of all and many other things possible. It is true that there are clear advantages of having an artwork created by using digital software. By doing this, it is expected to achieve its purposes which is to create a better understanding of the impact of digital software in the art industry and to create a solution to preserve the art aesthetic itself.

Keywords: Art, Digital Technique, Art Aesthetic, Art Preservation.

1. Introduction

Art is a creation of an object based on certain subjects to convey a message or simply for a decoration display. It is a way for some artists to express their feelings or emotions. Art may sometimes be seen as a person's thoughts through images [1]. An art piece can either be for personal or commercial purposes. A wonderful work of art has its very own poetic value that can trigger a viewer's emotions from many aspects. Digital technique is a creation of programming language through the use of computer technology in producing a platform for artists to produce art pieces. From existing habits and love for modern knowledge, art pieces now are generally created or produced by just clicking the mouse or pressing the keyboard [2].

The concept of art has now been integrated with many digital aspects. In this current knowledge era, an artwork is produced with the help of digital computer either for duplication, alteration, and distortion through the combination of all and many other things possible. The purpose of this research is to discuss the effectiveness of digital usage to preserve an artwork.

1.1 Research Problem

As studies have shown, digital techniques are being used in producing an art piece to serve its purpose ascreated by the artist. The digital world offerspossibilities which are a huge advantage to current artists. However, the involvement of digital computer technology in the art industry has caused discomfort especially among the older generation.

2. Art and its Aesthetics

In the olden days, art was a communication tool using symbols, which was based either on an individual's perception or his/her life's cultural heritage. There are many philosophers who define their ownunderstanding and interpretation of art practices throughout history. Two well-known founders areAloisRiegl and Erwin Panofsky [3].The discovery of historical art and theory is a result of studies and understanding through data analysis. There is a theory called 'Kunstwollen' or, 'Artistic Volition', which describes that an art can only be interpreted through the extrinsic essential meaning of the work, which is what is being displayed on the surface[4].

Defining the meaning of 'aesthetic', one may also compare it to the word 'logic' as these two have opposite definitions. Sometimes we wonder what kind of knowledge an art piece provides; there are two kinds of theories: logic and aesthetic. Logic knowledge is straightforward and with a definite meaning, while aesthetic is something else. Aesthetic or in Latin, 'aesthetica' is a sensual thought or perception regardless of anything rational or logical [5].Art aesthetic is based on the sensation it presents the viewers, which portraysa different kind of beauty, causes confusion, andthe discovery of many other experiences. Aesthetic theory is introduced so that the value of an art can be calculated with proper justification and in the

requiredcontext[6]. During Ancient Greece, the Aristotelian had the criteria for a good artwork such as beauty, symmetry, unity in diversity, equilibrium and balance, and a lot more. However, the viewer's artistic response to an artwork is usually the most important value of all. It is rather difficult to assess the aesthetic value of something that is highly subjective and personal[7]. An aesthetic artwork can be as huge as the magical transformation of a state of consciousness into a dream-life world.

3. Digital Tools and Techniques

There are many digital scripting or programming languagetechniques which provide useful digital tools in creating an artwork. One well-known example is creating architectural figures with authoring toolkits: 2D model drawing and blender for 3D modelling [8]. All of these tools can be well-defined where an artist may just key-in the required measures of the wanted output, and the computer will then generate the rest of the work. Most of these technology environments are strongly developed and frequently upgraded [9]. For example, the Adobe Design software is a widely-used tool which can produce a traditional lookalike artwork. With this tools and technique, an artist will be able to manipulate an image to make it look like an acrylic painting, pastel colour painting, oil painting, and a lot of other mediums. This software has been developed over and over again to improve its quality and to add new features. Another strong point in using digital tools is its ability in making the artwork interactive[10]. This technique creates a stronger 'relationship' between the artwork and the viewers, provided that they are technology savvy. Whether or not it will decrease the aesthetic value of the artwork depends on the viewers' perception.

4. Digital Usage in Artwork

Given the advent of today's technology, to create or manipulate an artwork can be easily done with a low cost hardware and software tools that are easy to find [11]. An example of an artwork which requires a lot of skills in digital technique is photography art. It is amazing how computer graphic algorithms can be used to modify an image. As time goes by, ink and paper are slowly being replaced by a more practical way to keep or store an artwork such as digital documents, images and videos [12]. Some artworks are no longer incorporated into a scrapbook but, instead, converted into an image form to create a slideshow which is then stored in a disc. This is one of many ways as to how digital technique is used in preserving an art piece. Following are the different types of art which use digital-based technique: internet art, software art, computer-mediated installations, as well as non-traditional art forms: conceptual art, installation art and video[13].

Studies have shown that there are some relevant topics in the subject area which have been researched and discussed. Most research findings use the method of reviewing secondary data where all of the available sources are analysed and compared in order to come up with an original conclusion [5].However, the researcher has found that a gap existsand that the argument is how the aesthetic value of an art can be preserved by using digital technology. By analysing data from resources and previously published articles, the researcher will find the solution to the problems by answering the research questions and come up with recommendations.

5. Research Findings

Preserving the aesthetics of an artwork is crucial in maintaining the quality or the value of art itself. However, to preserve an artwork is different from preserving its aesthetics. In order to understand both, data found in previous articles are analysed.

5.1. Effectiveness of Digital Usage in Preserving an Artwork

Asstudies have shown, an artwork was created using two different approaches:the traditional approach - which refers to expression gained from the art – and, the contemporary approach - which refers to the function of an art piece. The researcher believes that despite the approach, it is very important to preserve an artwork. In this case, in order to understand the effectiveness of digital usage, the advantages and the disadvantages are discussed.

5.2. Effectiveness of Digital Usage in Preserving the Aesthetic

The aesthetic value of an artwork is keyto its attractiveness. Possessing digital technique which enables the preservation of such value is a great advantage in this current digital world. A real life example on cultural heritage preservation programmes presented digitally is taken from the article 'Preserving Europe's Cultural Heritage in the Digital World'. It discusses an art museum that uses digital tools and technique to display the beauty of the European culture [14].Digital technique can actually capture the aesthetic beauty of an artwork by enhancing the image, or present it by taking an interesting approach using audio and video. Loebbecke and Thaller[14].suggested that in preserving the aesthetic beauty of an object, the object should be displayed as online content so that it will be appreciated even more. This practice of digital usage is very useful. The digital world also has its own aesthetics by the way the content is presented. The researcher is very much intriguedby the idea of silent listening and silent reading, which allows viewers to have their own moment in understanding or appreciating the artwork [15].

With a lot of usage of the digital technique, it actually presents a perception and cultural crisis...[16].where it creates an awareness of the relationship between the aesthetics of art and digital technology. The question is that even though digital output or product may be breathtaking, it only exists because machines are programmed in a way that it can follow instructions written specifically to produce an art piece[17].In other words, the machine is the one performing the task, not the artist. Therefore, where does the aesthetics of an artwork stand? This may trigger questions on skills that the artist possesses, besides his or her ability to think creatively while controlling the machine. Another consequence of processing art with digital technology is the ability to re-produce the same artwork more than once. Replicas are very common nowadays and it looks almost identical to the original artwork. However, by doing so, it somehow kills the 'aura' or the exquisite values of the artwork[2].This particular work of art will not just lose its price value but also its aesthetic value.

6. Conclusion

The researcher believes that no matter how modern the era has become and how advanced human knowledge has grown, the traditional aspects of life remains valuable in many ways. Art pieces are better appreciated when they are injected with human and aesthetic values. Lesser use of machine creates better perspective or creativity. A real painting has more value than any digitally enhanced image. In other words, paintings could fetch thousands if not millions of dollars in any part of the world, but the most a piece of digitalised art could be sold for is probably around one thousand dollars only.

However, technology is created to provide its advantages as well. The right way of using digital technology can actually improve the art industry. It is best to master both approach, traditional and modern, but with the perfect balance in order to preserve the aesthetic value of an artwork. The following Figure 1 is students' project from Faculty of Creative Multimedia, Mutimedia University, Malaysia.Students were required to produce an artwork to communicate or conceptualize environmental issues using digital imaging art.

| AinaAzrin_ 1081101241 | AinaAzrin_ 1081101241 |

ChewWinChen_1091103832   ChewWinChen_1091103832

Nurliyana Minhat_1091104478   Tan Kong Cheng_1091102090

Figure 1 is students' project from Faculty of Creative Multimedia, Mutimedia University, Malaysia

7. Discussions and Recommendation

Poss Possibilities offered by the digital world can be a huge advantage to current artists. Product that can only be obtained after years of training and crafting can be done in just weeks or even days by using digital technology (Malina, 1971). This spares the artist timeand energy loss. However, quality of the artwork is difficult to examine since the development of technology and aesthetic values are no longer parallel.

It is undeniable that digital technique can be used in preserving the aesthetics of an artwork as mentioned by Loebbecke and Thaller [14], as well as Cubitt [15]. However, the researcher also agrees with a statement made by Benjamin (1973) that using too many digital tools and technique will actually kill the exclusivity and value of an artwork.

It is undeniable that digital technique can be used in preserving the aesthetic of an artwork as has been mentioned by Loebbecke and Thaller (2005) and also later by Cubitt (1998). However, the researcher also agrees with a statement made by Benjamin (1973) that too much use of digital tools and technique will actually kill the exclusivity and value of an artwork.

In answering the research questions, the researcher believes that it is true that digital technology can be effective in preserving the aesthetic value of an artwork if, and only if, its usage is controlled under certain limitation. The best way to use digital technique in preserving art is to minimiseif not, put a stop to, the alteration, distortion, duplication or any other digitalised method that will kill the exclusivity and the originality of an art piece. If digital technique is used to create an art piece, maybe it should only be used to enhance the piece or to make it aesthetically more beautiful. Another way of using digital technique to preserve an art piece is by creating a presentation which displays the artwork showing off its beauty. The presentation only serves as a platform to present the art piece and not to create it.

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