CINEMATIC AUGMENTED EXPERIENCE: 28 BY KOMPLEX

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EDITORIAL – SCREENCITY JOURNAL SPECIAL ISSUE #3
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Screencity Journal launches its first special issue – a special number conceived to explore a specific theme or project that highlights interesting aspects intersecting, enhancing and questioning Screencity main topics. The selected themes or projects foster a deeper debate and just for this reason we think they deserve to be analyzed with a particular attention. That is the logic driving us towards 28 Komplex, a peculiar case study that gives the chance to approach a number of meaningful topics to which Screencity first special issue is dedicated.

28 is a movie totally realized with Augmented Reality technology. Indeed, the spectator/user is going to find the places where the storytelling is spread, throughout the city of Turin, and geo-located by means of a map and a smartphone or a tablet. The spectator/user is going to create his own urban itinerary and, at the same time, his own storytelling project.

Our editorial board could not avoid focusing its attention on this particular cinematic and urban experience. Thanks to what is now a long-way collaboration, Screencity supported the director Mariano Equizzi and the producers Paolo Bigazzi and Luca Liggio right from the start of this “adventure”. This special issue collects some reflections and notes, with the aim of opening up a fruitful and rich discussion with our readers about 28 and those themes that the project evokes, triggering an interesting mirroring between its specificities and Screencity elective keywords.
28 BY KOMPlex
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Abstract
28, the augmented reality movie by Komplex, is a perfect example of “Postcinema”, a “cinema after the cinema”. A cinema expanded and augmented by technologies that allow the audience to participate and perform the storytelling.

Keywords
Postcinema, Informational City, Media Landscape, Locative Media, Space Augmented, Media City, Portable Media, Ubiquitous Computing

28: A Postcinema Question

28 by Komplex - a particular work in augmented reality or interactive “site specific” urban storytelling - is an arriving point of a series of experimentations in the cinema field that, through the digital technology, is liberated from the obligation of the movie theater and the audience’s passivity. It is not an alternative cinema, as we know it, but simply a form of cinema that remains anchored to the memory of the cinema as history, as language, as device, as a social factor; however, he revises it proposing new methods, forms, and different practices, modifying, this way, the audience’s experience.

A fundamental role is played by digital technology and Internet. The digital technology and the centrality employed by the software as a mean of translation and cataloging, archiviation and revision of each communicative and informative data. After years of reflections on the death of cinema, on the expanded cinema, “remediated”, according with Geert Lovink we can state “We no longer watch films or TV; we watch databases” (Lovink: 2008, p. 11). In this sentence Lev Manovich could exchange the world “database” with “software” (Manovich: 2013).

Not only the arrival of digital but also of the Network as a space of transitions, production, distribution, and fruition. The union digital/Network breaks through the limits of the media concept, proposing itself as a language that includes media, and linguistic forms, methods, texts. It brings them together, it stores them, and it makes them available for navigation and modifications; it inputs them in a flow in which to connect through digital screens, various in format and in quality, but symbolic of the computing process of each device that is nowadays almost fully accomplished. The computing of each device, from telephones to televisions, answers to this need to untag the device from the union with just a single media.
Screens are thresholds to access a universe of data to use or insert, to comment on or manipulate. In this case, the classic definitions of “media” and “broadcasting” show the impossibility to describe these phenomena. So the postcinema is a “cinema after the cinema” that partners up with the cinema as a media, as a device, as an archive and history of forms, practices, and languages, to take these forms, practices, and languages and insert them in a new and different “augmented” environment, with other media in a continuous process — virtually endless — of reprocessing.

**A Cyberpunk Cinema?**

28 leans on a reflection and a years-long practice of a close-knit crew made of Mariano Equizzi (director), Paolo Bigazzi (sound and production), Luca Liggio (production and editing). It is a postcinema reflection that intersects the Cyberpunk, mainly for his restlessness between utopia and dystopia, and his vision, often apocalyptic, in defining a new relationship between thought, conscience, storytelling and body. However, for the crew, Cyberpunk also means thinking a communication that becomes from medial to neuronal: flows of consciousness and participation, performance and connection instead of broadcasting. A concept connected, obviously, as a reflection to the Marshall McLuhan’s thought of media as an expansion of the body. The postcinema by 28 states a further conceptual debt which is the reflection of Antonio Caronia when he connects Cyberpunk (and in particular the work of James G. Ballard) to the theories of Marshall McLuhan.

Caronia describes a new media system in which interior and exterior spaces, mainly real and virtual spaces, are not approached anymore with a dialectic methods but are hybridized and joined, they create a new spacial dimension, expanded and augmented. The new media imply a new bodily and sensory dimension for the human body, furthermore they draw a spacial “augmented” dimension. Just as Equizzi cinema that expands, sneaks in a viral way on the web, searches a shared and aptic dimension, tries the performance and, mainly, augments the real space stratifying it and hybridazing it. In addition, just like many Cyberpunk romances, Equizzi is fascinated by threads, more or less hidden, that connect things, bodies, objects, news, and communications. The complot therefore becomes the most specific story of this postcinematographic thought.

**28 – Plots**

Plots because are an open form of storytelling, hybrid between documentary and fiction, paricipated and paricipatory. Complot, is a word that derives etymologically from the Latin “cum” and “plecto”, meaning to hug together, to intersect, to reunite, to intertwine. Sharing the same semantic root with “complicated” and “complex” but also with “plot”. Here is created a story based on possible narrations, on hidden threads, on potential and virtual connections, on a spacial dimension to use through a performance and therefore a “slide” into the real… a spacial dimension full of facts, objects, and bodies that can (more or less) get complicated among themselves. The plotting, that allows Komplex to unify Leonardo Sciascia and Willliam Gibson, becomes flexible material, becomes form expanded and expandible of facts, communications, acts, and actions. A form open to the unpredictable and to the pontentiality, a form open to active participation. But could Gibson and Sciascia really coexist? Of course! In the moment in which the “detective story” becomes a tool to investigate the reality through facts to collect. 28 is then a discussion on narrative as a model of interpretation of real, to connect the plot, facts, and news. A ploy residing in the same idea of History as an artificial union of events from a cultural discussion. The history narrated is the History of power: each story is a story of power. New technologies and the web move just to store, to open, and to make manipulable data that are also...
stories or fragments of stories to collect, develop, connect. Is it essential to understand the work of Valerio Evangelisti (Equizzi had a chance to cooperate with him) and works exactly on the ability of the Story to open up to possible storytelling universes. Komplex mutates Evangelisti’s technique (also from the work of Robert Shea and Robert A. Wilson) and takes it in a universe that explodes of references, citiations, and symbols. Equizzi is his way to confront an augmented language that finally can expand immensely with the digital/Network.

**Augmenting the Cinema**

McLuhan, fltered through a visionary sensibility, like those of Bruce Sterling, William Gibson, James G. Ballard, and Philip K. Dick. Also, Derrick de Kerchove that has worked on McLuhan's intuition in regards to the spacialized characteristic of the new media (de Kerckhove: 2001). Therefore the public spaces and the city become the new core and the new landscape of the cinema of flows, “expanded” from potentiality and the ubiquity of new media, “augmented” from the effects of connection and geolocation. Geolocation, in Komplex's hand, is not anymore just a form of “site specific” and geographic games, it transforms in a spacial location of narrative fragment for the audience to connect. A network “complicated” and “complexed” made of storytelling “com-plot” to dissect. Komplex's postcinema’s ecological dimension recalls, on one side a performative need of a connection between the world and space; on the other, refers to an ontological system in crisis because of the computerization of the urban spaces (private, public, and transitional) and the emerging spacial communicative system made of multiple and stratifed spaces.

Komplex uses the augmented reality after experimenting with the live cinema and the architectural projections: in both cases it’s a matter of placing in the center the relantionship between performance, media, and body as thestorytelling's epiphany. The digital performance becomes the mean and form of the storytelling practice that expects a body, an expanded body, even just through a smartphone and a tablet and by an app. The performance seen also as a proposal of cooperation active in the text, as participation, sharing, and interacting with the text. Komplex refuses the mere and “pure” aesthetic game to reason on the narrative's possibilities of the happening. It a matter of using possible storytelling through connections, findings, epiphanies, and fragments of a discussion that goes from the succession of facts and real people to the field of symbols. Equizzi uses cabalistics signs just as dates, and facts references, and real people to create a big system (database? platform?) of possible connections in which the narrative is revealed as a series of possible plots that offer at the public the possibility to complete the work.

In this sense, it is fundamental the insistence on the body as a solicitation through sound. Sounds and noises are orchestrated, not so much to create an analogy, but as an emotional rug with which to solicit an aptic sensory. Paolo Bigazzi’s sound denotes a way of shocking sound system that calls for the single sense to participate in a rite that has very little to do with the homescreen, and that calls for a hurban rizomatic enjoyment through the headset. A sound, son of the Walkman (and of the IPod after) that is spacialized, performic, individual, and social, and at the same time, hybrid in mixing music and “concrete” sounds. In the same way, the live sets of the live cinema’s experience remind the happenings and, if not directly, the raves of the electronic culture. The music pulls, emotionally charges the body and its movement (dancing as a phenomenon of participation and enjoyment), sends to a dimension of expanded conscience that involves the trance before the listening. It is a cinema that is re-ritualizing: redefines the places of use (the “Black Box”), the experience's modality (for example: darkness, passivity, and the silence) and puts in crisis the positions of the director and the author. Komplex uses the digital as a form of technological communication above the medial. Not multi-media, nor iper-media, but exactly above-media.
It's not about referring to Rosalind Krauss' argument on the "post-media" forms (Krauss: 2000), it's instead about affirming and practicing the reduction of any of the previous media's form, practice, method, and expression to a single technological language translatable and applicable in ubiquitous and under standards and patterns managed and defined only by the user. Postcinema as also post-cartoon, post-game, post-television, and post-media, just because the media are de-ritualized, and ritualized after, in a new form that expects participation, interactivity, ubiquity, sharing, connection and geolocation. It is there that the public space becomes an ideal place for the rite that intertwines performances, bodies, spaces, architectures and urban forms. Live experiences become architectural experiences in the moment in which they explore the potential of public space in the transformation of a shared place of communication, and participation in a process that hybridizes the real with the virtual. In this sense, as we were saying, the passage from the experiences of architectural projections to the adoption of the technology of the augmented reality becomes logical and actually necessary. Augmented reality is a technology that allows Komplex to rethink the cinema by putting at the center body, space (and ubiquity) and interaction. Interaction, according to a logic that derives from the virtual reality and features videogames that are involving and interactive (that decisively are part of the set of the director's methods and aesthetics, just think of *Syrena, Agentz, R.A.C.H.E.*)

**(In)Conclusions**

28 is a mystery object, a work that is indomitable and untranslatable according to conventional patterns and parameters. A work that crosses different experiences just like the Live Cinema, the Augmented Reality Games, also Net Art, Public Art etc. A work not compromisable to the medial encoded system. A digital and viral work that lives on the Network and that feeds on the geolocation. A work that calls in question the audience that is, by now, decreased culturally in the logics of web 2.0, the social network, and that pushes for a web 3.0... that “Internet of Things” that redefines, not only the bodies and the citizen-users actions, but also the same categories of space and place.

**Bibliography**


**Biography**

Co-director of Screencity Journal. Collaborator, reviewer and scientific committee of various international conferences, festivals, reviews and book series. He wrote and edited various books including: Screen City, Music Video (with Alessandro Amaducci); Oltre il cinema – Metropoli e media; Dal Postmoderno al post-cinema (edited by); Cinema e web (edited by).
28: SOME NOTES ABOUT INTERACTIVITY AND SITE-SPECIFICITY
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Abstract
The article takes into consideration the production 28 from the structural point of view. Focuses of the analysis are the cinematic aspects and cross-media elements that contribute to a high-technological product, which structures its narration by means of a site-specific storytelling form unfolded throughout the urban texture.
I argue the innovative nature of the project is not to be found in the original mix of media and distribution platforms, but rather it might reside in the potentiality to reshape existing filmic, visual and artistic procedures framing them within a new hybrid form.

Keywords
Augmented Reality, Cinema and Media, Postmedia, Cross-media Storytelling, Media City, Media Landscape, Portable Media, Site Specific, Urban Design

Defining 28
Launched to the public as both a live performance¹, an ARG (Alternate Reality Game), a “urban nomadic film” and a “cloud culture creature”², the project 28 is surrounded by a mysterious aura. Partly due to its content that clearly echoes a sci-fi/noir/dystopian universe, the cross-media attitude by Komplex Live Cinema Group fosters this very suggestion and immediately underscores the multifaceted nature of its work.
This poses a preliminary question: how is 28 to be defined? Is it possible to formulate a plain, non-ambiguous definition? In terms of medium specificity the answer seems definitely hard to be found.
The project was born as an experimental online writing started by Mariano Equizzi as “a narrative, participative, paranoid blog” (Bazzichelli: 2008, p. 322), later fictionalized thanks to the introduction of a character that replaced the director in the narrative. This is a hypnotist operating in a strange imaginary city, ruled by a sort of artificial identity called Multiple Artificial Intelligence Algorithm (M.A.F.I.A.) managed for criminal purposes by power elites. Such a thematic mixture of crime, technology, conspiracy, urban atmosphere and surreal spirit mirrors the choice not to commit to a unique genre, nor to a unique medium.
The use of audiovisual material, comics aesthetics, cinematographic technique, interactive design, video game, augmented reality tools, online platforms (i.e. Youtube, Spotify, Pinterest etc.), smartphone apps, avant-garde artistic practices, and the strong reference to a real context where the user/spectator is asked to act are thus the components of a hybrid perspective. The intermedia ensemble represents the crucial aspect emphasized by
the authors, who pointed out how “the project features a hacker approach, based on the attitude to
disassemble, understand and reconfigure the limits of narration by means of alternative technologies”
(Equizzi, 2013b; author’s translation). The director’s words represent an interesting point of view that
highlights a particular investment on technology, alluding at the same time to a certain opposition between
technology itself and narration. In other terms, media and their content seem to be conceived here as
something separated, as if the object of representation would stand for an old-fashioned element which has
somehow lost its attractive power compared to the more appealing, all the rage dispositifs used to spread it.
On the contrary, I believe the strength of 28 is precisely the almost visionary combination of narrative and
technology, underscoring the creative possibilities to develop a non-linear narration through new screen
media and interactive tools without necessarily overcome the taste for the development of a fictional fil rouge.
Not by chance, Equizzi himself argues in the same interview: “We didn't start [our research] from a specific
medium, [28 stems from] a collaboration of different media, some of which are linear, while some other are
interactive […] We wanted to make these media collide in order to create an organism able to support the
mise en scène” (idem) of the concept.
Despite the exclusive emphasis reserved to 28’s technological components, I would maintain that both
Komplex’s linguistic background and the way in which new media are mixed betray a visual imagery that I
hardly wouldn’t trace back to cinema – be it in its post-medium forms rather than the classical ones – for the
project involves a number of different strategies potentially able to recreate a coherent narrative whole. I do
not mean to evoke a linear narration scheme, characterized by a clearly recognizable one-main-plot structure³
(which, besides, I do not think was the director’s priority), rather I propose to consider the multiple
contribution brought by different media and the diverse technological tools used within the project as
convergent threads that gain incisiveness in the very moment in which they are integrated in the same
texture. Consequently, I see 28 itself as a text – an augmented text featuring the experiential characters
imposed by the sensory overload typical of the contemporary mediaspace.⁴ Hence, Komplex’s project
represents the emblematic example of a cross-media product that creates an encounter between textual and
experiential approach. Providing a case study rich in both narrative and pragmatics, I find 28 particularly
suitable to be analyzed through this two-fold matrix. It can feed in a meaningful way the discussion leading
to a systematization of this model – a model which has recently been at the center of the theoretical debate⁵ –
favoring a broad et-et approach, in that it offers some interesting material to support the formulation of a
complex view. Such a model is able to actually grasp expanded media practices and the current hybrid
patterns of consumption exposed to a rapid and constant redefinition.
Yet again, in its clear attitude toward polymorphism 28 couples textual and experiential aspects. In so doing,
the production perfectly complies with the post-medium cinematic domain. I argue this is true at least for
two reasons: on the one hand it adheres to an expanded conception of cinema; on the other hand, the project
procedurally resembles some recent filmic forms that features a strong technological mark, being anyway
acknowledged as moving image-based products in all respects.

**Mixing legacies and innovation**

The idea of an overflowing moving image explicitly refers to Gene Youngblood’s fortunate expression
formulated some forty years ago. The media mix used by Komplex produces precisely an expansion of the
possibilities of moving image language, and thus it is to be understood as a creative experiment that
represents a fold in the evolution of contemporary cinematic experience. As the author of Expanded Cinema
would have summed it up, “it’s all cinema, including virtual reality goggles” (Youngblood in Huhtamo: 1990).
Along this inclusive direction, that expresses what I called elsewhere the “centrifugal” trend characterizing filmic forms in the post-media age, it is easy to see continuity between 28 and some recent kind of audiovisual production such as interactive and web-based documentaries. 

More precisely, what do these formulae share? On which analytical level is it possible to recognize some continuity?

By way of introduction I think it is necessary to say that my attempt to connect 28 to a particular type of documentary film does not rise from the conviction that Equizzi & Co.’s production can by any means be assimilated to the documentary genre. 28 has no intention to record and testify reality, though the use of digital interactive technology and the creation of a link between individual, audiovisual interface and reality still represents a common ground between i-docs and my case study. In this sense, even if the former productions are defined as proper films and the latter represents a hybrid rhizomatic media artifact, they both encompass a number of operative processes and fruition strategies that open up the traditional filmic field to a wider set of practices.

As i-docs, and to some extent as cinema, 28 finds its raison d'être in interactivity. I identify at least three main features that characterize the underlying logic, which inspired Komplex. 28 uses interactivity in order to:

- provide a series of pre-existing contents to the user and let him organize them;
- invite the user to enrich the narrative thanks to bottom-up creative uploads;
- bridge the fictional and physical dimensions by means of augmented reality components able to reconfigure the users’ sense of space.

Taking into considerations these elements, 28 seems to be quite fitting in Sandra Gaudenzi's i-docs taxonomy. In particular, I would maintain it triggers an experiential mode of interactivity (Gaudenzi: 2013). Indeed, the project offers an assemblage of physical elements and digital data that blurs the separation between virtual and real context. The result is a hybrid space, that is to say a complex dimension, which is configured thanks to locative technology and networked, mobile screen media able to activate a nomadic, on-site experience. The visual language adopted by the director recreates a representational world opened to the interaction of the user in terms of browsing, while the cross-media structure allows a participative attitude in the construction of this fictional world by enabling the subject both to contribute content-wise, and to integrate the narration within the real environment. These dynamics set off a multilayer negotiation that reconfigures the spatial/temporal coordinates of experience starting from the user’s perception of the resulting augmented reality. Therefore, interactivity is developed here with the double intention to provide a contextualization of the user/consumption, and to embed the narration process in the subject’s world. I would describe the effect of this very kind of interaction as the outcome of a performative logic of enactment, since the individual is involved in first person from a representational and bodily point of view, and he is asked to perform a set of actions to unfold the plot. It is not a chance, then, if Equizzi refers to 28 as a “digital multicellular entity, […] an organism” (2013b; author's translation) that evokes a deep sense of embodiment able to root the narrative in the subject’s organic dimension of experience. Komplex's ultimate aim is thus is the co-creation of a hybrid texture made up of physical and ephemeral elements. As Gaudenzi systematically points out, “when interactive computation mediates the relationship of the user with a physical environment it creates a dynamic space (Massumi, 2002: p. 183) […] Compared to other types of interactive modes, the experiential one has the peculiarity of adding layers of data to physical space, creating a complex and dynamic context” (Gaudenzi: 2013, p. 63).
The perceived reality, whereas enhanced by the audiovisual digital material, is the scenario where 28 articulates its *mise en scène*. As in many other recent i-docs, the project promotes a high degree of immersion, achieved by the contribution of diverse media “clouds” collected in the fictional frame, inside which the user is allowed to have a voice. These areas are strategically arranged by the authors, but once inside the subject can share his impressions and express his ideas freely: they reframe a sort of open database structure, where the interaction spaces and the conspiracy story featuring the hypnotist are located side by side. In this sense, perception becomes a weaving operation, characterized by the instability of the fibers composing a hybrid filmic, new media texture. Such unsteady nature is due to the unpredictability generated by the interaction. As just briefly anticipated, the user contribution is structured according to a pre-existing path, managed thanks to a coordinated presence in the social media and to a networked geo-location ecosystem, but the movements followed by the subject in this mixed, cross-media, environment are not completely controllable. He has therefore a real exploratory role enacted by clicking on pre-located options that can be enhanced with UGC (i.e. Pinterest boards, tweets, Facebook comments and connections, Youtube video views and implementations, etc.). This is the reason why the representations, the meanings and the creative associations inspired by 28 are in constant elaboration. I believe the quality of this interaction mechanism is meant to be an opportunity to engage the user stimulating a bottom-up storytelling, and so is the situated character of the experience.

If the reference to some techniques, codes and procedural elements typical of a certain kind of documentary highlight a cinematic genealogy of Komplex's production, the rootedness-related aspects connected to the showcased approach to space possibly represent an even clearer legacy in respect to avant-garde and visual arts. The idea of developing the project narrative by moving throughout urban space echoes those artworks characterized by a performative language and reflects a certain psychogeographic suggestion. This is not the case to retrace a detailed history of the Futuristic aesthetics of movement, the Dadaist inclination for urban walks and the collective ambulations organized by the Surrealists, nor to recall the well-established figure of the *flâneur* that inspired and fed a flourishing literary and artistic production from the Nineteenth century on. It is nevertheless worth mentioning the Situationist strategies introduced some time later by the Lettrist International, because I would argue that what 28 favors is indeed a media-based, highly technological form of *dérive*. In the light of this position, the forenamed mixture of textual and experiential elements appears to be definitely strengthened. I already explained that the project could be considered as a text: the reference to avant-garde background calls forth a double level textuality, because on the one hand it is possible to recognize a narration telling the sci-fi story of the hypnotist against the M.A.F.I.A. (text level 1), and on the other hand the subject's movements throughout the city can be reckoned as a way of integrating the fictional plot by Equizzi with a factual sign that works as a trace left by the passage of the user (text level 2). In other words, according to a long cultural tradition we can wear the shoes of a “neo-Land artist”, writing his text just by means of walking. In this sense, 28 becomes a complex multilayered textual experience, where the itinerary has a symbolic meaning and acquires therefore a deep aesthetical value. Strolling is thus to be intended as a linguistic gesture endowed with a creative effect, because simply by moving through the hybrid space provided by the urban/narrative fabric the subject gives birth to new folds of a cross-media augmented texture.

How can walking be a fertile operation in textual terms? How does this find its connection with the visual spectacle offered by the cinematic material constituting 28? Which kind of relationship links walking and interaction?

Similarly to cinema, where the movement of images articulates an enunciation, the subject’s motion practices trigger an utterance, which is notably a textual process. As far as the cinematic material feeding the project’s
universe is concerned, walking while holding a screen media device is a way to explore that very material: passing through the city means to cross the hybrid 28 space and, for example, using Aurasma is possible to disclose an audiovisual element appearing among the buildings just in front of the user. Consequently, such a kinetic attitude does not solely imply a pure physical movement, but rather includes a set of new media mechanisms that enhance the march with a technological touch. Geo-localization, tagging, real time intervention on the city map intervene and open up a repository gathering a wide set of cinematic contents, interactive areas accessible to the individual, remastered street art codes, revamped versions of classical urban iconographies; the result is a spectacle that produces situated meanings and knowledge, feeding the user's “walkscape”. Thanks to portable screen media, Komplex's project makes visible and accessible one's own visualization of the fictional world and gathers the augmented reality pieces scattered throughout the city. In this sense, the project reframes the tight connection with the context featuring site-specific artworks and media productions. Such a logic is reinterpreted here in order to foster the user's direct enactment, and joins the participatory model I already analyzed in reinforcing 28's engagement strategy. This aim is further amplified by the strolling, because site-specificity allows the user to lose himself in the “palimpsestic depth” of the city and to enjoy his flânerie. The impression of the subject is eventually a refinement of the sense of place, whereas 28 reflects on a multifaceted, heterotopic space; playing an active role in a sort of manipulation of the environment, the individual conceives it as a performed space, in other terms as an “anthropological place”, characterized by his own presence, his action as well as by a genius loci that connects the idea of space with that of identity. In this perspective, the constantly changing relation between the user and his context highlights the mutual influence they exercise one on the other.

Conclusions: Changing geographies

28 provides a scenario in which artistic codes are renewed, visual language, cinematographic imagery and old-media forms are enhanced by the innovative possibilities allowed by new technologies, offering a product that adheres to a participatory consumption model. In this frame, the user's contribution finds two expression options: interaction and site-specificity. The former adopts an experiential mode and triggers a negotiation process between the narrative universe and the real spatial/temporal coordinates; the result is a new hybrid dimension where both fiction and reality converge. The latter is combined with a motion attitude in the form of a technologically renewed dérive; such a mix releases what Anne Friedberg defined as a “mobilized virtual gaze, [supporting] an imaginary flânerie through an imaginary elsewhere and an imaginary elsewhen” (Friedberg: 1993, p. 3). Komplex's project works in a heterotopic space situated across this boundary between real and ephemeral: it invites the subject to take part in a storytelling process that takes place in a physical environment, which is also able to mirror its effects in a parallel fictional world. Both strategies ultimately enhance engagement, because the user is called to perform an action that implicates him quite directly – be it defined as an interactive encounter, a linguistic gesture (walking as writing) and/or an aesthetical operation (walking as performative mapping).

The interactive, geo-located, multimedia geography created by 28 synthetically represents the core of the project, but works as a meaningful metaphor, too. The augmented city is continuously stimulated by integrations of audiovisual materials, which turn it into an ever changing, textual, yet performative, narrative and experiential representation. In the same way, the contemporary mediascape is crossed by ongoing trends, which give birth to a self-renewing, vivid geography that we have here attempted to record.
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Biography

Miriam De Rosa earned her Ph.D. at the Catholic University of Milan in 2011. Since then she collaborates with the Department of Media and Performing Arts of the Catholic University of Milan, teaching *Audiovisual Cultures*, and serving as assistant lecturer for the classes of *Communication Pragmatics* and *Cultural History of Audiovisual Media*. Her researches tackle the complex relationship among subject, space and filmic device in the post-medium age. Objects of her studies range from visual arts to media platforms and live cinema performances. On these issues she wrote diverse essays collected in Italian and international anthologies, and the volume *Cinema e postmedia. I territori del filmico nel contemporaneo* (2013). She is a member of NECS Publication Committee and co-director of *Screencity Journal*.

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1 So does Paolo Bigazzi Alderigi, on iter-research website http://www.iter-research.com [retrieved 06.11.2013].
2 These definitions are suggested by director Mariano Equizzi – namely he mentions ARG in D. Morreale, “A self reflection through the cyber mirror: 28 by Komplex”, in this volume; the formulation “urban nomadic film” is included in an unpublished manuscript about 28 (Equizzi, 2013a), while the latter is inferred from a recent online interview released by Technonews.it (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ltio203nnIU retrieved 06.11.2013).
3 For a synthesis of the basic narration patterns, see at least Bal (1997).
4 The term mediaspace is clearly referring to Couldry, McCarthy (2004).
5 I cannot deal extensively with this issue here: a more detailed reconstruction of the debate is provided in De Rosa (2013).

According to a certain psychoanalytic theory of the seventh art, cinema would exist only when the spectator is present. On this topic, please refer at least to C. Metz, (1982), The imaginary signifier. Psychoanalysis and the cinema, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

I also dealt with the hybrid form stemming from these two elements, and I called it “space-image” (De Rosa 2013).

The strategy of dérive has notably been introduced by Debord (1956).

Concerning Land Art, see at least Tiberghien (1995).

This aspect is at the center of many researches; please see at least Davila (2002) and Careri (2006).

On this issue, please refer to De Certeau (1990).

The term is proposed in Careri (2006).

The expression was coined by Laura Rascaroli and presented in her lecture Street view: European routes, cosmopolitan takes (Glasgow, Screen Studies Conference, 30 June 2013).

For an explication of heterotopia, please see M. Foucault (1984).

Such a definition assesses a peculiar space that has been qualified by the presence of something/someone being; the concept is widely discussed in the frame of the debate about the philosophy of space, which is impossible to reconstruct here. A clear and more immediate use of the notion is to be found in Augé (1995) as opposed to the famous non-lieu.
Abstract
The text analyzes the work of artists who use augmentation, information and immersion in specific contexts—public or private spaces. The aim of the analysis is to understand socio-cultural transformations in the fields of art and technology in social space and what new forms of aggregation and participation have developed, providing an opportunity to reflect on new concepts of democracy that are emerging in our global media age. The question underlying the study is how do artists who use augmentation, information and immersion give new meaning to the concept of public space, changing the proprietary boundaries of that space and concept of what it is to perceive reality.

Keywords
Media Art, Spatial Art, Public Space, Immersion, Ubiquity, New Aesthetic, Ubiquitous Computing, Augmented Reality, Wearable Computers, Smart Objects, Smartphone, Pervasive Computing, Surveillance, Data-space, Big Data, Noir, Cyber Culture

Introduction
A whole new scene is emerging. Starting with the question: if the concept of data-space has become a paradigm for contemporary society, what are the implications for art? The works of artists who use augmentation, information and immersion in specific contexts—public or private spaces—have the goal to create interventionist actions and collective experiences within an experimental augmented framework. These artists play on ambiguities in defining what reality is—how it is perceived, felt and detected. The aim of the analysis is to understand socio-cultural transformations in the fields of art and technology in social space, and what new forms of aggregation and participation have developed, providing an opportunity to reflect on new concepts of democracy that are emerging in our global saturated media age.

Recently Gibson described things this way: “Cyberspace has everted. It has turned inside out. Colonized the physical.” (Gibson: 2010)
Let’s begin with the symbolic work “The Apparition of the Unicorn, Pink and Invisible at the Same Time” by the artist collective Les Liens Invisible, in which “Art overtakes Faith in imagination.”¹
These prankster artists took the phenomenon of web-based parody religions to produce a humorous intervention that breaks the law at the same time. Using augmented reality, they brought about an event that people on the Internet had long been waiting for: the apparition of the Invisible Pink Unicorn, a legendary
figure that first appeared on the Net in the early 1990s as an eminent deity to satirize theistic belief. In the words of Steve Eley "Invisible Pink Unicorns are beings of great spiritual power. We know this because they are capable of being invisible and pink at the same time." (Huberman: 2007, p. 103). The goddess made her appearance as a cyber-monument in Saint Peter's Square in Rome on April 23 - Easter Day - 2011. The work demonstrates the illegal, unauthorized use of public space. Perhaps not everyone knows that the eponymous square in front of Saint Peter's Basilica is not located on Italian territory, as the Vatican City, home of Pope Francisco I, is an independent state. It is also an undemocratic state, where protests and demonstrations of any kind are strictly forbidden, a situation guaranteed by tight security. The Invisible Pink Unicorn was chosen by the artists because it had become a rallying point for activists, and in a certain sense “illegal”. Les Liens Invisibles’ “ubiquitous monument” has prompted “an eternal reshape of the Eternal City,” as the Internet everts out of itself and into reality. “A Monument to the Invisible Pink Unicorn - which is a work and symbol of atheism, fervid imagination and hope - has been permanently placed in the middle of the square and all the passersby can now admire it through the comfortable viewer of their smart-phones freely installing the popular Layar AR application.” According to the authors, “the Invisible Unicorn is not a joke and it won't be removed it from its current position. The virtual sculpture is 'real', (in)visible and it has to be taken into serious consideration: it is the way a recontextualized symbol can alter, challenge and reshape the perception of a public space—especially a very closed and symbolic one like the [sic] St. Peter's Square in Rome.”

Squatting in Space

Exploring the issue aroused by using AR technologies as “site vs. non-site,” “materiality vs. immateriality” or ubiquity of an art that is “not here, not there” brings us to the topic of representation in art. With the birth of net.art, the Web began to be used as the space par excellence for all that was immaterial, encouraging new directions in art focused on the real versus the virtual. “The 1990s were about the virtual. It started with the media obsession with Virtual Reality (VR). It is quite possible that this decade of the 2000s will turn out to be about the physical—that is, physical space filled with electronic and visual information.” (Manovich: 2005, p. 1). Since 2002, Lev Manovich has traced the development “of the technologies which deliver data to, or extract data from, physical space - and which already are widely employed at the time of this writing (early 2002/2005).” (Manovich: 2005, p. 1). Manovich thus turns the crux of the matter on its head; the point is not technology but space, and the definition of art that overlays and occupies that space. What impact does this style of art have on society and on the public? In what way does it appropriate public and private space? And in doing so what political issues does it raise and what participatory democratic processes does it activate?

William Gibson in a recent article writes: "Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon prison design is a perennial metaphor in discussions of digital surveillance and data mining, but it doesn't really suit an entity like Google." (Gibson: 2010) Manovich explains: "This close connection between surveillance and assistance is one of the key characteristics of the high-tech society. This is how these technologies are made to work, and this is why I am discussing data flows from the space (surveillance, monitoring, tracking) and into the space (cellspace applications, computer screens and other examples below) together." (Manovich: 2005, p. 4). It is easy to see that the heart of the matter lies in the definition of, or focus on, social space, or Augmented Space, as a specific characteristic of high-tech society. Deriving the term from “augmented reality”, Manovich refers to this new kind of space as “augmented space,” which is becoming a reality and works very well. What is never explicitly mentioned, however, are the political implications that naturally arise from this overlaying of layers, made possible by tracking and
monitoring users: “delivering information to users in space and extracting information about these users are closely connected. Thus augmented space is also monitored space.” (Manovich: 2005, p. 6).

In response to this encroaching form of social control Clemente Pestelli and Gionatan Quintini, accepted Share Festival’s invitation to produce the Special Project 2010 with their usual creative cheekiness. Specially designed for the sixth Piemonte Share Festival, the project mustered all the surreal and virtual imagination that lies at the centre of their work to invade Turin’s urban environment. *R.I.O.T./Reality Is Out There* was a series of urban strikes invisible to the naked eye—but for that no less tangible—using augmented realities that surround us every day. The public was invited to uncover the virtual sculptures through a game, a digital urban treasure hunt, and was treated to the sight of flying objects such as floating bananas, Facebook banners, revolutionary slogans, Space Invader icons and so on.

Deconstructing the natural association that has existed ever since the Stone Age between reality and the tools we build to control it, *R.I.O.T.* turns this relationship on its head by using reality as a tool, as a means through which we move to explore a universe visible only on our smart phones, creating a sort of paradoxical tourism. Setting their sights on augmented reality, or rather on the what the myth of ‘augmented reality’ appears to promise, the city of Turin was invaded by a series of imaginary installations squatting in key locations.

**MoMA Invasion**

Other projects with direct political connotations for the Art System have been organized by other artists. One very clever example was the virtual augmented reality show held on October 9, 2010 at the MoMA building in New York—only the MoMA did not know about it. The infiltration was organized as part of Conflux, the psychogeography festival. Sander Veenhof and Mark Skwarek, the two artists behind the invasion, extended to the public a ‘cordial’ tongue-in-cheek invitation to their temporary exhibition, adding a post scriptum that the MoMA itself was yet to be involved. Squatting in the halls of the MoMA in New York, the exhibition featured augmented reality art in its proper context: a contemporary art museum, showcasing the radical new possibilities and implications that augmented reality is bringing to the cultural and creative field. Over thirty artists took part in the “art invasion’ annex exhibition”, distributing their works on all the floors of the building and effectively taking over the MoMA. In the artists’ statement, Veenhof and Skwarek attribute remarkable responsibility to a technology that allows provocation without the risk of arrest that graffiti artists face, even though they are not anonymous. They called it ‘progression’ in the field of art; depending on the way you look at it, it is artistic freedom or just plain illegal.

Space is expanding in terms of the information it holds, and is being augmented through the addition of media such as images, video, sound, music, words and data, which are introduced in space, but also captured within space. Augmented space is a space that is monitored and watched at the same time; it is a space in which users are tracked, where data is distributed but also extracted. In this context, the aesthetics of ubiquitous computing opposes art to virtual reality by expanding on the digital and taking it into the physical dimension, in what we might call “Spatial Art”.

As yet another label, “Spatial Art”, is hardly indispensable and will probably be short-lived as the never-ending hype of digital technologies and the derived continuous flow of newness and obsolescence. Nevertheless, it can help us reconstruct the narratives of certain specific artistic practices. Spatial Art overlays and unites several spaces into one, making artistic use of time, movement and data or information in a space defined by growth in technological interaction, i.e., a data-space. Spatial Art speaks to a public on the move, to a public that is mobile and not stationary, obliging us to realize that the media that we wear are part of the objects that make up our world. (Bolter, Grusin: 1999, p. 249).
From an aesthetic point of view, the question of space is not new in art. Reaching out into the third dimension, into space, from a flat, two-dimensional canvas is a recurring theme throughout the history of art. Nowadays the problem of bringing together two different spaces is conceived in much broader terms. Overlaying dynamic and contextualized data onto physical space brings change, dynamism, interactivity and multimediality. That is, how to introduce into an artwork those elements that characterize reality as the continuous flow of states that we perceive as change. The contrast between site and non-site, between the real and the virtual, between being here and there at the same time—the ubiquity of objects and images, the relationship between physical space and artworks—is a field widely explored by artists.

Every single place on Earth has coordinates that can be tracked technologically; every single space can be surveilled. As Korzybski put it, the map is not the territory—a concept later examined and developed by Bateson, though also explored by Borges in his well-known short story *On Exactitude in Science*. Maps today—spanning Google, GIS, GPS and the entire web itself, including games such as Foursquare and social networks, which themselves publish content in the form of maps, graphic data and infosthetics that are directly geolocalized, and hence are forms of territorial representation—have become activities and practices of socialization, interacting with social life. The result, as we have seen, is the illusion of living within a technological Panopticon in which it is no longer possible to dabble in any form of expression beyond control and outside of sovereignty: we ourselves produce the data that fulfill the contemporary paradigm of surveillance and control. By subjectifying the process of subjectification, biopolitics is self-generating. (Foucault: 2004, p. 261). The technological Panopticon is an expression of augmented power that pervades from the inside out, constructed as a series of multiple power relationships. Through those power relationships, through the invisibility of control, the biopolitics of social control is applied.

From an aesthetic point of view, contributing to the architectural construction and maintenance of the network—the “social sculpture” of today quoting Beuys’ “extended definition of art,” later developed into the idea of “social sculpture” and his thoughts on how and whether art should interfere with politics—has led artists to work in new fields that contain elements of new forms of participatory democracy. One example of this process started with the Invisible Pavilion. The Invisible Pavilion was an uninvited, experimental, hallucinatory experience of augmentation, information and immersion in a specific context, involving the unauthorized use of public space, which squatted in the exhibition spaces of the 54th Venice Art Biennale. It was a performance involving the “flow” of digital-based works of art, which filled the whole Giardini concourse where the national pavilions were located. Curated by Les Liens Invisibles and myself, the main purpose of the project was to augment the spaces of the Biennale with a stream of signs and symbols, in an attempt to emphasize how producing art is a state of flow in the “always-on” age. The format used for inviting artists to contribute to the performance was also designed specially for the use of augmentation, information and immersion. Artists were not asked for ‘one’ piece from a collection but for a ‘stream’ of pieces, since the idea was not to use the augmented space to reproduce the same curatorial scheme as the visible Biennale. The Invisible Pavilion project led to a new partnership with the artistic collective Manifest.AR and their Venice Biennale 2011 AR Intervention. Together a format was built that stepped up the interventionist component of the projects.

Nine artists—Artie Vierkant, Constant Dullaart, CONT3XT.NET, IOCOSE, Jon Rafman, Les Liens Invisibles, Molleindustria, Parker Ito, and REFF–RomaEuropa FakeFactory—were invited to contribute to the pavilion project, turning the Biennale space into a performance by providing a stream of works for the entire length of the exhibition.

Molleindustria is an Italian team of artists, designers and programmers, whose aim is to encourage serious discussion of the social and political implications of videogames. Their strategy is to involve media activists, net-artists, habitual gamers and detractors of videogames. Their intervention and contribution to the Invisible
Pavilion targeted the Chinese Pavilion, after Chinese artist Ai Weiwei was arrested at Beijing Airport on April 3, 2011, while en route to Hong Kong. His arrest appeared to be part of a larger crackdown on democracy activists and dissidents. Augmented Perspective references Ai Weiwei’s series of photographs Study of Perspective, allowing visitors to superimpose the artist’s one-finger salute onto the surrounding landscape.

The Chinese Pavilion, it is known, was under the direct control of the Chinese government, leading Molleindustria to denounce Italian complicity with the Chinese dictatorship, stating, “While the international art community is mobilizing for the release of Ai Weiwei by pressuring Chinese authorities and demonstrating at embassies around the world, the Venice Biennale provides a central stage for government-endorsed Chinese art, becoming, de facto, an accomplice of this unacceptable attack on freedom of expression.”

For REFF - Roma Europa Fake Factory - “Defining what is real is an act of power. Being able to reinvent reality is an act of freedom. REFF promotes the dissemination and reappropriation of all technologies, theories and practices that can be used to freely and autonomously reinvent reality.” This commitment is what led the artists to invent REFF AR Drug, an augmented reality drug combining three “very powerful molecules”: REMIXine, “known to augment the total entropy of systems”; REALITene, whose “configuration is not determined in the lab, but is left to the shaping processes enacted by the patient and its surrounding context”; and last but not least, REINVENTum, “a compound that collaborates with the other molecules found in our drugs to reassemble components into new forms once their bonds have been disassembled.”

According to the artists, the purpose of the drug is to treat biopolitical issues such as social depression, fear of the future, precariousness, anthropological distress, lack of opportunity, communication totalitarianism, scarcity of freedom and intolerant social ecosystems. It has yet to be launched on the market.

CONT3XT.NET is more conceptual in its work. Founded in January 2006 by Sabine Hochrieser, Michael Kargl, Birgit Rinagl and Franz Thalmair, this Vienna-based collective takes the idea of the ‘context’ as its starting point, to reflect upon the spatial, temporal, discursive and institutional framework in which contemporary conceptual artistic practices are grounded. For the Invisible Pavilion the collective produced Blemish, one of the most scheming and intriguing works streamed. As the artists explain:

“The work blemish pursues the technological limitations of mediated images by extinguishing single components of it. Ephemeral image vacancies are inscribed in the mobile display as a layer of defective pixels and can be read as an intervention in the technological conditions of devices that serve for the representation of reality by digital means. Equally, blemish is an intervention in the public space, giving priority to the context of the global art world as well as targeting the blind spots of its modes of production and representation. The unstable nature of reality as well as the contemporary methods of its reproduction is called into question: Which of the significant components of a digital product are visible, which are not? Which components of an overall image are not on display, deliberately or accidentally? Which of the many artistic formats appears in the canon of contemporary art, which of them are blanked out in the files of its operating system? The immaterial defect of form—a dead pixel—is inscribed in the auratic art spaces of the Venice Biennial. Barely perceptible for the viewers it is disguised as a loose arrangement of black squared errors which finally can be read as an abstract comment about the blemished context of art.”

Constant Dullaart’s Invisible Watermark and Jon Rafman’s works Pollock Tank, Georgia O’Keefe Spinner and Matisse David, forming part of the series Brand New Paint Job, have much in common with the ‘New Aesthetic’ theorized by James Bridle. Lots of images made up of lots of pixels was the answer to a figurative approach to the New Aesthetic’s reproduction of reality, questioning the unstable nature of the real world and the contemporary methods used for its digital reproduction.
Working on the Invisible Pavilion project for the 54th Venice Biennale, it so happened that we came across another group of artists working on much the same issue, so we decided to cooperate with them and launch a joint attack on the Biennale from different fronts and perspectives. In June 2011, the cutting-edge international cyberartist group Manifest.AR¹¹ issued a statement to the general public and to the president and director of the 54th Venice Biennale informing them that they had created additional pavilions in the Giardini concourse, built in the new medium of augmented reality, and that some of the works had leaked out into the public space of Saint Mark’s Square. The artists Mark Skwarek, Sander Veenhof, Tamiko Thiel, Will Peppenheimer, John Craig Freeman, Lily and Hong Lei, Naoko Tosa and John Cleater all took part directly in the project. As Tamiko Thiel explains:

“Augmented reality has redefined the meaning of ‘public space.’ As corporations privatize many public spaces and governments put the rest under surveillance, augmented reality artists take over the invisible but actual realm that overlays real space with multiple parallel universes. Augmented reality actualizes the metaverse in the real universe, merging the digital and the real into a single, common space. Augmented reality can conquer space but it is not indifferent to space. With my artworks you must negotiate real space in order to view the works. They are usually not single images or objects, but installations that surround you. In order to look at them you must move your body in space, looking up, down and twisting around.”¹²

In Shades of Absence: Outside Inside, Tamiko Thiel inserted into the closed curatorial space of the Giardini concourse in Venice the silhouetted figures of artists who have been threatened with arrest or physical violence. Regardless of whether they are outsiders or insiders to the Art System, known internationally or only within small circles, their work has excluded these artists from the safety of protected space.

28 Komplex

28 is an artwork that is secret, or invisible or in some way a “revelation” in space also takes on an aesthetic element shaped by the artist’s being an outsider. The author Komplex has made a urban story telling based on augmented reality, a conspiracy and psychedelic novel on power and control. The Reader-Player-Explorator-Nomad will move around the city like a character from Paul Auster NYC trilogy. The work 28 has a almost cinematic narrative dimension that is the newness of the project, overlaying and unites several spaces into one, making artistic use of time, movement and data or information in a space defined by growth in technological interaction in a data-space. 28 speaks to a public on the move, to a public that is mobile and not stationary, obliging us to realize that the media that we wear are part of the objects that make up our world. It is a conceptualization of a scenario akin to the world presented in the film They Live (1988) directed by John Carpenter. In that world, special sunglasses revealed subliminal images and the real information underlying physical media (newspapers, billboards), in a reality augmented by messages of alien persuasion (obey, consume, watch TV etc.). Today, additional layers of information are conveyed directly to people living in the smart city.

28 is a secret casting set in the Italian Alphaville; Turin is also a famous esoteric city like Lyon, Praga and San Francisco and one of the most innovative city. A perfect scenario for a cyber noir tale, a perfect place to hide secrets and puzzles. People find an invisible city, where daily surfaces hide a psychotronic story, fragmented in the city spaces. Intervention took place in symbolic locations around town, creating a hybrid event at the crossroads of digital art, urban space and hacking. Here, real and virtual space interact so as to create a single social environment, made possible ever since digital space became an integral part of the city itself. The game is therefore an urban hack, the reappropriation of public space via intervention directly on
the streets, squares and roads, and under monuments, porticoes and buildings. It is action in the collective
digital sphere to create an unexpected gulf, cultural jamming, a guerrilla attack on communication in the
global city. As a symbolic act, Marino Equizi’s urban hack is really an aesthetic overexposure, an exercise in
the subversive use of augmented reality, which becomes unreality, a vision, an augmented dream in subcultural
practices. It is less about public space and more about destruction, interruption and aperture, in an effort to
crack open standard mechanisms of closure.

Conclusions

The problem of perpetual newness. The culture of ubiquitous information highlights the social
peculiarities that can ensue. Mapped space overflows onto society, compelling contemporary artists
to explore the relationship between art and social life, to find the intersection between the self and
society, and to depict, directly and exhaustively, the features of the society in which they live. These
artists represent contemporary thought in their way of representing ubiquity as a real condition of
everyday life, transforming it into symbols of rich cultural connotation. Ubiquity is a forceful display
of the role that art plays in understanding a global world, where artworks reflect not only the artists’
perspective on reality, but also shed light on our own experience of the world.
The conclusions lie within the approach taken to the topic; an approach that is neither technological
nor geographic, but rather driven by an interest in capturing the cultural climate and a certain
psychological and anthropological dimension of our perception of public space, of overcoming
limits, of the concepts of material/immaterial, visible/invisible, real/unreal. The conclusions are given
by the account pieced together by artistic works that make use of those elements that characterize
reality as the continuous flow of states that we perceive as changes in life and in the space we live in.
The works are individual, shifting, subjective accounts, more from the point of view of an art world
outsider than from an insider.

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Ibidem


Tamiko Thiel, e-mail massage to author, April 18, 2012

INTERACTIVE MEDIA IN URBAN SPACE
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Abstract
In this particular moment of cultural evolution, from mass media to digital media, the space factor is gaining a considerable relevance: especially the relationship between mediated and physical space is of particular interest because it recalls the archetypal figure of the labyrinth, and at the same time it involves the latest technologies of communication, from the various forms of digital gaming to the augmented reality.

The connection between interactive media and urban space is now physiologic, and the scenery is becoming even more interesting because it encourages experimentation in new forms of communication and expression. Particularly, the most advanced art forms provide very interesting examples of interactive use of urban spaces as places of imagination, fiction, emotion.

Keywords
Art, Creativity, Digital, Interactivity, Game, Labyrinth, Locative, Media, Mobile, Space, Storytelling, Urban

Introduction
The mediated spaces in the city become increasingly interactive, because they contain media products which are able to react to the behavior of people: more and more cities are filled of vision devices, establishing close relations between media perception and territorial location (Gasparini: 2012). The phenomenon has one of his first demonstrations in the not so futuristic scenery presented in Minority Report (S. Spielberg, 2002), where the main character was recognized by some advertisement posters that automatically presented him with personalised commercial offers; and again in 2003, when a billboard of Coca-Cola installed in London, Piccadilly Circus, had inside a weather station, and emitted different messages depending on the weather: on a windy day, the letters were moving, on a rainy day, drops appeared on the board, etc.

In the summer of 2013, the Foursquare Social Network, in partnership with Samsung, has launched an application called Time Machine, which allows the user to trace the visited places: pubs, hotels, restaurants, train stations, shops etc., building a hybrid tool, something between a map and a timeline, that detects and visually represents all user navigation in the area.

Communication technologies are changing the face and the functional structure of the city, innovating in a disruptive way every aspect of city life. Smart City is the umbrella-term that represents - often in a confused
way - the need to redefine the "citizenship" in urban environments in order to put the user at the center of the changing processes, in order to understand the dynamics that arise from urban nomadism in the mediated cities (Ratti: 2013). Through the communication technologies and the proliferation of miniaturized sensors, cities are becoming powerful data generators (about energy consumption, mobility flows, waste management, health care, education processes, etc.), but these data need to be interpreted, understood, shared, metabolized in the social context. We need to understand what are the new forms that characterize the public and private spaces under the pressure of the growing presence of the media; it is necessary to understand whether these forms can give some smart indications in order to transform the cities not only in an intelligent way, but also in a human one. In this picture, the urban media system no longer appear just as tools to visualize and interpret big data, but as a strong generator for the new urban aesthetics.

**Storytelling and Urban Art Games**

Games, labyrinth, interactivity, mobile/locative media are the elements that extend the cultural revolution of the network even into physical environments, where they offer the possibility to reconfigure social relationships through new practices of vision, perhaps even adventurous and unpredictable. An entire territory to explore, where Digital Creativity can lead to forms of *locative art* (Ekman: 2012) that retrieves the so far disconnected experiences of pervasive computing, site-specific installations, place-based storytelling, geo-tagging and interactions in urban areas.

Urban culture and media are complementary, the image of the network and the image of the city overlap, recovering the concept of *non-place* out from its fenced size (airports, shopping malls, etc) in order to amplify and extend it to every mediated urban experience. For this purpose, contemporary art has set itself the task of recovering the social dimension of the urban life, building a picture of the artist that fits perfectly with the psychological and social skills required by postmodern condition: flexibility, anxiety, uncertainty, nomadism. Carrying out the creative skills from the narrow field of art, transporting them to the physical location in urban areas, extends the possibilities of aesthetic experience in the same way that hypertext has widened the field of narrative possibilities beyond the limitations of linear and sequential writing. The typical features of hypertext - the granularity of the experience, that is potentially re-aggregated in different shapes; the active role of the reader, who determines the course of history; the birth of an open authorial model - are characteristics that, if applied to the field of urban storytelling, expand the image of the network from the exclusively mental or representational field, in order to build a new hybrid experience, a sort of presence-navigation that explores the social body of the living city.

An example of this hybrid approach to urban experience, characterized by a textual fragmentation seeking new forms of aggregation, is *Komplex 28* by Mariano Equizzi, an integrated project of multimedia experience that mixes participatory technologies such as augmented reality (Communication Strategies Lab: 2012) with literary and filmic references that constantly evoke the nomadic uncertain of the urban experience:

"... it's also a graphic novel, a digital graffiti operation, a radical story about occult powers linked with advanced technology. The 'pages' of this book are hidden in the architecture of Turin through augmented reality; it's a cryptocasting. The reader-gamer is like a Paul Auster character that will move like a nomad in Turin searching for traces of this secret tell." (Equizzi's declaration)

The real city and the imagined one overlap into a synthetic experience, where the city itself with its mediated forms and metascreens gives life to the emotional interface of the project.
The nomadism becomes the key for the interpretation of these forms of urban art games, where the aesthetic experience merges with forms of gaming activities placed within an urban space historically full of social, political, emotional significance.

Conclusions

These experiments represent aesthetic and experiential forms closely related to the contemporary. Not only because they have a necessary technological ground, which is closely linked to the development and diffusion of mobile devices and with the forms of cross-media communication, but also - and perhaps especially - because they recover the sense of social presence in urban areas, face the theme of reuse of cultural heritage, promote vital forms of street and public art, evoke the flow of smart mobs that run through the physical and mental spaces of the young generation (Rheingold: 2002): in their fragmentary complexity, they are the global reinterpretation, in terms of fiction, of the contexts in which everyday life takes usually place.

Bibliography


Biography

Giulio Lughi is Associate Professor of Sociology of cultural and communicative processes in the University of Turin. He studies the impact of new technologies in the humanities. Trained in literature, linguistics and semiotics, has worked since the early 90s about culture and technology, digital media, digital creativity, interactivity and narrative forms.
A SELF REFLECTION THROUGH THE CYBER MIRROR: 28 BY KOMPLEX

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Introduction

Between the end of July and the beginning of October 2013 I, Mariano Equizzi, Paolo Bigazzi Alderigi and Luca Liggio, the three authors in collective KOMPLEX, carried out an online discussion with the aim of analyzing the design process that led to the creation and development of the project 28. We preferred an asynchronous dialogue, based on the exchange of comments, multimedia content, texts in review mode, so as to take the time necessary to identify together the topics of greatest interest and discuss it on several occasions, on the basis of the stimuli and doubts that emerged from time to time during the various asynchronous multimodal interactions. What emerged was a text in progress and here we report the current form that we have developed for simplicity in the traditional model of the interview, so as to return to the linearity and sequentiality of the multidirectional flow of thoughts mediated by different communication systems used in the process of self-reflection that I had the pleasure of moderating.

Project 28 was born through the work and experimentation consortium of Mariano Equizzi, Luca Liggio and Paolo Bigazzi Alderigi, who on this occasion, not properly filmic, take the name KOMPLEX. KOMPLEX is a live cinema team devoted to the investigation of new ways in storytelling, visualism technologies, and live music performances.

Mariano Equizzi, a producer and former student of the Experimental Center of Cinematography of class 1999, after a traditional experience as 1st Assistant Director with Michele Soavi, started to investigate Interact-with-Rome and the boundaries of media related to popular genre. So from 2003, he started to focus on the film industry in Italy, which suffers big limitations in terms of content and potential of expression. It’s sort of complicated and sometimes inexplicable, like a stalemate. Now his aim with KOMPLEX project is to definitely create interactive experiences where a synthesis of many media is essential to engage the audience, which nowadays has readily technological access.

Luca Liggio runs the digital video production side of KOMPLEX to create interactive viral projects for the Web. He is a producer, director and film editor as well as an avid explorer and first adapter of new digital
technology applied to HD/3D video productions. He has a degree in New Digital Tools in Filmmaking at NUCT Rome. He is a member with Mariano Equizzi and Paolo Bigazzi of LebFilm devoted to classic linear media. He founded the web portal Filmring a place where to find all information on the cinema industry, from the news to the box office with a special attention for tech-news related to cameras and new technologies for shooting.

Paolo Bigazzi Alderigi has always been interested in the sound culture of new wave-electronics. He founded, in the mid-nineties, the study Iter-Research. The necessary knowledge of sound engineering and synthesis characterize his instrumental research and production processes constantly hybridizing analog and digital worlds, synthesis and design of software programming and his expressive research. In his compositions he is always trying to set this pattern as a form of electronic luthiery.

Interview

The analytic process starts from the attempt, apparently assumed, to provide a definition of the work 28, whose structural feature is just the polymorphism and the ability to hybridize with different technological solutions. The one presented at the Share Festival is a possible variation, the last in chronological order, which injects the techno-noir narrative of 28 in an alternate reality game based on a technological multiplatform environment -which enables the transmedia story- and disseminates narrative segments between the buildings, streets and monuments of the city of Turin, thanks to augmented reality accessible through mobile devices.

[Mariano Equizzi] 28 is an ARG (Alternate Reality Game) that plants its roots in the literature of speculative fiction (Paul Auster, William Burroughs, Philip K. Dick, Thomas Pynchon). What I imagine is a city of secrets, a tech-noir Turin. It is a scene between Raymond Chandler, Max Ernst and Banksy. I use the architectural structures of Turin as a book with hidden pages, where there are media objects, videos, pictures, and lines of a script as the signs in a silent film. 28 is digital graffiti, land-art augmented reality with a narrative intent and exploration of the relationship between spaces, media and ancillary contents. The player becomes a mobile nomad who reads and discovers this hidden reality in the city area, guided by the Aurasma map, the augmented reality App needed to play 28. Obviously, the parts of the puzzle are disarranged, but how would you reveal a conspiracy if not through its pieces? The player is the centerpiece and must understand, move around and discover, not only avail oneself.

[Luca Liggio] 28 has made it possible for us, the working group, to step outside the usual patterns of production and propose a new and challenging project in a way that leaves the old media and comes closer to the technology and living spaces that our children will use and inhabit. I believe that an audiovisual experience as 28’s augmented reality, together with the new tools available (iPhone, Android, iPad) can create new narratives and user friendly approaches needed to go beyond the limits of traditional media.

[Paolo Bigazzi Alderigi] 28 employs media, containers, and users to achieve a space-time dimension whose content is represented in various forms. The proposal is extended in various places such as Apps, augmented realities, mini albums, video clips, medium-length films, live cinema, evolving the content from a classically linear form to another that is determined by the actions of the user or randomly. It’s a project that allows interception, creating an atmosphere that is then optimized by the narrative, visual and sound contents. 28 is connected, viral, narrative and offers an experience both in the augmented reality and in the APP, as a game
of combinations and meanings. The user can instantiate meaning through a lived non-suffering relationship between man and machine.

**28** is a transmedia game in augmented reality, which creates an alternate world explorable through the web and through the mobile devices’ interfaces. Storytelling and storymaking are strongly affected by the choices relating to the interface design and the use of the game. The narrative complexity and the simplification of the interfaces are two elements that characterize the most recent instances of interactive digital storytelling. The relationship between *transparency* and *hypermediation* is crucially important since there is a thin line between reality and fiction in alternate reality games, and since the content must be distributed through elements of the narrative between the online environment and the physical world. *Cloud media*, the story through a plethora of media used by the player daily, and *ease of use*, the search for the optimal systemic usability, represent not only expressions able to describe the interface requirements of an alternate reality game, but also a dyad essential for the design of alternate immersive realities, in which the user should not perceive obstacles or difficulties passing from one device to another. The choice of *Aurasma* as a platform for the story in augmented reality also depends on the willingness to enhance the system accessibility of use, so that players have the opportunity to immerse themselves in a nomadic experience, inside a fictional complex universe as that created in **28**.

[Mariano Equizzi] I chose *Aurasma* for its popularity and easy access. I needed a platform on which we could focus on the content more than the form. There are very advanced proprietary tools, but also too confusing, especially for the end user. Augmented reality applied to entertainment, writing included, is too big to be thought of by individual investigators, return and metamorphosis of the user are profound. I see that film builds unity, augmented reality reports everything on the streets and widens the screenplay and the film shootings. A story of conspiracies should be written in a linear fashion. When I discovered augmented reality, I realized it was the best way to express the story. It isn't enough to tell stories. We had the chance to hide them in the city and make them cultic, as some street art based on subtraction of elements. I’m interested in the viewer who becomes part of the adventure and discovery. Augmented reality is closer to this type of interference than the arrogance by the monolithic media, such as film.

The nomadic experience of **28** goes through the territory, it contaminates it with the fictional reality through increased graffiti, it superimposes it on the daily techno-paranoid dystopia, making an argument for technologies through experimentation with non-linear narrative solutions. The multifaceted project **28** (live cinema, medium-length film, storytelling for augmented reality) has given rise to different forms of interaction between form and content, between narration and technological devices for the story and its fruition.

[Mariano Equizzi] The story has not changed one iota, but its recoding has changed it into a better tale, with tools that are the story in itself, and not mere tools of staging. Augmented reality has allowed us to find the right *screen* for the concepts that were expressed but trapped in unattractive forms to the content itself.

[Paolo Bigazzi Alderigi] Switching from linear to non-linear narrative is greatly served to separate elements and create their fruition. A progressive synthesis among story, suggestion and reality, through a sensory experience lived by means of mobile technology. Perhaps one of the leading results in **28** was to understand that describing and sharing the cultural background of the world of KOMPLEX are an integral part of the work in itself, a custom of *Cloud-Forms*. The aesthetics of **28** helped a lot since the beginning thanks to its comics and essential features. A simplicity that fits well even considering the average time granted by the user of mobile media, just a few seconds.
In 28 the legacy of cyberpunk and industrial culture manifest their presence with an attitude to critically interpret and decode the present by manipulating technology in an unconventional way, pushing the limits.

Cyberpunk culture is the hacker culture inclined to use tools, originally with a purpose, but totally used subversively for another one. Augmented reality is a military comeback that has been assimilated by marketing often linked to very large brands. Through our hackering, we brought it within certain aesthetics and use it as an experimenting narrative tool. We do not see the messianic and the Carroll's influence as in Matrix when we think of cyberpunk, but we remember the narrated experiences much more concretely in the books of Bruce Sterling. The industrial is similarly invoked as reading and critique of everyday life. The industrial was a music synthesis, poor but efficient, and the tape cassette's covers were photocopied. While Emerson Lake and Palmer played millions of pounds synthesizers, Throbbing Gristle played cassette tapes. 28 seems photocopied, with a more economic street-art printing form. The main industrial element in 28 is now linked to the realization that, with augmented reality, a means and a process such as film, mockingly industrial in our country, has amply proved its limits, as if video games were not enough to show it. Augmented reality allows you to build worlds within the world. Augmented reality is so advanced as to be revolutionary, miraculous, and shamanic.

The legacy of cyberpunk and industrial culture reside in a constant research on the perceptive ability of the information flow and its quality. In the container-contained relationship. The only transposition in different devices of the same content doesn't add value but banally duplicates. The content care is therefore the real added value, as well as its cost. The cyber and industrial attitudes seem in this sense necessary inputs through which to interpret the technology. Such inputs are inherently expressive.

In her book Networking, Tatiana Bazzichelli cites a passage from a text by Mariano Equizzi which speaks of Anime 28:
"In this journey back into the abyss of artistic practice and in the dark horizons of the modern arts Industrial marks I think the lowest point is also questionable / uncivilized. We're swimming in this 'abyss' since we started the project Revenge, with the approval of foreign operators, especially Eastern noisefili. And I'm postulating the Anime 28 on the basis of just such a drift towards artistic uncivilized"
The new form of 28 maintains the relationship with a drift towards uncivil art.

After making 250 four-second-clips each on the textual contents of 28, I can say that 28 is uncivil as it was Elio Petri or some certain street art forms which from the walls try to make us overcome, with an uncivil game, the limits of the collective surfaces, using the space as an average parallel intended for the tail of the eye or in this case to experimenters of space. Days ago I was pondering how fin de siecle culture and advertisements were born in the same period and both with the same aim of mind-control practice. 28 hacks augmented reality without damage and tells equivocally an ambiguous story of control. Yes, it is uncivil as punk, the Satyricon and Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion were. On a second thought, the rave culture hid information in the urban area in the same way. Only the right eyes could see them. Contrary to
the industrial, 28 is not threatening nor necrophiliac. If at all it is *moorcockian*, but it is not and does not want to be Gothic. It is industrial in its use of impoverished elements for its visual and non-auditory appearance, but you can't say that those are already underground. We think that 28 is in a chaotic balance among different currents of what ten years ago was called underground culture, now it might be called *Cloud Culture*.

The production flow of a transmedial work involves a series of challenges that require the coordinated and complementary use of different distribution channels in one direction, production and intertextual post-production.

[Paolo Bigazzi Alderigi] The main challenge is the creation of the Cloud. It is a blend consisting of: content produced for each device, access to resources for further study, cross reference to additional content, possibility of sharing. In both experiences the mobile a-geographical of the App and the geographically indicated of augmented reality, there are several ports for receiving additional resources which alternatively lead to the *YouTube* channel, *Apple store*, *Beatport*, *Google Play*, *Amazon*, *Soundcloud*’s podcast, *Spotify*’s playlists, and the KOMPLEX cloud culture in *Pinterest*. The challenges were generating a series of pathways that are taken by the user according to his desire for deeper investigation, hiding *Lombardian* plot (as in narrative structures by Mark Lombardi) designed with links. The presence of different formats like the App and the mini album requires coordinating a promotional effort insisting on reference channels, making even this step essential to form the project. Targeted and viral seeding, following a well calibrated map, are an integral part of the transmedia project both in the production and post production phase.

[Luca Liggio] My specific work is related to the audio and video rhythm, mixing and distributing media in any form or by any means, facilitating the information flow towards the outside regardless of their matrix: html, video, php, clip, blogging. We receive anything in our studio and I have to connect things with each other, format them so that they are not too alien but neither too usual.

An interesting aspect of KOMPLEX work is the integration of old and next media. There is direct evidence of this contamination, even in the technological environment of 28, in which this debate is metaphorically extended to an interaction between the meanings associated with the consolidated urban spaces and monuments (and the stories they tell) and new meanings projected upon them through augmented reality.

[Luca Liggio] We have always loved to mix various types of technologies from super 8mm to digital, to cameras that give us the opportunity to express, even with the kind of right shooting, the specificity of a story, a game, a video clip. With 28, the traditional system comes alive. Hybridizing the language of the Blog with urban spaces is a choice in between the installation and an alternate reality game. Of course it is pioneering but not so much; the new media, and the technologies with which they are implemented, in fact are too big to be able to be simply transferred in monolithic TV or in the sacral places such as cinemas and theaters. I think of certain industrial archaeologies, that, despite being historical and rhetorical, are now just museal, traditional, simulacra of a past in search of new future.

[Paolo Bigazzi Alderigi] The assumption dead / next media, from the point of view of technology and the sonic dimension of 28, could be reversed, considering the use of instruments which in fact were considered dead in the second half of the eighties. In literature, 1989 is considered the golden year for the purchase of an analog synth. The next music media (software synth) for about twenty years often does nothing more than replicate the same structures of analog machines, adding only a certain degree of procedural flexibility. The
relationship between dead and next, is a hybrid that intercepts the computing power of some programming softwares (definitely next) and the ability to characterize analog tones (never dead).

The nomadic experience of 28 is accompanied by a soundscape ideal how is it defined by KOMPLEX?

[Paolo Bigazzi Alderigi ] Dark, dingy, elegant, refined. The Patrick Bateman in American Psycho on crack playing the sax of Ornette Coleman, accompanied by synthesizers and harmonies by Recoil (Alan Wilder). Let's say that it approaches Massive Attack, Portishead and Andrew Parker. It is easy for me to think of a sound-landscape able to support a continuous and fluctuating tension. Mesmerizing the viewer is what I find most fun and rewarding in terms of music and sound effects. The creative effort is designed to catch the attention paid during the playing, in an effort to grant even inviolable and inevitable distraction, to name it entertainment.

Let's talk about the sound dimension of 28, the workflow and the difficulties encountered in the design of the soundscape and the soundtrack of the project.

[Paolo Bigazzi Alderigi] For three days we scanned images of about 8 cubic meters of old magazines from the 60s. To these we joined short video clips, giving shape to a medium-length film, for which I composed and produced the soundtrack. The mood was immediately set with a very ironic feeling through a series of clichés that typically characterize a certain film noir, but surrounded by a dark and dingy halo. Aware that the project 28 could take multiple appearances, I started to make a mini album featuring seven instrumental tracks which could accentuate a sound more articulated between wave and funk influences. I practically produced the tracks simultaneously, using the sequencer Sony Acid and Fruity Loops. Through the latter one, I produced a series of sound sketches, like pieces of a puzzle that I put together in each of the seven projects, starting from analog timbres (20 ms Korg, Yamaha Cs 80, Prophet 10) and digital processing (Reaktor, Kyma). This has allowed me to organize the workflow in a very instinctive way, opening and closing the various projects after adding a piece, emptying my memory from the previous sounds in order to better judge the next project. It was very natural and technically effective to transfer these contents in a live form first and then for the App. I was able to prepare a large sample library to compose different sound objects and connect the one shot experience fruition of pages in the app, with the flow created by the sequence of pages viewed by the user. The library thus produced will be part of an upcoming product of American Twisted Tools (San Francisco), a manufacturer of software written for and with Reaktor (Native Instruments).

The design of sensory and emotional experiences is very important in dystopian sci-type storytelling as understood by KOMPLEX. We explore the land where the sounds of 28 take root.

[Paolo Bigazzi ] The electronic nomadism of Klaus Schultze, relived in the timbric orchestration of Future Sound of London, the harmonies of Depeche Mode and the processing of Amon Tobin. KOMPLEX is sufficiently omnivorous and finds its balance in the hybridization of cross-media and technology, composition and sound design. Many of the assumptions of cyberpunk and partly of the industrial have occurred over time as a constant demonstration of technological re-interpretation or of underground involvement. I refer to the use of a small machine, the Roland's TB-303, at the end of the 80s, as a practice tool for bass players, which later became the basis for creating the Acid-House sound. This attitude finds new territories of investigation as the study of the programming software (Kyma, Reaktor and Max), with the sensors, to reach to a man-machine expressively rewarding interaction, since the expressive ability of the medium and therefore of its content inevitably come from its simplicity in allowing exploration, reinterpretation, and full participation. The interface becomes transparent and allows a full exploration of the content.
In the KOMPLEX experience, the interaction between sound and video technologies is fundamental, as well as the experimentation in the integration of different technological solutions, in particular in the experience of Live Cinema.

[Paolo Bigazzi Alderigi] We wondered how to perform and interpret 28 live, and what would have been the most expressively valid means, aiming at presenting a live non-linear film-format. We then divided the whole story into various audio and video clips, creating a library that was uploaded in Ableton Live for the audio and in Resolume Avenue for the video. We also assigned values from several sensors (4 flex sensors) worn during the performance, in control of some processing parameters, giving a dynamic feel both to the sound and the video. This data stream, run with the hardware interface osc/midi wireless Kroonde, is directed to the control of some Reaktor parameters, through a patch written with Max. The data fluctuation, partly also their randomness, participate in the dynamic timbre, a fundamental concept for me. We will always tend more and more to connect the bi-directional audio and video software, identifying the parameters that can dynamically and expressively tell the story and its pathways. I consider Touch designers such as Reaktor, Resolume and Kyma, and interfaces being a form of electronic string instruments. I found very interesting to treat some sounds by controlling parameters of audio processing using as a modulation source some video data, such as gray scale or number of lines, from clips analyzed with the tools Jitter of Max (Cycling '74). During the live then there is a dimension of real-time video editing, sound design, and re-interpreted parts, which require a certain degree of improvisation.

Bibliography


Biography

Domenico Morreale after graduating in Communication Sciences at the University of Turin, he obtained his doctorate in Sociology of cultural and communicative processes at the Politecnico di Torino. He is a researcher at the Department of sociological and psychopedagogical studies, Guglielmo Marconi University where he teaches Theories and techniques of mass communication, Theory and philosophy of language of media and entertainment and Literature and audiovisual Communication, within the degree course in Film & TV Production (in collaboration with the Full Sail University in Orlando, Florida, USA). He is teaching assistant for the course Social sciences and crosmedia and Film Production, Master of Science in Cinema and media engineering at the Politecnico di Torino.
It is a four-monthly online publication, which includes double blind peer reviewed articles dealing with a assigned topic. The selected papers can include one of more tags listed by Screencity Journal.

Cover: LEBFILM © 2013
Luc Melle stopped the tape playback when he hears the 28 conditionament signal.
28 IS LINKING HIMSELF WITH MY BRAIN
SCHNABEL: we suggest you to change your MIND...
THE DRONES ARE EVERYWHERE

THE BIZ CARD CANNOT LIES!
THE M.A.F.I.A. 12
HANDS ME
IMPORTANT TAPES

28 WAS SEARCHING FOR A
CAMERA-MAN SYSTEM,
A SHOOTER
FINALLY THE PLAN IS CLEAR, 28 IS TESTING MY POWER TO GRAB IT, TO USE IT!
28: - THEY WILL SIMPLY SEE, YOU WILL SHOOT THEM.-