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Impact of Urban Spaces and Moving Image Projects of Media in Video Art

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ABSTRACT

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The concept of urban space and city environment in the contemporary art field can be understood in various ways through different perspectives. This thesis examined not only the visual characterizations of the city, but also to focus on urbanism through global culture, identity and the relation between an individual and the space. The second essential theme in the thesis was to examine moving image projects of media, such as the style of commercial films and their impact on video art by the certain visual aspects merged within avant-garde elements. The discussion of how media and commercialised content is seen within the art world was also a research component of the written part of the thesis. To support the versatility of the research problem and objectives, projects by Isaac Julien, Hito Steyerl and Jesper Just were discussed to unwrap how urban spaces and media had been used as a theme in contemporary video art. The topics were explored by analysing a variety of books, academic writings and web articles, as well as through informative videos and documented interviews.

As a practical part of the research, a two-channelled video artwork *Urban Chaos* was a case study for the thesis. By reporting the aspects of directing, cinematography and post-production, the creative process became a constructive way to follow how urban environment and media aesthetics can be reflected in every step of the art production. The video work *Urban Chaos* was created to be a part of the Fine Art study path's degree show *Kaleidoscopers,* originally planned to be exhibited in the spring 2021. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the exhibition however had to be postponed, which forced the artists to present their works in a digital environment on the exhibition's website.

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Key words: urban space, video art, media, media art, commercial media

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1 INTRODUCTION

Globalization has made it possible to be in interaction of new establishments anywhere and any point of the hour, and therefore it encourages the idea of feeling unity in a contemporary world. How we see and feel urbanism and modernity in urban areas can be a wide abstraction, but perhaps, in addition to digital innovations, one of the most visible notion of it, is to observe our everyday surroundings and the continuous transformation in the contemporary art, media, portraiture of cityscapes, architecture and suburban life.

To understand how visual storytelling through urban images can be an effective way to contrast the function of our culture, it is necessary to focus the subject matter on one of the contemporary art mediums, which in this case will be centralized into video art. The production of video art is more popular and boundless than ever before, but in addition, the recognition of its differences between art worlds and media production has become rather difficult, in a way even impossible to separate, since they have always been intertwined with each other. However, the combination of the two forms do not compulsorily mean the death of the other medium, but rather a new conquest in the modern creation of moving images.

The manner we decide to approach the status of urbanism in video, depends on the artists' and creators' decisions of how to represent the reality. As the cities and population continue to grow, the usual methodology to urbanism is related to environmental issues and threats of the future, which is usually projected as a documentary or through postmodern stories related to human behaviour as a society. In addition to portraying the urban space as a subject of sociological cause and effect, the city can be filmed as a living protagonist, whose characteristics affect the people around it. Urban environment can help us to find our identity and values in life. It is easier to contrast our issues with other people around us, to understand the complexity of the world and see it as a bigger ensemble or feeling of being connected to the communities.

I personally became very fascinated about the media and its formats already in early age, where the influence of the communication outlets were television and

magazines. Before truly understanding the mediums of art, or having access to the internet, media was the main platform which created the cultural content I enjoyed, and it showed me both good and bad occurrences, which however, I sometimes could not separate from one another. Twenty years later, the concept of media is much wider, and it does not only include products, companies, news, and market. It has become more individual, and user based. Media is going towards the needs of the user or the relatability, rather than the needs of the capital. Consequently, modern media is in the very centre of our everyday lives and present almost everywhere we go. It is in our phones, computers, public transport, shops and malls. The competition within the media is fierce and we tend to focus our attention on the subject which strikes us the most, we simply have no time to observe all of them.

Today, commercialism and media borrow more visual aesthetics and artistic approach to create those striking moments or sentiment reactions for the viewer, because that is exactly how they will stand out from the masses. In addition, cultural awareness has also expanded to younger generations. There is almost a trend that every individual favour a certain kind of visual aesthetics, and if the media succeeds to fulfil that, it is even better. I am very interested in how those trends shape the way we see media; how old movements make a comeback and how the new ones appear with great force.

Fashion films are not only being watched because of the piece of garment. It is about playful narration, with dramatic slow motion, impressive set design, and picturesque people. The same formula has been used in other commercial films and music videos. It is not about the product but the story. The use of certain stylistic decisions in music, special effects or cinematography for example, can make the media content very artistic. In the most ideal circumstances, commercial film campaigns can very much remind of short indie films, for example. Venturesome creative decisions construct more likely memorable discussions and experiences for the audience, as well to create a certain image about the particular creator or director and their stylistic preferences, which might help to extend media aesthetics in the community.

Just like in commercialized content, visual artists are more and more reflecting their vision and topics through media. For example, politics and political parties develop almost like media trends; fast but also recycled. And what could be more powerful than questioning a particular medium and perspectives, than using exactly the same relevant tools. I often ask myself the same question over and over again when working with media and art-based projects; could this really be considered to be art?

I also discuss institutional art theory elaborated by George Dickie in 1974 and how can we define what is art, media or commercialism in the first place, and how do they differ from each other despite the space they are (usually) shown in? Is it even necessary to try to categorize our creative work and the environment they should be put in? Could all this really affect the value of my work? Take, for example, film director Wes Anderson, who has managed to create a recognizable yet unique and playful visual style. Each of his scenes is like a carefully laid out artistic composition, but at the same time he manages to follow a simple and direct cinematic narration. It seems like an endless inquiry of in which directions, subcategories, genres, mediums, and spaces we can eventually accommodate our own art.

As trying to find answers for these questions and studying the creation of these realities, the video installation *Urban Chaos* (2021) became the practical tool to examine the way we experience the city and media as individuals and the report of it works in this research as a case study. This artwork shows how specifically the relation between people and cityscapes can be reflected through audio visual means, and therefore to promote the creativity to explore our modern environment. In addition, the project will focus on the importance of the artist's role on portraying emotions and movements through direction, filming, post-production work and presentation of the work in virtual space during worldwide pandemic. The way we can explore the narration of the video, even in a wider perspective – it is created for multichannel purposes to support the technical innovations in digital culture and to promote new media-based art.

I also discuss the subject of urban spaces in video art through analysing video works by Isaac Julien, Hito Steyerl and Jesper Just. All of the three artists are not

only inventive visionaries in their own field of art, but also in the area of filmmaking, while also inspiring my own creative process from several different point of views. Julien who focuses on multi-channelled visual poetry in his cinematic works, at the same time raises awareness on social issues and the treatment of the minorities in different cultural spaces. Steyerl who continues to question power structures of media and artificial intelligence, while also comparing the said authority within physical sites through the power of military, warfare and free ports. And Just, who centres his work around challenging the individual's expenditure of their physical environment, while also relying on performative and mysterious narration in his videos.

2 ABOUT URBAN SPACE AND MOVING IMAGE IN MEDIA ART

2.1 Globalization and Development of Urban Environment

The concept of globalization can be considered to have begun to build its roots ever since the first trade of goods started from the silk roads in the 1st century to The Age of Discovery during the 15th to 18th century. However, the time when trading goods actually went global and hence started to form into a more solid structure, didn't start until during the Industrial Revolution in the 1800s, when new inventions from steam engines to other technological developments enabled more easier and faster manufacturing of the products, and the international exporting of the materials. (Vanham 2019.) Although globalization, as a hypothesis, can still be seen to be mostly concentrated around worldwide economics, finances and trade, it has moreover left a considerable mark for the evolvement of the modern system through cultural point of view.

Some ideologies believe globalization to be one of the main figures for the evolution of capitalism, which strongly reflects postmodern and Marxist theories (Lewellen 2002, 8). According to these ideologies, it is argued that globalization is in direct relation to support the system of private ownership of property, which again is usually tied up for the dominion of wealthy class and unfair employee rights. Belting, Buddensieg and Weibel (2013) state that globalization can also be seen as a product, which promotes the monopoly of Western culture and modernity. The impact of Western modernity is said to continue the practise of colonization by concentrating on staying as a dominant culture by the system of including and excluding certain cultural aspects like language and religion. However, today when the Western economy and modernity is practised more widely around the globe, it starts to lose its power to determine what the Western modernism actually is, and possibly the mechanism of exclusion will be broken by the effect of globalization itself. (Belting, Buddensieg & Weibel 2013, 10–12.)

Ever since the development of the internet at the turn of the 21st century, the formula of globalization has had an enormous breakthrough, while being able progress more and more services and data into digital platforms. Due to this

revolution, it has become easy to connect with people from all around the world, whether in the matter of business or leisure. The access for information is limitless and immediate, which can help communities, organizations and even nations to improve the way the environment, and facilities around societies, are built for people to access. Different corporations still own a huge amount of digital space, which has raised massive concerns in regard to cyber security in private policies and possible data breaches during 2010's. Companies like Facebook and Google have been criticised for harvesting profiles and private information for personalized advertising (O' Flaherty 2018). On the other hand, digital globalization has also made it possible for individuals and small companies to affect the flow of technological innovations, and thus reducing the value or demand of using the services of mass corporations.

In the article *Media, Diversity and Globalization in Digital Age* by Francisco Rui Cádima (2017), it is pointed out that the digital age has also brought the new kind flow of information for digital users and social networks by developing algorithmic techniques and "share" culture, rather than leaning so much on the source-based data. The increase of filtered content, misleading information and fake news or profiles created by bots and AI may over time lead to a deterioration in media literacy. However, the digital environment also has a great power and freedom to spread cultural diversity and bring communities together in the global level. (Cádima F 2017, 94–98.) The expansion of digital space has given us a chance to get a closer look of the topics that might have been alien to us before and to learn more about people and their situations from different ethnic, political and social backgrounds. The influence of social media communities and even the voice of an individual against the problems of society, can lead to major changes of civil improvements, especially if the content associated with the cause is spread across multiple platforms.

Now when there has been a brief introduction to the model of globalization, we can start to reflect it through the lens of cities. It is obvious that industrialization and the shift in the economy were significant factors in the development of shaping small villages into large metropolises. New opportunities in the working life as well as focusing transport connections to urban centres, attracted the population to move within the reach of the city and therefore the formation of

urbanisation was born. According to Kara (2019) today's cities adapt developmental strategies, within economic, social, political and local conditions, by creating new urban spaces and activities which keeps the position of the city competitive towards other cities in global funds. In addition to just gaining global investment, property market and urban economic development, the important effects of globalization's progressive development for the cities is how it is able to affect the people, culture, products, beliefs and ideas to improve citizens' quality of life. (Kara B 2019, 111–112.) In the end, the modern city is a result of many advanced changes, from technological innovations to the progress of services. Without the effect of globalization, the development of cities and our idea of modern urban areas would be much more inadequate.

> The city is a social, ecological, and technical system of relatively large size, density, and complexity. It contains humans and nonhumans, some of which (like pigeons) are living and others of which (like streetlights) are not. To this extent, cities are not solely human achievements but rather achievements forged in collaboration with nature and technologies. (Beauregard 2018, 6.)

2.2 Culture and Identity

Cities have their own features apart from an architectural point of view, since the physical design of urban space and towns usually follow a clear management of traditional neighbourhood structures and sociology in urban planning. Urbanism focuses to study how the physical and built environment in city areas are networking with its dwellers, and how effective physical designing of the environment can enrich its citizens for a better wellbeing and sustainable lifestyle (Urbanism: Meaning and Benefits 2018).

Metropolises have been able to create part of their identity through unique landmarks and historically important architecture through built heritage, which is not only significant for the internal citizens, but also efficient for external representation of the city in media, tourism and global market. Several cities have even earned exclusive features and nicknames, which are generally known from all around the world. For example, Paris is known to be called a city of light and love, New York as a centre of western world and finance, and Berlin as a city of

diverse underground culture and art. No matter how these characterizations might help to promote the special qualities of the metropolises, cities and towns build their uniqueness on a more local level.

The perception of identity can simply be explained to mean the traits one owns which defines their personalities and values. Kaymaz (2013) has stated that identity also requires comparison between things and individuals and that identity is never a stable construct but rather continuously evolving and changing occurrence. Place identity is strongly connected to the feel of attachment of the place and to the sense of belonging in social and cultural life in the urban areas, which in return gives a feel of community and security when the emotional or cognitive bond has been founded for individuals and societies. The feel of attachment to the place can be experienced in several different ways for example through economic, spiritual or religious bond, but also via family heritage or destruction of the area. (Kaymaz 2013.)

To support a human's connection to the urban environment, it is vital that the milieu of the city enables a variety of experiences which give an opportunity to stay close to the subjects each finds meaningful, both physically and mentally. Freedom of self-expression and the sense of endless possibilities offer a stable and encouraging environment which helps the individuals strengthen one's identity and attachment of their surroundings. The importance of public spaces supports the possibility to participate in different social gatherings, cultural activities and events while creating the sense of community (Kaymaz 2013). If the volume of public spaces and social activities are found too alien, for example through ethnical or religious discrimination, it can be challenging to interact with self-identity and urban identity, which can lead to the feeling of loneliness and isolation, even for the most outgoing people. Just like in eco-anxiety, spatial anxiety might be born due to the problems of navigating one's physical space or the feel of being trapped in the culture of mass consumption and immense concourse.

Cities have become exceedingly culturally diverse, due to global and nationwide migration and exploration of new and innovative dimensions. The unfortunate side effect of globalization however is the menace of future cities becoming too

homogenous, eventually wiping out the local culture entirely. In UNESCO's report (2016) it is stated that the importance of urban development in local cultural institutions such as museums, galleries, academies, and theatres have become even more valuable economic sectors and part of the city's fundamental identity. Metropolises are able to provide much needed urban services and environment for growing creative sectors for example in media, design, food, fashion, visual and performing art industries because the environment in question is constantly changing and evolving. (Culture: Urban Future; Global… 2016, 18–19.) As the creative divisions play even bigger part in the cultural elevation of the city, the role of local artists has gained more importance to the promotion of cultural variety and education, by portraying different social situations and backgrounds of the resident communities.

Today, visual artists are not only commissioned to focus on the beneficial parts of cultural innovations, but also to show the problematic side in both social and individual point of views. The visualisation of social stigmas, poverty, segregation of races, genders and sexual orientation, corrupt infrastructure, environmental issues and poor welfare services fosters communities to understand that as long as the cities continue improving social, political and economic issues in all social classes, there will be hope for urban spaces to stay sustainably responsible in the future years too.

2.3 City Portrayed in Video Context

Appearance of new urban innovations, features and global phenomena through interaction, transportation and mobility in the ever-changing hybrid Technopolis, gave a tremendous fascination for media artists and filmmakers to form variability for the characterization of moving image projects (Lu & Penz 2011, 25). Media and entertainment businesses are influential mediums of creating certain images of how we interpret urban life, and these practices can be analysed through certain theoretical paradigms for example through political and sustainable hypotheses (Darchen, Pojani & Sipe 2017).

Cinema representing visual language differs from the traditional literature, because in addition to reading and understanding language of the film, filmmakers need to perceive reality by creating images and synthetic environments for the viewer (Lu & Penz 2011, 29). Films, in addition to television programs, have continued to generate new and distinctive stories placed in the real and/or fictional cityscapes. The way the city is particularly presented into the camera is up to the concept of the narration and what kind of relation the said environment is creating for the main subjects, or if the city itself is supposed to be the main substance.

PICTURE 1. *Blade Runner* gained a cult following for the innovative visual aesthetics of its representation of futuristic city (Ridley Scott: *Blade Runner* 1982)

Urban space can act as an intermediary for character development or as a metaphor to various plot progressions through mood, image world, and civic events within the character's milieu. Film genres can indicate the way cityscapes are presented or at least what kind of mood they are bringing to the general storytelling. Science fiction movies such as *Metropolis* (1927 dir. Fritz Lang) and *Blade Runner* (1982 dir. Ridley Scott) are good examples of how city's role in films is to signify the dystopian high-tech future, where human race suffers the fate of global injustice, slavery or other unethical regulation in the result of capitalism. Although the postmodern theme in these stories is already gloomy, director Ridley Scott for example, was able to create a revolutionarily picturesque portrayal of futuristic Los Angeles in the original *Blade Runner*, which managed to inspire other sci-fi films with its urban aesthetics. Denis Villeneuve continued

Scott's legacy of highlighting the persona of the cities in the sequel *Blade Runner 2049*, which has received praising in a way it manages to visualise urban space via monographic palette, sound effects and natural elements to carry the plot forward and bringing the ominous world to life.

In the drama genre urban space is usually portrayed the most realistic way. In addition, it is often capable of underlining some relevant social grievances, depending on the characters' background. A neo-noir cityscape filmed around a struggling protagonist with financial problems might be fixated in a poignant ghetto, and a serious crime movie or series on the underground suburbs. *Lost in Translation* (2003 dir. Sofia Coppola) and *Taxi Driver* (1976 dir. Martin Scorsese) are some examples of how cinematic language can make otherwise busy looking cityscape to reflect loneliness and the feel of isolation in protagonists' personal lives in two very different ways in the genre of drama. Comedies and romantic works, however, are more traditional to show the built environment as a desirable utopia where typical apprehensiveness of affordability or social struggles are nearly insignificant.

In commercial and media context the city is tended to show as an adventurous and exciting concrete jungle, where despite the impression of versatility, modernity and cultural centrality, the space more likely acts as an aesthetic accessory for the main character's journey or as a hypothetical portrayal of how the protagonist experiences the environment. The urban site can look surreally clean and empty, highlighting the subject's importance and wellbeing. Taking for example automobile commercials, where the driver cruises around the unfilled city streets, with the shiny and elegant car. The windows and walls of the buildings are reflecting the light coming from the headlights and streetlamps, giving an impression of freshly washed or sanded surfaces. Just like the car itself, there are only new technologies and contemporary settings placed for the image and everything feels untouched and revelational. This portrayal of the city makes the user easily feel special and influential. However, it can also blind the viewers' notion of the reality, while managing to create certain attractive visions about the marketed brand.

On the other hand, a city can also be seen as serving a certain, or all the possible social and aesthetical aspects. In some music videos for example, the environment can be presented to imitate the poverty in the city, where visual images focus to show abandoned buildings, dirty and cramped streets or fragmented communities. The other videos might show party goers in the skyscraper rooftops, nightclubs and hotel penthouses where possibilities for different glamorous provisions are endless. More minimalistic approach of the city has also become a popular theme in music videos, especially the exposition of the city at night. The theme lets the character explore the feeling of both physical and emotional isolation, and other profound sensations in the urban areas more realistically while also achieving interesting visual aspects of city lights bringing intensity for the imagery. In his song *Blinding Lights* (2020 dir. Anton Tammi), Canadian singer The Weeknd ventures mindlessly around the glowing boulevards and motorways of Las Vegas while the rhythmic synth pop beat in the background guides his hankering lyrics.

PICTURE 2. A screenshot from The Weeknd's music video *Blinding Lights* (Anton Tammi: *Blinding Lights* 2020)

Furthermore, the cinematography of urbanism in the medium of non-fiction documentary can be more focused on the certain architectural subjects and details in modern spaces, or more specifically, to document different relations and behavior between authentic urban and human environments. Álvares (2015) explains that one of the most applicable forms of representation is to divide documentaries into four sections: observation, expository, reflexive and performative. Documentaries invite the audience to create a meaning beyond the

images they are being shown, forming an identity value for certain concepts of the film. Therefore, filmmakers' objective is to challenge or question certain policies by indicating critical perceptions on the urban change and space to draw the audience's attention, so that the viewer identifies themselves to the process or becomes aware of the effects of the context introduced. (Álvares 2015, 31, 213.)

In the contemporary art field video works were eventually being expanded also outside of art galleries into the public environment. New technological innovations have managed to break limits of how video is portrayed, and the idea of reflecting urban landscape on TV screen or canvas has been upgraded to the opportunity of projecting the artworks for example through architectural surfaces, digital installations and huge billboards. Above all, video as well as audio-visual works in public spaces are able to reach variable people while supporting the idea that art belongs to everyone.

Site-specific video art shown on certain cityscapes can bring more meaning to work when it is in relation to its environment as seen in Jaume Plensa's video sculpture and interactive work *Crown Fountain* (2004) in Millenium Park in Chicago. Thereby, artists can shape the urban environment and have more freedom for experimental and interactive interpretation without having to necessarily connect the visual images into the notion of urbanism. Public video art can also work as an advantage for populists and activists and by introducing non-commercial messages, artists are able to receive feedback from multiple viewing contexts (Petro, Hall & Aneesh 2012, 182). Great example of public art activism is Nina Simone's performance projected at the Robert E. Lee Monument in Richmond, Virginia in 2020, as well as the face of George Floyd and other African Americans who have died in police custody, projected on the statue. On the other hand, public art can also become a marketing opportunity, for example through a tourist attraction or civic publicity (Lu & Penz 2011, 183). *Midnight Moment* (founded in 2012*),* for example, is an art event happening every midnight on Times Square, New York, where different media, video, performance and other emerging visual artists conquer dozens of LED billboards in one of the most well-known tourist spots in the world.

2.4 Defining Video Art, Mass Media and Technology

For a long time, television broadcasting was a main platform that pushed the content and ideas for the wide audiences. The supremacy of the medium was however not unproblematic due to the fact that the nature of the content and the perspective of the topics for discussion were usually unilateral because of the small number of program distributors. During 1960's and 1970's, when the production of camcorders reached a wider popularity within common citizens, artists were able to create alternative visions of the video medium by using both video art and TV to keep criticizing the form of television and to question its cultural significance (Petro, Hall & Aneesh 2012, 179).

Artists managed to expand the depth of their art by documenting performances, pushing the boundaries of cinema, and shaping the form of moving images in a way they had never been seen before. Filmmakers and artists have throughout the years examined the styles and aesthetics of the cinematic language in moving images, and the genre of avant-garde was born particularly to represent the surrealist impressions of cinema. Today the imitations of avant-garde are more likely to be seen in independent films rather than in high box-office blockbuster movies.

The rise of new technologies and digital achievements enabled the birth of multimedia works which have fallen under the terms such as media art and digital art. In short, multi-media video art uses the digital realms as well as electronic media and communications to produce new realities and originality. With new digital tools, artists are able to edit their own videos much easier and with more detail, while also receiving important data from the material they have created, which is something that the analogue technique is not capable of. Although the use of analogue gadgets, such as film cameras still remain popular tools to use among some artists for its old-school utilities and unique depth of imagery.

The digital format of video art has also moved strongly from physical spaces into social media, where the works exist on online platforms and websites. Anyone accessing the internet can create content, receive visibility, and find material

relevant to their lifestyle. Video content is also easier to advertise or present in the context of mass media. Apps such as Instagram and TikTok break the borders of the creation of moving image by encouraging its users to create less than a minute-long video content, which again might raise some controversy of the topic if social media videos can be considered to be real art.

One of the standpoints to consider something as a work of art, is to study the institutional art theory elaborated by George Dickie in 1974. According to this theory the art can be considered as such when it is acknowledged by the social institution of the *artworld*, the term was defined by Arthur Dante. The authorized members of artworld are formed by the compilation of artists, spectators, curators, critiques and basically everyone who is in interaction with the work of art or those who generally show particular interest, support or appreciation towards it. Therefore, the value of the art is not being measured for example by its aesthetic features, but rather by the fact that it is defined by the members of the artworld for the public to experience. The theory also supports the artist's frivolity and impulsivity towards their work rather than following certain conformation. (Dickie 1974, 426–437.)

The nature of social media-based video work differs from more contemporary video art already by the approach of its viewers, algorithms and the fact that the artists working under certain platforms won't necessarily need a physical space, education or connections to compete with professionals and reach the same level of popularity (The Digital Art Revolution… 2017). As being a fine art student myself, I have learned to observe several different techniques and strategies the art can be created, promoted or portrayed, which also has strongly included commercialized media platforms. And just like my fellow counterparts out and from art school I have found the use of media platforms very beneficial for the artistic content.

Personally, I am constantly on the side of a visual artist and as long as the vision follows originality, we see our work relevant for the creative communities, and we are willing to make our work showed in public, we are all considered to be artists and the specialists on our own visual area. Just like the artworld presented in institutional art theory, the social construction of art is generally forming into new

sectors all the time, and that also means that the new methodologies of how the art can be publicly presented needs to be taken into consideration. Thus, the use of media-based tools and media platforms in media art can be used without losing its features as a work of art.

The term *mass audience* usually raises some negative thoughts because even though mass media has a power to conduct information and examples of culture from high, medium or low level, it usually chooses the low parallel to portray cultural content. This is because mass media is considered to reach a huge number of viewers, and the success is measured rather by quantity over quality. (Walker 2001, 9.) Mass audience, however, has also been able to influence the cultural effects of what mass media can or will create. The feedback from the audience has raised stronger power especially on television and streaming productions, and programs which promote the ideas such as misogyny, male gaze, racism, sexual abuse or impossible beauty standards are more strongly to be criticized by the viewers.

The other mass media related concept is commercial art, and it mostly focuses on gaining financial profit to the brands and companies who create or order the work. Good example of commercial art is advertisement films or music videos which can hit a massive prominence both national and global level if done right. High quality or well organised commercial art tends to draw the audience's attention quickly, because of its enormous public visibility and fast pace. Commercial creators tend to borrow more avant-garde features and adapt them in mainstream models, for example, fashion films frequently try experimental and artistic styles to introduce new season of clothing by hiring film directors or emerging filmmakers for the project (Rees-Roberts 2018, 6).

Since the wave of digitalization has changed the way we perceive the world, artists have also had to consider innovative ways the art can be created by using fresh digital tools. Mixing media and emerging technologies have enabled new careers and orientation for certain digital sectors such as coding, animation, computer graphics or computer-generated realities which are valuable and still rising competences within the art, film and media industries. As these technologies keep expanding, digital software and programs are also becoming

more user friendly and easier to procedure, thanks to the development of programming, the speed of data transfer and the possibility of running larger programs even on the smallest devices. In comparison, today's modern phones have over a million times more random-access memory than what the computers used for the Apollo 11 mission had (Kendall 2019).

One of the most interesting rising technologies in the art world has been the growth of the concept of digital realities or more specifically, extended reality (XR), which is the umbrella term used for augmented, virtual and mixed reality. The main formula of extended reality is to create computer-generated environments, mixing both virtual and physical realities, and it is predicted to become a mainstream tool within the next few years. (Scribani 2019.) The use of extended reality technologies is rewarding for both the artist and spectator, because it brings completely new dimensions for the interaction of the artwork. Total or near-perfect attention of the senses on artwork creates unique communications between the viewer and art. When the spectator gets the sensation of controlling the environment and its actions, in a way that it feels like they are the ones creating the art or being part of it, makes the experience special and unforgettable.

Museums and art galleries have started to develop new ways for visitors to interact with the exhibition space by using extended realities, and ever since the beginning of COVID-19 pandemic it has become extremely important that the audience has a chance to spectate the art environment also from their own living rooms. Artists are more and more able to curate and share their own exhibitions and screenings from virtual platforms and directly communicate with the audience (Extended Reality: What Future… 2020).

In exhibition spaces video artists are able to create many interesting interactive artworks and installations with emerging technologies such as three-dimensional animations and holographic projections. International art collective *teamLab* (founded 2001*),* has for example created impressively large scaled digital installations which have connected audiences from all around the world through the fusion of art, technology and science. In the entertainment industry extended reality can become for example a way for the viewer to build their own vision of

the film or even create their own plot twists for the story. Or perhaps the viewer can someday spectate exotic animals from nature documentaries up close from their natural habitat through the realistic virtual world.

3   ARTIST EXAMPLES

3.1 Isaac Julien

Isaac Julien (born 1960) is an example of a media artist and filmmaker who combines several mediums such as theatre, photography, sculpture, dance and music to expand the visual language of his cinematic works, proving again that breaking the barriers of artistic disciplines can be a powerful construction. He is especially known for his pioneering multi-screen installation works in gallery spaces, but originally, he came to the attention of the public for his 1989 poetic documentary *Looking for Langston* and 1991 debut feature film *Young Soul Rebels*. (About Isaac Julien 2019; Victoria Miro n.d.)

PICTURE 3. Julien's three-screen installation film *Baltimore* in gallery space (Isaac Julien n.d.)

Born in London and based in Los Angeles, Julien has always found poetry as an important factor for his creative process, and a tool to indicate everyday experiences, which are also connected to his own personal life. He centres his works around global culture and conversations such as queer visibility, black identity and migration. (Tate 2017.) One of his latest work *Lessons of The Hour* (2019*)* is a ten-screen video installation about former slave Frederick Douglas who became the most photographed person in the United States during the 19th century. At the same time the work is also connected strongly to today's Black

Lives Matter movement and cultural discrimination in America (Shifting Vision 2021). His other installations such as *Ten Thousand Waves* (2010) reflects real-life tragedy and Chinese history through the journey of a goddess, while *Western Union: Small Boats* (2007) is about the journey of immigrants traveling across the Mediterranean Sea and dealing with the trauma for example through poetic movement and architecture. (The Museum of Modern Art 2013; Shifting Vision 2021.)

Julien has also created works which have especially focused to portray the use and intentions of urban environments. In his seven-screen installation film *Playtime* (2014), Julien focuses on other important factors of global culture: capital and labour. The relation of art and capital has always been disputable and challenging to create, but according to Julien, in his work the theme was viewed through the effects it caused for different individuals in different capital cities especially after the financial crisis of 2008 (Tate 2017). His three-channel video *Baltimore* (2003) instead is about the relation of three different Baltimorean museum spaces mixed with different film styles through black culture. The work as a whole represents the cultural richness of the city and its urban diversity throughout history, arts and humanity.

In *A Marvellous Entanglement (2019)* Julien emphases to show the iconic pieces of Latin American modernist architecture and structural elements designed by Lina Bo Bardi, filmed within seven different buildings in São Paulo and Salvador regions, and exhibited through nine installed screens in the gallery space. The video is a clear homage for the architect's legacy and visionaries, and how Bo Bardi's characteristics in both her work and personal life continue to inspirate the Brazilian high culture, still after the several years of fragile confrontation of democracy and dictatorship in the area's recent history (Victoria Miro 2019). While the camera endures to film the buildings from several different angles, the video also highlights numerous architectural aspects in Bo Bardi's constructions, such as the spiral staircases, colorful details, concrete shapes and symmetries, all which immediately stand out from the regular silhouette of the cityscape. The buildings are serving many different intentions, some which are meant for public use, and other which have become abandoned as the time has passed, while the other have bonded a strong connection to the other elements of the area such as

the ocean view. Julien connects the passage of time, significance of the buildings, as well as Bo Bardi's experiences through performative visual stories such as dance, music and performance art in designed spaces, which evoke the manners of importance of modernity and cultural significance of a specific structure in the communes' history.

Julien's modern style and timeless global subjects are a fresh display in gallery spaces, while also normalising the cinematisation of video art. He does not consider himself to be a mainstream film director but finds it important that the artistic visual language could be brought to commercial cinema more frequently without really compromising it (Barnett 2013). The uniqueness of his multi-screen installations mixed with exclusive surround sound and photographs bring the element of sculpturality to the exhibition space and freedom of exploration for the spectator to see the artwork in several different angles and point of views.

The same topics he studies in his works are constantly on the surface of today's media channels and platforms, which makes them easily approachable while also spreading cultural awareness in the form of art. It seems like Julien finds it important to acknowledge the media's influence on social issues, and he wants to continue to spread it through his works. At the same time, aspects of media, especially forums and social media spaces, gain support for these issues from Julien's works and representation in the art world. He believes the topics he portrayed thirty years ago are still relevant to question through modern media distributions, and that it is important to spread it for the newer generations too.

3.2 Hito Steyerl

Hito Steyerl's (born 1966) philosophical theories and powerful analysis about the use of virtual realities and new technology always impress the viewer. As a filmmaker, media artist and professor in the University of Berlin, Steyerl has always found interest in political topics in her artworks and essays. In her works she often questions the power structures in social, financial and cultural environments, as well as the influence of capitalism and the importance of activism in the digital era. Steyerl has stated that she is not an academic person

and that her ideas and visions are only her own personal viewpoints, yet she continues to impress by her humbleness and new paradigms as well as reviewing the contemporary art worlds and modern society in a radical manner.

Digital spaces, social media and emerging technologies have stayed important mediums for the artist to examine. With the additional style of borrowing pop-culture phenomena and ironic humour, her art is aesthetically strongly associated with rugged image quality, broken pixels, or imperfect surfaces, and she immensely merges reality and fantasy by documenting real life situations with computer generated visualisations (Bradley 2017). One of her latest works, *Virtual Leonardo's Submarine* (2020), has been re-created into a new online 360-degree VR experience, where the viewer is spectating the digital underwater world while an artificial female voice opens up the topics such as corruption, power, military, art and advanced technology. As explained in the article of Andrew Krepps Gallery, the viewer in a VR space is positioned into the centre of the environment while also being completely invisible, which Steyerl has explained to be part of the concept of "bubble vision". In this theory, humans are adapted to live in a virtual world where they are disappearing and being replaced by artificial intelligence and automation. (Andrew Krepps Gallery 2020.)

Although Steyerl's works usually follow very manifesto-like narration, she also tends to leave the visual language open for self-interpretation. In her video *How Not to be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational .MOV File* (2013), instead of practically showing how to disappear, the artwork focuses on how digital platforms and image resolution determines visibility. How something can be erased, swiped, shrunk, scrolled or taken picture of to be made into invisible subject. It starts to become clear that the concept is very much about human's or humanity's disappearance in otherwise digitalized corporative world. The video shows google earth images about the resolution targets and pixel-based resolution charts, built in the deserts of California to calibrate aerial photos and videos and how these standards calibrate the whole world as a picture. It is also pointed out how the most essential things in the world are kept invisible such as love, warfare and capital.

Steyerl is obviously worried about technology's control and censorship towards individual people, and hence the video work is a bittersweet essay about how human value is in menace to lose its worth in digitally dependence societies. However, Steyerl does not believe that digital corporations or the internet is able to annihilate all human relations, simply because the world would become too boring, and eventually the humans need a material world to balance out their virtual environment (Bradley 2017).

PICTURE 4. A screenshot from Steyerl's work *How Not to be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational .MOV File* (Hito Steyerl 2013)

In her video installation *This is the Future* (2019), Steyerl has created a new kind of technology and it is focused on the garden controlled and produced by artificial intelligence. The imagery is colourful, manipulated and pixelated, changing its form constantly in a way that it feels like a time-lapse, however it seems that the concept of time is skewed or non-existent. The flowers, forests, and city buildings are changing their form by the pixels, sometimes the fractal spaces are merging and otherwise drawing back from another. The AI system from time to time tries to produce the prediction of the right kind of future, however failing since the present has become more and more unpredictable through cultural, political and social tensions. Future becomes history and vice versa. *This is the Future* is truly one of those works you can't fully understand, but should it be comprehensible? After learning to know Steyerl's philosophy about her working process, I do not think so.

In addition to her approach to media and AI, she also deals with the powerful relevance of urbanism in her works, or how issues just like AI influences our urban lives. She gets her inspiration of using urban environments from the most authentic real-life events, and how for example authorities like military services have been able to control and reshape the cities during the state of conflict. She often questions how certain situations came to be, who is responsible for the alteration or evolution of the image of specific architectural spaces, who does the environment belong to, and what are the communities really like in those areas? In her *This is the Future* exhibition in Art Gallery of Ontario during 2019-2020, Steyerl showcases some of her most visionary works from the recent years including the installation *Hell Yeah We Fuck Die* (2016).

The title of the installation, named after the most used English words in song titles from billboard music charts, has been set as LED text around the indoor space which looks strongly like a parkour playground. Parkour originated as a training of military services, which is related to the video works shown within the installation. *Robots Today* (2016) shows the images of a destroyed city by Turkish military in Turkish-Syrian border while the artist asks questions from the virtual assistant Siri, while other videos in the installation are focused to show the footage of the mistreatment of humanoid military robots filmed in robot technology testing labs. (Art Gallery of Ontario 2019.)

In her site-specific work *Freeplots (2019)* Steyerl has built planters made out of crates which reminds of the shape of free ports. She takes a stand on the situation where her work was sold and stored to the free port zone, which relates to tax evasion. With this work Steyerl gives back to the local communities by purchasing manure for community gardens and collaborating with the society by gardening specific floras for the planters. She was interested in examining the different types of located territories and seeing urban life from a biological and ecological point of view. (Lee 2019.)

Her other works based on the urban environment are videos *Unbroken Windows* (2018) and *Broken Windows* (2018). The first video follows a community activist in the vandalised areas of Camden, New Jersey, where he replaces broken

windows with joyful paintings to bring valuation for the urban areas, while in the second video artificial intelligence is being taught to recognize the sound of breaking a window by engineers and researchers (Schmuckl 2019).

Steyerl predicts that the structure of art is slowly shifting and heading into different directions rather than merging together, where one is more focused on branding and fashion, and other to more non-commercial art (Bradley 2017). I think Steyerl belongs completely in a category of her own. Even though her works might often propose more twisted ways of how we see technology, pop-culture or environment, her main objective is to make us think for ourselves, our loved ones and the things which are truly important in our lives – such as friendship, self-intelligence, love and companionship. She knows her audience is not thoughtless, nor she needs to treat them like one. Instead, she brings us confrontations about the life and civilisation around us. To quote the user *L p* and their comment from *This is the Future*'s YouTube video: "Hito Steyerl is so inside of mainstream culture and its power systems - yet she is so outside of it and so critical of its current direction" (World of Singulart 2019).

3.3 Jesper Just

Danish artist Jesper Just (born 1974) has focused to deliver visually cinematic short films, which however tend to not follow the usual construct of mainstream movies. Just trusts on quietness and performative film language without momentous monologues. Instead, one of the most significant roles in his films is the sound world or music, which carries on the poignant journey. The artist willingly deals with topics such as closeness and identity while also easily finding importance to focus filming minor groups, and to open up about emotional relationships of different genders that the entertainment industry still often ignores. In his earliest works, Just especially centres his short films around the idea of male perception in media and society.

Media has strongly affected Just to break boundaries which usually prevent creators from stepping out of the basic model of an appeal. Portraying a successful, white, straight family man is perhaps the least he wants to bring to

his work. There are already too many stories about that in the world of media, and perhaps it does not bring any new valuations to the industry either, at least not easily. Just knows that the media has a full potential to expand the view towards different individuals and he wants to support it. His male characters are visibly showing emotions and vulnerability, some which are easily categorized to be feminine qualities. Just questions the conceptions of femininity and masculinity, in a way that they are not dependent on gender or age.

In *No Man is an Island* (2002) the viewer sees a middle-aged man dancing at the park of the city while an old waltz plays in the background. His movements are theatrical and somewhat awkward for the bystanders to follow, however the man's passion for his dance is highly visible. There is a younger man sitting at the bench of the park who cries while following the man's performance. The viewer does not know if the young man is affected by the other man's dance or if there is something else which has made him cry in that moment.

In the sequel made in the year 2004, the film is based on a lonely bar with dark shadows and afternoon glow. Suddenly one of the lonely men at the bar starts to sing a serenade with a powerful voice, and eventually other men join to sing the song, forming a beautiful choir together. Just portrays individual situations in his films, which doesn't have beginning, midway and ending. He deals with time unsystematically, so that the duration of some actions might be several minutes long because of the feel of authenticity, while some other scenes follow much quicker pacing. Just has noted that movies have a pressure to keep the spectator entertained all the time, while the art can focus more to be slow and "boring", but also to bring a higher meaning for the image (Portland Art Museum 2014).

The relationships between his characters are unknown and left for the spectator to interpret on purpose. In *Something to Love* (2005) two men are in a black car driving slowly in the parking hall. The older man driving the car is weeping, while the other, much younger man sits on the backseat, looking outside the window with no visible emotion. When arriving at their destination, both men rise out from the car and the younger man leaves. The older man eventually decides to rush after the other man, finally finding him from an elevator kissing a woman. The man and woman are kissing for a long time, while spinning around to the tone of

a music box. The older man tears up while watching them, is he jealous of the woman or the man? Or is he emotionally touched by their relationship? When the pair notices the older man by the door, they are shocked. The younger man turns away from the woman, takes (seemingly) the other man's hand and leaves the woman to the elevator. Both men are walking back to the car, while this time the younger man goes to the front seat and they drive away, not looking back. The work necessarily makes you think about the cliche concepts of unrequited love, dramatic love triangles and forced masculinity in movies, while also bringing out the topic of love between two men, both romantic and platonic, which was considered to be quite rare in media still during the 2000s.

In his newer works, Just has become more fascinated about the significance of environment and building the cinematic narration around the physical multi-screened installations. In his work *Interpassivities* (2017), Just created a one-hour long performance with the mix of video art to the wide, open space. The idea of the work is to connect the ballet dancers, workers in pedestrian clothing and the audience together to the performance, creating shared attendance for the environment, while also questioning the roles of agency, authenticity and participation (Brooklyn Academy of Music 2018). During the performance, the workers are moving and stacking the pieces of the surface from the floor to change the navigation of the space, so that both of the dancers and the audience have to reinvent their movement of the body and become more aware of their surroundings while their physicality is constantly challenged (Louisiana Channel 2018).

There are three different films shown during the performance, first one being close-up shots of the ballet dancers' skin and fabric of the garment, while the movement of their body is in sync with the music from the self-playing instrument in the performance space. The muscles of the dancers however make a movement due to electrical impulses, and not by themselves. The second film is a sculptural presentation of the continuous passive motion machinery (CPM) which helps people with bodily injuries to train their muscles. The movement of the machine is very straightforward and stilted, and the dancers try to reflect that in their performance during the duration of the film.

In the last film we see a person wearing a tutu and creating sounds with a stick to the iron poles in the border of Mexico and the USA. The film talks about the border structure of the body but also the border in the landscape within the artwork space. (Louisiana Channel 2018.) Just constantly examines the limits of the bodily movement and the impact of our own physiques in relation to the space it is placed in. He tries to create the experience of the performance as close to reality as possible so that each stage would contain natural reactions and progression. It is a hard task, considering the audience is knowingly taking part in the event and the dancers are, despite the naturalness, following the pattern of the program. Perhaps that is also exactly what Just wants to point out; there is always a bigger factor governing us.

PICTURE 5. Image from Just's installation *Corporealités,* (Jesper Just 2020)

In his exhibition *Corporealités* (2020) Just continues the concept of the physical use of the body from *Interpassivities,* although this time he builds the artwork around multi-screened video installations. The first film from the original performance of the ballet dancers and the electric stimulations activated to them through wires, are shown in several different LED panels around the gallery. Instead of the dancers controlling their own muscles and reacting to the music of *Fauré's Op. 50*, they stay inert and passively receive electrical impulses, which are directly activated to the music itself (Galerie Perrotin 2020). Some of the LED panels of the video are installed on the floor, dismantled from the overall image

of the dancer's muscles on fragmented screens, and therefore portraying the idea of detached parts of the body. There is a connection in circuitry of how the wires are sending impulses to the muscles, and how the wires in gallery spaces are controlling the display of the screens. (Cheng 2020.)

Like in *Corporealités,* Just continues to create maze-like installations where he challenges the conceptions of an individual and technological ableism. He is constantly fascinated of how cities, public spaces or architecture are serving our availability of movement and he enjoys putting the spectator to a role of a figurehead, and to let the person make a decision of how the work is interpret through their navigation in the space, instead of viewing the work from a far as an outsider. Just uses space as a mediator for the sounds and images in his works. In fact, for him it all starts from the space, both urban and architectural environment, and how he is going to build his works around them. It feels like the space is as organic as it was before Just put his works in there. It all depends how we decide to approach it as an audience.

Above all, Just asks big questions about property, control and power to our own physicality, which might never receive a clear answer. How are we allowed to use it? Who else has a right to direct it? And how technological, sociological, and structural factors might restrict our way of reaching it? All this might sound very tiring to analyse, but that is not really what Just as an artist wants us to do, because he's not doing that either in the first place. Instead, he wants us to focus on the levels of emotionality, desire and tension – features, which make us the most human.

4   THE PROCESS OF THE 'URBAN CHAOS' VIDEO WORK

4.1 The Aspects of Direction

When starting to work with moving image projects, one needs to understand the topics they value and themes they can relate to in a personal manner, otherwise the work might lose its credibility and bring up misunderstandings or confusion for the audience. Dealing with the themes of urbanism and life in city areas started by identifying my artistic needs and practicing self-inventory by projecting my personal real-life issues and experiences. "You can't make art without a sense of identity, yet it is identity itself you seek by making art", states Rabiger (2003, 24). Ideating stories you are intrigued to tell needs self-reflection into your physical, mental, emotional and social spaces. The main dilemma is not to find a subject which has not yet been discovered, it is how you manage to ideate even the most common topics in the most innovative and personal ways.

I was born in 1996 in Finland and grew up in a suburban area in a small city of Hyvinkää, where the merge of ruralism and functionalism have been the main factors in the regional appearance. I saw fascination in the areas such as Helsinki, where architecture played a bigger part for the identity of the city than just a serving of the basic needs. Playfulness and modern approach of the build environment supported colourful urbanism, which brought the diversity of people together into the communal areas. The buildings were not there just to fulfil the purpose, they were constructed there to promote the cultural richness.

PICTURE 6. A screenshot from the title of the artwork in the video (Aleksandra Näveri 2021)

When I began to create the video *Urban Chaos,* as a part of the fine art degree show *Kaleidoscopers* (2021), I knew I would want to reflect the relation of a person and the urban environment, and how they are able to interact with each other in the video. I became fascinated about the rapidly changing construction area near my residence in Ranta-Tampella borough in Tampere, and I began to closely follow the change of space by physically visiting it almost daily. After this mundane experience I was intrigued to examine what urban spaces can mean for different individuals as a case study, and why it can be so momentous in the first place, both physical and emotional levels.

PICTURE 7. Image of the Ranta-Tampella construction site while filming *Urban Chaos* (Aleksandra Näveri 2020)

To find an interesting approach to the documented theme, I collected a small group of people to model in the video, and act as a user of the space as well as the mediator between the camera and scenery. I wanted these people to be the same generation as myself, since I found it important to deal with the theme of urban space through the eyes of twentysomethings; a generation born around the time of the invention of the internet and within a rapidly globalized and digitalized world. In addition to my own experiences, it was interesting to analyse how others in my age would react to the modern world and the urban environment they had grown up or later moved in.

I usually found it easier to work with people who I know personally because then I know how to approach them, talk to them or just overall what kind of tone of voice I should use with them. Communicating is essential when directing a

moving image project, and I want to make the experience as comfortable for both me and the model, and to let them know that they too have a freedom to improvise or suggest certain actions. When filming *Urban Chaos,* I managed to find an easy-going and organic relationship with the models when directing them from behind the camera, even with people I had not met face to face before or for a long time, which was a new and self-developing experience for me, and something every artist could practise about. Warming up the person by goofing around and explaining the vision of the scene was as important as the actual shooting, so that the mutual accommodation was managed, and those moments became one of the best outcomes from the project.

PICTURE 8. Shot of the model while filming *Urban Chaos*. At times the models were also filmed up close, so I found it very important to keep up the easy going and relaxed atmosphere on set (Aleksandra Näveri 2020)

4.2 Visual Aesthetics and Cinematography

In regard to the aesthetic vision, I first started collecting photographic material of possible spaces to film by scouting the city areas. What kind of urban environment I found interesting and what time of the day it would be best to shoot to get the right kind of light to the image in terms of visual depth? The areas included, for example, rapidly changing construction areas, parks, monuments,

tunnels, churches, streets, bridges and parking garages. The areas however were not chosen only by the aspect of clearly representing the visual urbanism, but also from the simple emotions they evoked in myself.

PICTURE 9. Early images of the potential filming locations when scouting the city area (Aleksandra Näveri 2020)

In some cases, these spaces were found by accident, for example by the train passing above the bridge or seeing the ray of sunlight hitting the right spot of the street in a perfect manner for my purpose. If the space immediately created interesting visual scenarios in my head, I wanted to make sure a certain scene would be filmed there. I found it important to have images filmed during different times of the day, because urban spaces change in a living interaction. All in all, the imagery or environment around the models was more about connectivity of several subjects rather than just showing one significant space at a time. I think overall the visuality of the city area is not built by just a few main objects – it is the sum of a larger ensemble.

Other practice I used in addition to environment for constructing the depth of the image, was to form a specific flow in the movement of the models. Instead of using verbal narration, I wanted to focus on film models' visible feelings and motions in camera and practise a poetic way of telling the story. Time to time I asked models to stay still and just look around their environment while the camera

created the movement, another time I asked them just to focus on the camera so that they are not too distant for the viewer. In addition to stillness, I found it fundamental to let models use their environment. I asked them to walk into certain directions, run through a small area or make other intense movement.

PICTURE 10. Image of the DJI Ronin gimbal used in filming (Aleksandra Näveri 2020)

I was inspired by how film director Neels Castillon, has practised bodily movement and the use of environment in his video works to tell a story. Castillon who is focused on making commercial films, directed pianist Hania Rani's music video *F Major* (2020) where we see three professional dancers, moving to the rhythm of mesmerizing piano song in the middle of South Icelandic beach. The camera follows each dancer alternately and is constantly in a movement while following them, sometimes from the side, behind or slowly spinning around her. At times the camera gets very close to the dancer to show her emotions, while another time it moves away to show the dancer and the scenery, she is in. This camera movement inspired me to purchase a DJI Ronin gimbal – an image stabilizer, which would make the cinematography much more suave during the filming of the project.

PICTURE 11. A screenshot from *F Major* (Neels Castillon: *F Major* 2020)

I decided to film most of the material in slow motion, using my Sony A7R III camera's Slow and Quick Motion mode, which automatically records the footage up to 100 frames per second, making the movement four times slower from original material. It is important to bear in mind that using this kind of mode will decrease the quality of your image a little and mute the sound from your video material, but since I did not intend to use original sounds in my project, this worked well. Slow motion can also be added later during the post-production phase, but to manage that, the camera needs to be set into the right frame rate and shutter speed to receive smooth movement. There are several occasions for example in 90's movies where the footage has been slowed down, but the movement looks jumpy and rough, it is usually because the frame rate has been set for too low during the filming.

PICTURE 12. Shot of the model while filming *Urban Chaos*. The use of slow motion gave a mesmerizing look for the shot material (Aleksandra Näveri 2020)

In media, slow motion is often used during high adrenaline action scenes in movies and TV-shows, to show intense dancing or other bodily movement in music videos, or to present the movement of the clothing in fashion commercials. It is visually impressive, stylistic, and easily attracts the viewer's attention, perhaps that is why the effect is so much connected to commercialised content. Using slow motion is also one main aspect in my project to examine media art's visual ways to portray narration, how it can be an alternative method for natural cinematography and still promote avant-garde aesthetics. In *Urban Chaos* the use of slow motion can create a feeling of slowing down within such a hectic environment. The spectator can find completely new viewpoints from urbanism and discover that there is also harmony in the city areas, when we just allow ourselves to stop and see what can truly be found around us.

4.3 Narration Through Post-Production

From the start of the project, my vision was to show *Urban Chaos* as a two-channelled work. I started to assemble filmed material in two sections and chose scenes which could fit with each other the best. However, I did not want to be too strict about the rule of the channels, but instead I trusted my own appreciation for the images. Sometimes the two images were reflecting the familiarity of their environment, and other times the spaces were completely opposites. In some parts alignments, surfaces, tones or sensations of the images created such an interesting combination that I had to position them next to each other. Thus, the idea of creating multi-channelled work was not only intended to connect visuals with each other, but also to find differences and to open new ways of observing footage shown to us. It gives a whole new approach for interactivity of the work.

Although *Urban Chaos* could be considered to be categorised as visual art, as well as other moving image work, it is actually a combination of audio and an image, meaning that the audio is not only a side factor or an increase in the value of the image, but rather an equally important feature. One of the most visible parts of telling the story of my video work, is its sound world and music, which creates wholeness for the audio-visual experience. Music can determine pacing,

atmosphere or emotions of the certain scenes of the film, and in *Urban Chaos* variable music selections are setting the tone for each of these qualities.

PICTURE 13. A screenshot of *Urban Chaos.* Combination of two different scenes created some fascinating compositions (Aleksandra Näveri 2021)

During the post-production process, four different music tracks were added to divide the narration. The video work has been built as a three-act structure: act one – which introduces the setup for the film, act two – escalating the circumstances or encounters of the situation, and act three – displaying the conclusion or closure (Rabiger 2003, 23). Following three-act structure within editing is essential for having a clear and consistent manufacture in the story. It helps the audience to understand and study the particular vantage points of the narration and feel emotionally involved for certain challenges and situations in the characters' development on screen. Although it is known that more experimental or avant-garde cinema tend to not follow the three-act structure so strictly.
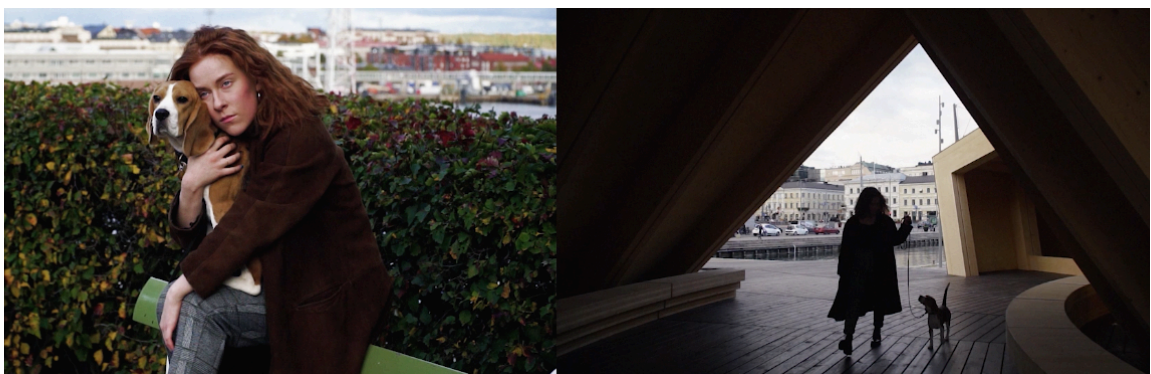
PICTURE 14. A screenshot from *Urban Chaos* (Aleksandra Näveri 2021)

Urban Chaos starts with a melancholic cinematic soundtrack, later dissolving into energetic electronic music, which eventually fades back into slow atmospheric

sounds. I mixed the soundtracks to switch naturally, without too intense transitions, so it gives a feeling that there is only one song played during the entirety of the artwork. I also wanted to create an experience for the audience where they would not have time to think about the technical aspects of the film, but instead they could become absorbed in the mellow storytelling.

The editing and cuts of the scenes are either slow or fast, depending on the pace of the music, and the variation of speed on scenes creates easily different layers for eight-minute video to observe. Time to time the video work reminds a lot of a melodramatic movielike scenes, where a character looks at the camera while their clothes or hair flutters in the wind, while in another time we only see a glimpse of them spinning or running in the space, before the scene already cuts into next part. Eventually the amount of time the viewer has a chance to spectate the actions of the characters, or venue of the scene, depends entirely on the decisions made during the post-production process. In commercial films or other smaller productions where time is limited, the phasing of the video has to be different from the regular film structure. In these cases, the editing has to focus on major factors and simplicity to avoid too unclear explanations. I personally wanted to give some space for self-interpretation and that is one reason I left out voiceovers, which were originally planned to be included for the video. Instead of spoken narration I wanted to highlight the importance of the editing in the role of storytelling.

4.4 Exhibiting the Artwork During the Era of Pandemic

My plan of showing *Urban Chaos* was to hang two transparent screens, such as plexiglasses, from the ceiling and to project both video channels into them. The screens would be installed next to each other, forming a wide V-shape which would create plurality for the physical space of the work. Because of the transparent surfaces and three-dimensional set-up, the audience has a chance to be interactive with the work by walking around the installations, and to see them from different angles and positions.

The original plan for the release of *Kaleidoscopers* degree show was in March 2021, however due to the stringent regulations for preventing the spreading of COVID-19, the exhibition was postponed to the Autumn 2021. The exceptional situation forced us artists to try out and accommodate new ways of making our art pieces visible. One of the greatest examples was our Virtual Gallery created for the exhibition. In virtual space, the spectator could interact with different objects in artists' rooms and see similarities of the visual themes to the artists' works.

PICTURE 15. A screenshot from my virtual room where clips of *Urban Chaos* can be seen in VR space (*Kaleidoscopers* Virtual Gallery, Tommi Mäkeläinen 2021)

Using digital platforms and social media to promote the exhibition became an important tool to market our works, and we had to make sure that the materials shown on www.kaleidoscopers2021.com were good quality and abundant. I was in charge of creating the website of the exhibition, and thus I became quite invested that the site would look visually impressive and tempting to visit. On the website the spectator can observe artists' own pages and read the artwork information and a statement, see images of the work and to check the artist's social media, webpages or resume.

In times like these, I found it very vital for creators to have an opportunity to connect with other creative people and form new relationships and projects. That is why I really wanted to focus on bringing everyone's contact information, portfolios and media channels available to the webpage. Other content that the

spectator can find from the website is our press release, information, images and videos about the Virtual Gallery and illustrated or photoshopped plans of our artwork installations in the gallery space. However, I think creating a website is not enough to reach visibility in the digitalized world, but we also need to highlight our accomplishments or creative events online, straightforwardly to people who have the same interests. That is one of the reasons why I think our Instagram account for the degree show was also important to keep active and exciting.

PICTURE 16. Illustration of the installed artwork (Aleksandra Näveri 2021)

I was also one of the graphic designers creating the visual look for the exhibition. It was important to consider what kind of colours, shapes and fonts could represent what we, the *Kaleidoscopers* want to bring to the world. The end result was an illustration of a hexagon-shaped crystal, with a bright colour palette of orange, blue, green, and other familiar tones to kaleidoscopic sight. It became quite relevant, since all of us are representing different ideas, philosophies, stories or aspects, which we found important to explore in our personal lives. The variety of the topics we want to question in the art world are each uniquely significant, and they introduce us to several fresh standpoints, whether those images are distorted, multiplied, embellished or otherwise re-invented, just like the kaleidoscopic view is.

5 DISCUSSION

This thesis began by defining how humanity has grown and integrated with urban space and the globalized world. The development of the spaces is endless, and the results of these changes are fully based on our lifestyles, values and preferences. It has become clear that urbanism and the perception of it is not only built by authorities and economic infrastructure, but also by the fraction of its people. All in all, describing the foundations of urban space is an entity of many factors, and it could perhaps be easier to question what urban environment is not, rather than what it eventually is. Ergo, I would personally divide the construction of urbanism into three major effects: political, social and cultural foundations. Urban space continues to grow and evolve drastically within global and local culture, yet at the same time it has a power to stay exactly like it has always been or vanish completely. Maybe that is one reason why the urban environment is so fascinating, you never know if a certain building has been destroyed, abandoned or rebuilt in the next thirty years.

Today I see the built environment most importantly as an opportunity for self-expression, and that the visitor or a local resident are the ones who build the most visible valuation for certain areas. Even graffiti on a wall can create certain feelings and reactions for the observer, which will be connected with how they see the area's characteristics as well as their own identity. It is interesting but also essential to note how differently all of us see the surroundings of the cityscape. Some of us see it to be strongly connected to consumerism and capitalism, and that's why the lifestyle connected to it is so strongly avoided, while some of us see appreciation of the versatility and ever altering community and services provided. I guess neither approach may be the only right way to respond to the said environment.

We continue to reflect urbanism to our own experiences, personal history and morals – that is why the topic still tends to interest us and share opinions. We should remain to question our relation to the space we live in and that we are open to have conversations, arguments and compromises about urbanised life. Modern society is changing its form constantly, and with that the space around us needs to also keep up with it and foster it. The most important thing about

ensuring the prosperity and relevance of urban spaces also in the future is to keep providing social, political and cultural freedom and qualities in cityscapes to everyone in all aspects of life. That means we need to continue to be observant about urban spaces, share information, but also be ready to receive it. It is Important to encourage the qualities we love about the city but also point out the issues which we find giving us more distress. We need to approach the fact how we react to different areas and why they make us feel a certain way. The answer can be found perhaps from our personal relationships, work, education, growth environment, achievements, challenges and other experiences in life.

In the aspect of art, we have a chance to dive deeper to the topics which astound us just like how the theme of urbanization inspired me to create *Urban Chaos*. I would say the creative process already begins from the first visions appearing in your mind, and when you see yourself actually physically executing it, you can only appreciate yourself as a creator for already reaching the halfway point of the project. Artists will always look for new ways to look at their work, it almost feels like we should be aware of all the theories reflected to it, even though we should always keep in mind that the art is maybe at its best when there are things also left for interpretation.

By examining the works of Julien, Steyerl and Just, I learned to assort the cinematic viewpoints I could bring out in my work without giving too much away. I could learn to see my video work through Julien's eyes, where he highlights the importance of personal experiences and the result of cause and effect. In other times I saw my work following Steyerl's fascination for media tools, and media's influence on art, culture and society. And sometimes I could relate to Just's vision of seeing our relation to space and how we are challenged to use it. In many ways, I could see my work strongly representing all of these ideations, while also bringing something personal on the table too.

My appreciation and interest towards media-based content and media art has not decreased, instead my belief for it has most probably just mounted up. At the beginning of the thesis, I questioned whether media and commercialized content can be considered to be art, or if the use of medium is lowering down the value of it. I have very much learned to comprehend that the word *art* is a very widely

understood concept. Our society and culture tends to keep the concept of art very sacred, and it sometimes evokes in our minds the idea of a difficult-to-practice aesthetic structure. Instead, I think art is more about an emotional journey. Just like in institutional art theory, should it be enough that if the work of art is considered to be art by its creator or by the spectator then perhaps there is no need to have an additional proof of what art actually is.

Besides, isn't it too severe to define the artwork by restricting the creative freedom of creating it, and therefore breaking the rule of making art in the first place? There is an art scene for every artwork. Naturally our comprehension of art needs to be current so that we can generally keep up with contemporary culture. If we think about art history in general, the main art factors were mostly focused on paintings, drawings and sculpture. Later on, other forms emerged with fine art such as theatre, video, photography and cinema. Media just happens to be one of the newest forms of that category, we just have an extensive variety of ways to use it.

I look forward to the structure of the media to bring something new to the art world in general. Within new technologies, trends, talking points, platforms and aesthetics, our perception of art continues to widen and affect more and more variety of people. We can learn a lot from the media when it lets us to approach it from several perspectives, so that we have an opportunity to observe its characterizations, both pros and cons. I could not see my own path as a visual artist if I also could not call myself as a media artist or filmmaker. I continue to believe that media and art will unite even more as we go into the future, and who knows what kind of creative mediums we have invented in the next fifty years.

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