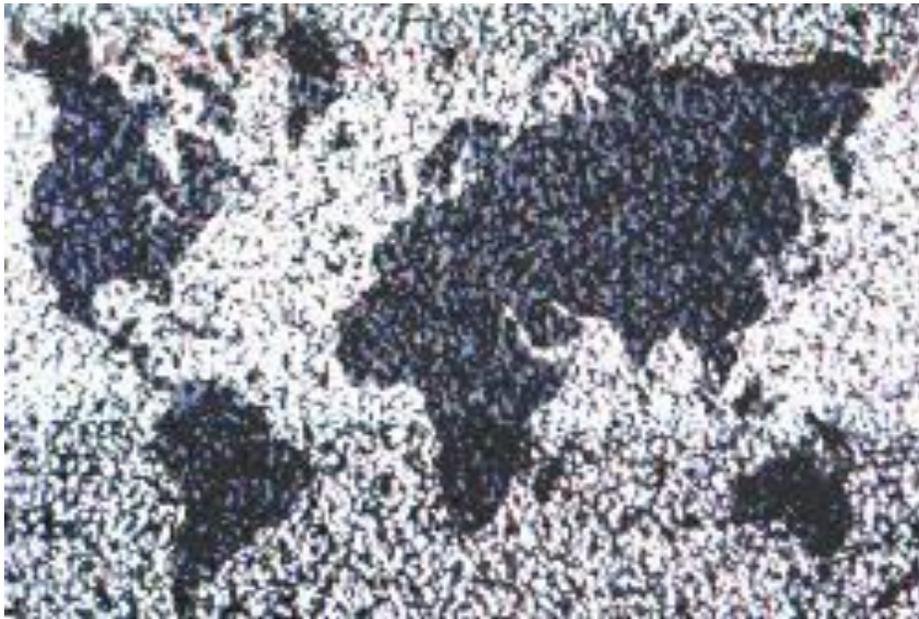


# IDENTIFYING PLACE AND PLACING IDENTITY IN TRANSNATIONAL TRANSMEDIA: A CASE STUDY OF TWO CONVERGENT MEDIA PROJECTS

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Two case studies currently in development will be examined from a producers point of view while focusing on targeting new audiences, The two projects – TELENESIA and ANTIGONE INTERACTIVE both employ different toolsets that relate to the location and preferences of the target audiences.



*"Telenesia/Antigone Interactive"*

"A Transmedia production will develop storytelling across multiple forms of media in order to have different entry points into the story." [1]

The key point within this terminology being the idea of working *across* platforms as distinct from other models of digital storytelling such as "remediation" and "crossmedia" where content is replicated across platforms.

TELENESIA is a fictional place and alludes to a distant and inaccessible "no place" and resting on the idea of a place that exists beyond and outside of the increasingly throttling networked communication. Conceiving a physical location that is post-network and by inference suggesting a post-apocalyptic time zone developed out of a research edition of hidrazone.com and was used as an overarching terminology to describe the process of increasing fracture of audience experience as the communication networks get more pervasive. Hence, a range of digital media tools and working practices were brought together under an umbrella term – computational video, VJ sampling, glitch to name a few.

TELENESIA evolved into art based project in that the principle outlet for the work is an installation within an art gallery, however, in engaging with the key concerns of the work – fragmentation and atomization of post network communication – there were clearly opportunities within a multi-platform setting.

The core of the work draws on two key influences. Firstly, the occult power of the moving image is fictionalised in Theodore Roszak's *Flicker*, a pacey novel that follows protagonist Jonathan Gates. The narrative revolves around an academic researcher who penetrates a shadowy religious order responsible for embedding subliminal images into Hollywood - later to be forcibly marooned on a Pacific island with a decaying film archive. In many ways the background of the novel reflects an enduring 20th fascination linking occultism and media developed by figures such as William Burrough's *Cut-ups*, Bryon Gysin's *Dreamachine*, Kenneth Angers *Magick Lantern Cycle* and work by the English filmmaker Derek Jarman.

The other strand being explored in the work is the hardware hacking and glitch cultures that in turn are driven by what is often described as a post-modern deregulation of narrative, scratch video and VJ culture. The aesthetic intention is to attempt move on from post-modern nihilism where the destruction of image is an end in itself and to use these atoms of destruction in a novel fictional edifice.

Beyond the gallery, TELENESIA expands across ephemeral networks allowing the exhibition slot to use platforms as both publicity and marketing opportunity as well as providing a legacy in the form of documentation and video. The installation itself is built on "physical computing" sculptures – boxes that allow the visitor to the gallery to access and play with a database of short video clips using analog controls i.e. dials and knobs and while there was no intention to replicate this experience on-line, elements of the narrative have been extended into the internet.

The initial building block of the project was the 1-minute video that would emulate and draw in some of key tropes and practitioners of experimental moving image. These short films have been posted into a video blog and exhibited at international film festivals prior to venue and funding confirmation of the show tour. The project has been in development over a number of years and initially the look and feel of the video pieces was developed as a VJ set that used digital tools according to an "analog rule set" i.e. using image effects in line with film optical printing. An underlying impulse before devising this set (which featured with a vocal sampling group) was to move away from the hegemony of hard edge graphics and explosive eye candy of mainstream VJ culture – the VJ community appears to be hungry for material so the source clips have been released under a CC license and distributed via torrents thus creating an on-line participatory mode to compliment the installation.

ANTIGONE INTERACTIVE explores the relationships between physical location and narrative in a parallel and complimentary manner. The focus of this project is to tell personal stories of migration and political conflict – accommodating films created by experienced filmmakers exploring the hidden side of personal family history. By focusing on the personal over the political it entails challenging of the inherent artificial nature of political boundaries and the de-humanizing effect of the nation-state.

The genesis of the project grew from previous projects by the producers that had used a global interface to allow the audience to access video content reflecting stories and places from around the planet.

In developing the work within the confines of transmedia the producers use the borderless map as a starting point, borders become apparent as users drill down into content. This reflects the restrictions of movement across the surface of the planet that is the starting point for the narrative threads. To this

end the Google maps API with its extensive capabilities for overlaying geopolitical information and location markers was chosen as the key interface device.

Common to much of material created for internet consumption, work tends to be molded into short form productions such as the website, in designing the narrative structure of the project it, the challenge was to tell rich and complex stories while maintaining an offering that could be consumed in bite sized chunks. The work uses an episodic structure that enables a longer form story to be communicated while only experiencing a 4-minute section at any one time.

The interface enables the audience to access the video segments using a variety of menu options: a tagged map using Googlemaps API, a gallery of thumbnails and a video player that allows the clips to be watched as a long form video more akin to watching television, thus the user can calibrate their own experience in terms of levels of interactivity.

In terms of the viewing experience the tablet/ipad was the optimal distribution device that was chosen for a number of reasons – that the viewing environment could to some extent be predicted and the strength of the quality of video playback. At early stages of development, the creation of an app was considered has the potential to provide consistent rich media experiences, however, the limitations over distribution, extensibility issues and the fact that user base would be necessarily limited precludes this option.

Drawing together the two projects it can be noted that they exist in almost opposition to one another TELENESIA is a fiction that attempts to move audience in space and time, while ANTIGONE INTERACTIVE is underscored by accurate sense of personal experience. Whilst elements of their transmedia existence may bear some resemblance in that they use short video within a web based interface and such like, they are operating at different ends of the spectrum TELENESIA challenges the audience to immerse themselves into an escapist fiction while ANTIGONE INTERACTIVE intends to awake a political dimension within the user.

telenesia.com

antigoneinteractive.com

### **References and Notes:**

1. *Bernardo, Nuno, The Producer's Guide to Transmedia: How to Develop, Fund, Produce and Distribute Compelling Stories Across Multiple Platforms (Dublin: beActive Books, 2011).*