Chapter 16
Spatial Narratives in Art

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16.1 Introduction

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

Recently Gibson described things this way: "Cyberspace has everted. It has turned inside out. Colonized the physical." (Gibson 2010)

Let's begin with the symbolic work "The Apparition of the Unicorn, Pink and Invisible at the Same Time" by the artist collective Les Liens Invisible, in which "Art overtakes Faith in imagination." (Les Liens Invisible 2011) (see Fig. 16.1).

These prankster artists took the phenomenon of web-based parody religions to produce a humorous intervention that breaks the law at the same time. Using augmented reality, they brought about an event that people on the Internet had long been waiting for: the apparition of the Invisible Pink Unicorn, a legendary figure that first appeared on the Net in the early 1990s as an eminent deity to satirize theistic belief. In the words of Steve Eley "Invisible Pink Unicorns are beings of

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Fig. 16.1 A screenshot of *The Invisible Pink Unicorns*, 2011, Les Liens Invisible, augmented reality, copyright Les Liens Invisible. Description: *The Invisible Pink Unicorn* is suspended in air over the Vatican Obelisk

great spiritual power. We know this because they are capable of being invisible and pink at the same time. "(Huberman 2007) The goddess made her appearance as a cyber-monument in Saint Peter's Square in Rome on April 23—Easter Day—2011. The work demonstrates the illegal, unauthorized use of public space. Perhaps not everyone knows that the eponymous square in front of Saint Peter's Basilica is not located on Italian territory, as the Vatican City, home of Pope Francisco I, is an independent state. It is also an undemocratic state, where protests and demonstrations of any kind are strictly forbidden, a situation guaranteed by tight security.

The Invisible Pink Unicorn was chosen by the artists because it had become a rallying point for activists, and in a certain sense 'illegal'.

Les Liens Invisibles' "ubiquitous monument" has prompted "an eternal reshape of the Eternal City," as the Internet everts out of itself and into reality. "A Monument to the Invisible Pink Unicorn—which is a work and symbol of atheism, fervid imagination and hope—has been permanently placed in the middle of the square and all the passersby can now admire it through the comfortable viewer of their smart-phones freely installing the popular Layar AR application." (see Fig. 16.2).

According to the authors, "the Invisible Unicorn is not a joke and it won't be removed it from its current position. The virtual sculpture is 'real', (in)visible and it has to be taken into serious consideration: it is the way a recontextualized symbol

Fig. 16.2 A screenshot of *The Invisible Pink Unicorn*, 2011, Les Liens Invisible, augmented reality, copyright Les Liens Invisible. Description: One view St. Peter's Square of Rome during the apparition of *The Invisible Pink Unicorn*

can alter, challenge and reshape the perception of a public space—especially a very closed and symbolic one like the [*sic*] St. Peter's Square in Rome" (Les Liens Invisible 2011).

16.2   The Problem of Squatting in Space

Exploring the issue aroused by using AR technologies as "site vs. non-site," "materiality vs. immateriality" or ubiquity of an art that is "not here, not there" brings us to the topic of representation in art.

With the birth of net.art, the Web began to be used as the space *par excellence* for all that was immaterial, encouraging new directions in art focused on the real versus the virtual. "The 1990s were about the virtual. It started with the media obsession with Virtual Reality (VR). It is quite possible that this decade of the 2000s will turn out to be about the physical—that is, physical space filled with electronic and visual information" (Manovich 2005). Since 2002, Lev Manovich has traced the development "of the technologies which deliver data to, or extract data from, physical space—and which already are widely employed at the time of this writing (early 2002/2005)." (ibidem) Manovich thus turns the crux of the matter on its head; the point is not technology but space, and the definition of art that overlays and occupies that space.

What impact does this style of art have on society and on the public? In what way does it appropriate public and private space? And in doing so what political issues does it raise and what participatory democratic processes does it activate?

William Gibson in a recent article writes: "Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon prison design is a perennial metaphor in discussions of digital surveillance and data mining, but it doesn't really suit an entity like Google." (Gibson 2010)

Manovich explains: "This close connection between surveillance and assistance is one of the key characteristics of the high-tech society. This is how these technologies are made to work, and this is why I am discussing data flows from the space (surveillance, monitoring, tracking) and into the space (cellspace applications, computer screens and other examples below) together." (Ibidem) It is easy to see that the heart of the matter lies in the definition of, or focus on, social space, or Augmented Space, as a specific characteristic of high-tech society.

Deriving the term from 'augmented reality,' Manovich refers to this new kind of space as "augmented space," which is becoming a reality and works very well. What is never explicitly mentioned, however, are the political implications that naturally arise from this overlaying of layers, made possible by tracking and monitoring users: "delivering information to users in space and extracting information about these users are closely connected. Thus augmented space is also monitored space." (Ibidem)

In response to this encroaching form of social control Clemente Pestelli and Gionatan Quintini, accepted Share Festival's invitation to produce the Special Project 2010 with their usual creative cheekiness. Specially designed for the sixth Piemonte Share Festival, the project mustered all the surreal and virtual imagination that lies at the centre of their work to invade Turin's urban environment. *R.I.O.T./Reality Is Out There* (Share Festival 2010) (see Fig. 16.3) was a series of urban strikes invisible to the naked eye—but for that no less tangible—using augmented realities that surround us every day. The public was invited to uncover the virtual sculptures through a game, a digital urban treasure hunt, and was treated to the sight of flying objects such as floating bananas, Facebook banners, revolutionary slogans, Space Invader icons and so on.

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

16.3   The System of Art Is Under Attack

Other projects with direct political connotations for the Art System have been organized by other artists. One very clever example was the virtual augmented reality show held on October 9, 2010 at the MoMA building in New York—only

Fig. 16.3 A screenshot of *Monument R.I.O.T*, 2010, Les Liens Invisible, augmented reality, copyright Les Liens Invisible and Share Festival. A view of Turin (IT) with one of R.I.O.T. works series

the MoMA did not know about it. The infiltration was organized as part of Conflux, the psychogeography festival (Skwarek and Veenhof 2010).

Sander Veenhof and Mark Skwarek, the two artists behind the invasion, extended to the public a 'cordial' tongue-in-cheek invitation to their temporary exhibition, adding a post scriptum that the MoMA itself was yet to be involved. Squatting in the halls of the MoMA in New York, the exhibition featured augmented reality art in its proper context: a contemporary art museum, showcasing the radical new possibilities and implications that augmented reality is bringing to the cultural and creative field. Over thirty artists took part in the "'art invasion' annex exhibition" (Ibidem), distributing their works on all the floors of the building and effectively taking over the MoMA. In the artists' statement, Veenhof and Skwarek attribute remarkable responsibility to a technology that allows provocation without the risk of arrest that graffiti artists face, even though they are not anonymous. They called it 'progression' in the field of art; depending on the way you look at it, it is artistic freedom or just plain illegal.

Space is expanding in terms of the information it holds, and is being augmented through the addition of media such as images, video, sound, music, words and data, which are introduced in space, but also captured within space (see Fig. 16.4). Augmented space is a space that is monitored and watched at the same time; it is a space in which users are tracked, where data is distributed but also extracted. In this context, the aesthetics of ubiquitous computing opposes art to virtual reality by

Fig. 16.4 A screenshot of *ARt Critic Face Matrix*, 2010, Tamiko Thiel, augmented reality, copyright Tamiko Thiel. Description: Thiel's work is exhibited in MOMA intervention by Manifest.AR
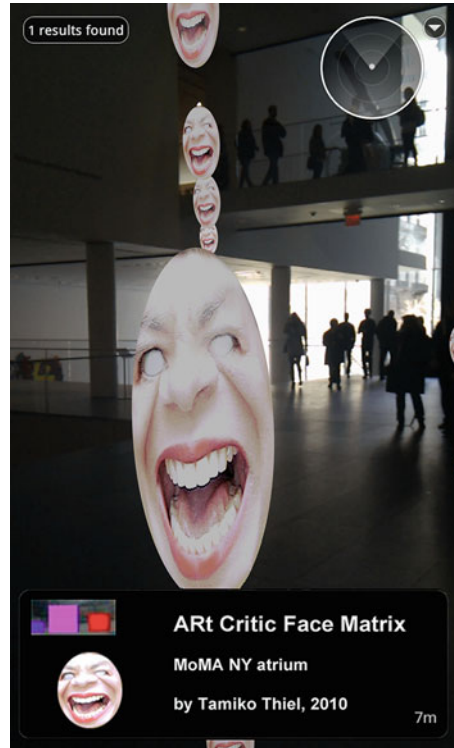
expanding on the digital and taking it into the physical dimension, in what we might call 'Spatial Art.'

As yet another label, 'Spatial Art' is hardly indispensible and will probably be short-lived as the never-ending hype of digital technologies and the derived continuous flow of newness and obsolescence. Nevertheless, it can help us reconstruct the narratives of certain specific artistic practices. Spatial Art overlays and unites several spaces into one, making artistic use of time, movement and data or information in a space defined by growth in technological interaction, i.e., a data-space. Spatial Art speaks to a public on the move, to a public that is mobile and not stationary, obliging us to realize that the media that we wear are part of the objects that make up our world (Bolter and Grusin 1999). In 2005, in the film "They Live", directed by John Carpenter (1988) special sunglasses revealed subliminal images and the real information underlying physical media (newspapers, billboards), in a reality augmented by messages of alien persuasion (obey, consume, watch TV, etc.). Today, additional layers of information are conveyed directly to people living in the *smart city*.

From an aesthetic point of view, the question of space is not new in art. Reaching out into the third dimension, into space, from a flat, two-dimensional canvas is a recurring theme throughout the history of art.

Nowadays the problem of bringing together two different spaces is conceived in much broader terms. Overlaying dynamic and contextualized data onto physical space brings change, dynamism, interactivity and multimediality. That is, how to introduce into an artwork those elements that characterize reality as the continuous flow of states that we perceive as change. The contrast between site and non-site, between the real and the virtual, between being here and there at the same time—the ubiquity of objects and images, the relationship between physical space and artworks—is a field widely explored by artists.

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

From an aesthetic point of view, contributing to the architectural construction and maintenance of the network—the "social sculpture" of today quoting Beuys' "extended definition of art," later developed into the idea of "social sculpture" and his thoughts on how and whether art should interfere with politics. —has led artists to work in new fields that contain elements of new forms of participatory democracy. One example of this process started with the Invisible Pavilion.

The Invisible Pavilion was an uninvited, experimental, hallucinatory experience of augmentation, information and immersion in a specific context, involving the unauthorized use of public space, which squatted in the exhibition spaces of the 54th Venice Art Biennale (see Figs. 16.5 and 16.6). It was a performance involving the 'flow' of digital-based works of art, which filled the whole Giardini concourse where the national pavilions were located. Curated by Les Liens Invisibles and myself, the main purpose of the project was to augment the spaces of the Biennale with a stream of signs and symbols, in an attempt to emphasize how producing art is a state of flow in the 'always-on' age. The format used for inviting artists to contribute to the performance was also designed specially for the use of augmentation, information and immersion. Artists were not asked for 'one' piece from a collection but for a 'stream' of pieces, since the idea was not to use the augmented space to reproduce the same curatorial scheme as the visible Biennale. The Invisible Pavilion project

Fig. 16.5 A screenshot of
Invisible Pavilion, Exhibition
Logo, 2011, copyright Les
Liens Invisible and Simona
Lodi
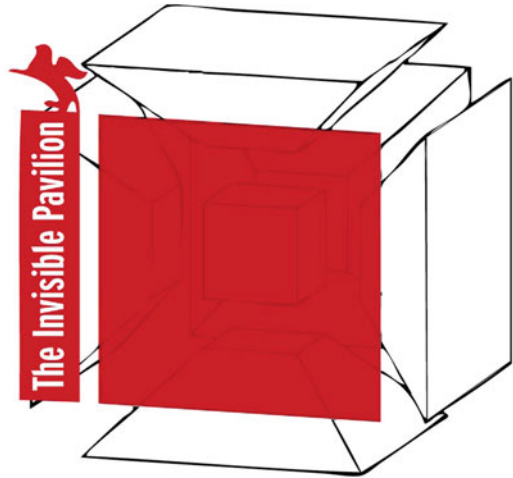
Fig. 16.6 A screenshot of *Drug Box*, 2010, REFF—Roma Europa Fake Factory, augmented reality, copyright Roma Europa Fake Factory. Description: Invasion of the augmented reality Drug Box in the Giardini of 54th International Art Exhibition Venice Biennale

Fig. 16.7 A screenshot of *Show Me Your Digital*, 2011, IOCOSE, augmented reality, copyright IOCOSE. Description: this work is positioned in the entrance of the main boulevard of The Giardini as a stage curtains of 54th International Art Exhibition Venice Biennale

led to a new partnership with the artistic collective Manifest.AR and their Venice Biennale 2011 AR Intervention. Together a format was built that stepped up the interventionist component of the projects.

Nine artists—Artie Vierkant, Constant Dullaart, CONT3XT.NET, IOCOSE, Jon Rafman, Les Liens Invisibles, Molleindustria, Parker Ito, and REFF–RomaEuropa FakeFactory— were invited to contribute to the pavilion project, turning the Biennale space into a performance by providing a stream of works for the entire length of the exhibition (see Fig. 16.7).

Molleindustria is an Italian team of artists, designers and programmers, whose aim is to encourage serious discussion of the social and political implications of videogames. Their strategy is to involve media activists, net-artists, habitual gamers and detractors of videogames (see Fig. 16.8). Their intervention and contribution to the Invisible Pavilion targeted the Chinese Pavilion, after Chinese artist Ai Weiwei was arrested at Beijing Airport on April 3, 2011, while en route to Hong Kong. His arrest appeared to be part of a larger crackdown on democracy activists and dissidents.

Augmented Perspective references Ai Weiwei's series of photographs *Study of Perspective*, allowing visitors to superimpose the artist's one-finger salute onto the surrounding landscape. The Chinese Pavilion, it is known, was under the direct control of the Chinese government, leading Molleindustria to denounce

Fig. 16.8 A screenshot of *Augmented Perspective*, 2011, molleindustria, augmented reality, copyright molleindustria

Italian complicity with the Chinese dictatorship, stating, "While the international art community is mobilizing for the release of Ai Weiwei by pressuring Chinese authorities and demonstrating at embassies around the world, the Venice Biennale provides a central stage for government-endorsed Chinese art, becoming, de facto, an accomplice of this unacceptable attack on freedom of expression" (Molleindustria 2012).

For REFF—Roma Europa Fake Factory—"Defining what is real is an act of power. Being able to reinvent reality is an act of freedom (see Fig. 16.6). REFF promotes the dissemination and reappropriation of all technologies, theories and practices that can be used to freely and autonomously reinvent reality." (REFF 2011) This commitment is what led the artists to invent *REFF AR Drug*, an augmented reality drug combining three "very powerful molecules": *REMIXine*, "known to augment the total entropy of systems"; *REALITene*, whose "configuration is not determined in the lab, but is left to the shaping processes enacted by the patient and its surrounding context"; and last but not least, *REINVENTum*, "a compound that collaborates with the other molecules found in our drugs to reassemble components into new forms once their bonds have been disassembled."(Ibidem) According to the artists, the purpose of the drug is to treat biopolitical issues such as social depression, fear of the future, precariousness, anthropological distress, lack of opportunity, communication totalitarianism, scarcity of freedom and intolerant social ecosystems. It has yet to be launched on the market.

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

images by extinguishing single components of it. Ephemeral image vacancies are inscribed in the mobile display as a layer of defective pixels and can be read as an intervention in the technological conditions of devices that serve for the representation of reality by digital means. Equally, *blemish* is an intervention in the public space, giving priority to the context of the global art world as well as targeting the blind spots of its modes of production and representation. The unstable nature of reality as well as the contemporary methods of its reproduction is called into question: Which of the significant components of a digital product are visible, which are not? Which components of an overall image are not on display, deliberately or accidentally? Which of the many artistic formats appears in the canon of contemporary art, which of them are blanked out in the files of its operating system? The immaterial defect of form—a dead pixel—is inscribed in the auratic art spaces of the Venice Biennial. Barely perceptible for the viewers it is disguised as a loose arrangement of black squared errors which finally can be read as an abstract comment about the blemished context of art" (CONT3XT.NET 2011).

Constant Dullaart's *Invisible Watermark* and Jon Rafman's works *Pollock Tank, Georgia O'Keeffe Spinner* and *Matisse David*, forming part of the series *Brand New Paint Job*, have much in common with the 'New Aesthetic' theorized by James Bridle (Bridle 2011).

Lots of images made up of lots of pixels was the answer to a figurative approach to the New Aesthetic's reproduction of reality, questioning the unstable nature of the real world and the contemporary methods used for its digital reproduction.

Working on the Invisible Pavilion project for the 54th Venice Biennale, it so happened that we came across another group of artists working on much the same issue, so we decided to cooperate with them and launch a joint attack on the Biennale from different fronts and perspectives. In June 2011, the cutting-edge international cyberartist group Manifest.AR (MANIFEST.AR 2011) issued a statement to the general public and to the president and director of the 54th Venice Biennale informing them that they had created additional pavilions in the Giardini concourse, built in the new medium of augmented reality, and that some of the works had leaked out into the public space of Saint Mark's Square. The artists Mark Skwarek, Sander Veenhof, Tamiko Thiel, Will Peppenheimer, John Craig Freeman, Lily and Hong Lei, Naoko Tosa and John Cleater all took part directly in the project.

As Tamiko Thiel explains, "Augmented reality has redefined the meaning of 'public space.' As corporations privatize many public spaces and governments put the rest under surveillance, augmented reality artists take over the invisible but actual realm that overlays real space with multiple parallel universes. Augmented reality actualizes the metaverse in the real universe, merging the digital and the real into a single, common space.

> Augmented reality can conquer space but it is not indifferent to space. With my artworks you must negotiate real space in order to view the works. They are usually not single images or objects, but installations that surround you. In order to look at them you must move your body in space, looking up, down and twisting around (Thiel 2012).
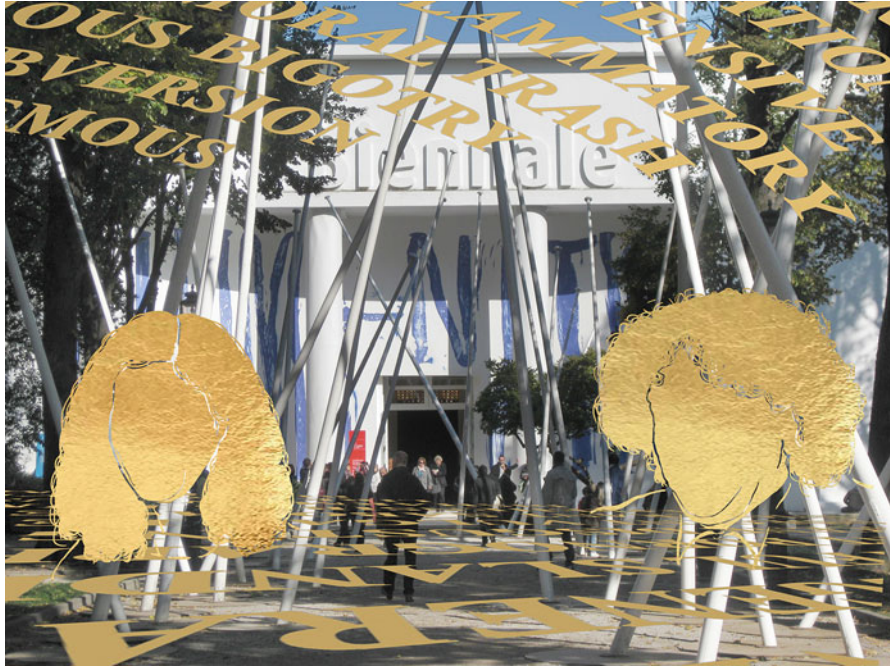
Fig. 16.9 A screenshot of *Shades of Absence: Outside Inside*, 2011, Tamiko Thiel, augmented reality, copyright Tamiko Thiel. Description: In honour of artists, whether art world insiders or outsiders, who have been censored via threats of arrest or physical violence. Venice Biennale 2011 Intervention

In *Shades of Absence: Outside Inside,* Tamiko Thiel inserted into the closed curatorial space of the Giardini concourse in Venice the silhouetted figures of artists who have been threatened with arrest or physical violence (see Fig. 16.9). Regardless of whether they are outsiders or insiders to the Art System, known internationally or only within small circles, their work has excluded these artists from the safety of protected space (see Fig. 16.10).

28 is an artwork that is secret, or invisible or in some way a 'revelation' in space also takes on an aesthetic element shaped by the artist's being an outsider. The author Mariano Equizi has made a urban story telling based on augmented reality, a conspiracy and psychedelic novel on power and control . The Reader-Player-Explorator-Nomad will move around the city like a character from Paul Auster NYC trilogy.

The work 28 has a almost cinematic narrative dimension that is the newness of the project, overlaying and unites several spaces into one, making artistic use of time, movement and data or information in a space defined by growth in technological interaction in a data-space. 28 speaks to a public on the move, to a public that is mobile and not stationary, obliging us to realize that the media that we wear are part of the objects that make up our world. It is a conceptualization of a

Fig. 16.10 A screenshot of Tiananmen SquARed: Tank Man, 2011, 4Gentlemen, Location-based augmented reality, ©4Gentlemen. Description: "Tiananmen SquARed" is a two part augmented reality public art project and memorial, dedicated human rights and democracy worldwide

scenario akin to the world presented in the film "They Live", directed by John Carpenter. In that world, special sunglasses revealed subliminal images and the real information underlying physical media (newspapers, billboards), in a reality augmented by messages of alien persuasion (obey, consume, watch TV, etc.). Today, additional layers of information are conveyed directly to people living in the smart city.

28 is a secret casting set in the Italian Alphaville; Turin is also a famous esoteric city like Lione, Praga and San Francisco and one of the most innovative city (see Fig. 16.11). A perfect scenario for a cyber noir tale, a perfect place to hide secrets and puzzles. People find an invisible city, where daily surfaces hide a psychotronic story, fragmented in the city spaces. Intervention took place in symbolic locations around town, creating a hybrid event at the crossroads of digital art, urban space and hacking. Here, real and virtual space interact so as to create a single social environment, made possible ever since digital space became an integral part of the city itself. The game is therefore an urban hack, the reappropriation of public space via intervention directly on the streets, squares and roads, and under

Fig. 16.11 A screenshot of Komplex 28, 2013, Mariano Equizzi, Komplex, augmented reality, all rights reserved by Komplex. It used as trigger the facade of Turin, Lingotto. It's a perfect "screen" to create alteration in the architectural pattern in order to make an interesting pop-out of the clip

monuments, porticoes and buildings. It is action in the collective digital sphere to create an unexpected gulf, cultural jamming, a guerrilla attack on communication in the global city.

As a symbolic act, Marino Equizi's urban hack is really an aesthetic overexposure, an exercise in the subversive use of augmented reality, which becomes unreality, a vision, an augmented dream in subcultural practices. It is less about public space and more about destruction, interruption and aperture, in an effort to crack open standard mechanisms of closure (Fig. 16.12).

16.4   Conclusions

The problem of perpetual newness (Watz 2012).

The culture of ubiquitous information highlights the social peculiarities that can ensue. Mapped space overflows onto society, compelling contemporary artists to explore the relationship between art and social life, to find the intersection between the self and society, and to depict, directly and exhaustively, the features of the society in which they live. These artists represent contemporary thought in their way of representing ubiquity as a real condition of everyday life, transforming it

Fig. 16.12 A screen shot of *Map Installation*, 2010, Aram Bartholl, plywood, wooden beam structure, semigloss coating photo by Anne Fourès. Copyright Aram Bartholl. Description: Installation View of Google Maps point in physical public space

into symbols of rich cultural connotation. Ubiquity is a forceful display of the role that art plays in understanding a global world, where artworks reflect not only the artists' perspective on reality, but also shed light on our own experience of the world. We have looked at how and where the distinction between public and private space breaks down, at how new space and new territory for art is being opened up, at reactions to data-space. The concepts of art in public space, art as public space and art in the public interest have all changed, paving the way for a return of political activism in the social function of. In this context, does it still make any sense to talk about public space and public art? Can we still speak of artistic universals?

The conclusions lie within the approach taken to the topic; an approach that is neither technological nor geographic, but rather driven by an interest in capturing the cultural climate and a certain psychological and anthropological dimension of our perception of public space, of overcoming limits, of the concepts of material/immaterial, visible/invisible, real/unreal. Set off against the artists and the exhibitions described in this paper are the museums, venues or sites that already exist. What we have is not the definitive story of a movement but rather an account

Fig. 16.13 A screen shot of *We Need Something*, 2012, Will Pappenheimer, location-based augmented reality iPhone screenshot, copyright Will Pappenheimer. Description: This work is located over Queens, NY during the manifestation days 'Occupy Wall Street' in 2012

given by a series of individual works and by continuous links to real and virtual situations. The conclusions are given by the account pieced together by artistic works that make use of those elements that characterize reality as the continuous flow of states that we perceive as changes in life and in the space we live in. The works are individual, shifting, subjective accounts, more from the point of view of an art world outsider than from an insider. This can be seen in Will Peppenheimer's *Skywrite AR: We Need Something,* which appeared virtually over Queens in New York throughout the Occupy Wall Street protests in 2012 (Fig. 16.13).

The game of claiming to be outside any official system or establishment is itself a strategy for earning oneself a role as spokesperson of dissent, while it is also interesting as an expression of artistic freedom. The framework of the exhibitions described is shaped by the continuous friction between the individualism of the artists and the institutional nature of the events they target. It all turns on an ambiguous division that is technically ironclad as it overlaps the problem of perpetual newness that augmented reality and the New Aesthetic express. Changes in public space have become manifest in the augmented power of biopolitics, in the critical analysis of ubiquitous computing, in the question of surveillance versus inverse surveillance, in freedom of speech, in the permeability of boundaries, in locative media, in developments in the political and social environment, in the Panopticon, in interventionism in the art system (such as the Venice Biennale and MoMA invasions), in issues of democracy and privacy, in the tracking and profiling of data flows underpinning the growth of a database culture. All these changes have contributed to the construction of a new digital identity—but is it an identity

that we really want? As this new identity shapes living conditions in urban and private life in the smart city, mobile communications and handheld devices are erasing our personal presence, shifting the focus of accessibility onto the issue of digital inclusion/exclusion. A conflict has emerged between the individual and the community which itself is cardinal to the Art System and world of galleries and museums, which is substantially market-based. In this way, Spatial Art reflects the constant tension between the multiplicity of individual artists and the organizational unity of the system in general. There is no other unifying thread for Spatial Art, and as an element even it, perhaps, is paradoxically absent. All we have are clips, words, floating objects, statements, made-up chemical formulas, fragments of non-narrative accounts, elements without structure. What would appear to emerge is, on the one hand, the figure of the artist as messenger and innovator of roles and meanings, championing an anti-establishment art; on the other, the artist as the teller of fragmented narratives of reality and immateriality. They are witnesses of a fundamental anthropological change because as artists they are outsiders to the art market and the system in general, taking on an ethical role on which their exhibitions are premised. Their standing outside the system in general makes them morally invincible and irreproachable, and if what they do is illegal, it means they are treading on fiercely contested ground.

   Artwork that is secret, or invisible or in some way a 'revelation' in space also takes on an aesthetic element shaped by the artist's being an outsider to the Art System, to the world of art based on economic rather than cultural value. For mainstream art scenes, not producing for the market is ultimately the last real statement that the artist can make against the art world, a form of rejection of capitalism and its modes of production, which for some takes on an existential bent. These are artists who live in society and not in museums, who are in touch with social and political issues, which is why their art tends to revolve more around 'action' than around pieces of artwork. The picture is ultimately connected with the role and responsibility of the artist as a pioneer and critic, as a witness and as a futurologist in a certain sense—as a person who can bring about change even through simple, surreptitious gestures. This image of the artist may well be just a myth—but why reject it and the evocative appeal that it continues to command?

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