

LIVE CINEMA. THINGS HAPPEN AND THEY HAVE A BEGINNING

Things Happen

A group formed by Iván Gómez-España and Itziar Arriaga working in the area of new visual performance structures in real time. www.thingshappen.es

If we talk about *Live Cinema*, the first thing that comes to mind is that it is something completely new for most people. And it isn't because live video editing or audiovisual show formats similar to what we know as live cinema haven't been used. It's because this medium is gradually gaining in autonomy. And it is slowly growing in importance thanks to improvements to the broadcast channels of this hybrid medium, the scion of all the disciplines that encompass contemporary artistic practices. But the most important outcome of the above is the gradual emergence of a public that assists and creates in equal measure. A public whose varied background, visual culture and way of understanding communication adapted to formats like the Internet, video games and cinema, has found a means to showcase its creative interests in live cinema.

Our own entry into this world of real-time visuals arose from our interest in an innovative medium that was highly sensitive to change and could be fashioned according to specific needs, enabling the deployment of new forms of representation and offering great narrative abilities. It allowed for the theoretical and practical integration of various disciplines that had always interested us, such as the plastic arts, design, architecture, music and magic, since the creation of illusion and the new expressive resources required were all part of the attraction. We were drawn by the potential offered by new technologies, and the combined communicative power of image and the capacity to create a show through the staging of live visuals.

In our work, narrative capacity and content are the driving force behind the entire piece and set the pattern for constructing the visual elements that we will project, thereby generating a coherent visual discourse. At first, we weren't too interested in the haphazard mixture of images and the mere technical application of the material without adapting it to a script. Accordingly, we refer to a narrative capacity applied to this field and attempt to tell a story using the intrinsic conditions of this medium, while searching for the foundations of its language: like a photographer adjusting to a bidimensional, static format while commenting upon something that involves time and movement.

When we try and explain how our work functions—actually quite difficult because every day we strive for a better understanding and we are always making changes—we say that we translate a story into images through a series of scenes that can instantly be modified depending on the needs of the narrative.

By way of comparison, we could say that it is like a cinema still that you can concentrate on, modifying its composition according to the expression that you want to adopt at each moment. You might remove an object from the set or keep one in particular if you want to emphasize it. You could fiddle around with a character, or wipe out a whole scene and stick with something that had previously gone unnoticed. Or make everything fly around all over the place, causing total confusion.

First of all, we write a script and design the visual materials. We then test them with the tools that we will be using to see how it works. Once we have made sure that the material fits both the scene and its relationship with the other items and with the

procedures that control the devices, it may still be necessary to make changes in the material and tools to ensure optimum adaptation to the composition.

In our sessions, despite working on a structure through which we attempt to arrange the items narratively, we currently have a random factor that can occasionally generate chaos, which then forces us to redirect the entire sequence. Sometimes our work is similar to a musician who, rather than just play notes, strives to diminish the confusion of surround sound in structures so that they will have a meaning for the onlooker. This reducing function enables us to reposition the items so that they gradually define the story.

The visual items we use are always floating in a space that is constantly being refashioned according to the scene and is never delimited by the rectangular frame of a screen. Consequently, characters and sets travel freely around a space, passing through walls, ceilings or the floor.

We don't begin the session by making it coincide with the kind of music that usually accompanies visuals. In fact, we don't even consider that there should be any music at all. Our idea is to create a dialogue with sound, and for the sound content to emerge from the script and the visual material.

We both manage the same tool live in our respective but coordinated functions, ensuring an ongoing relationship between both our actions. Generally speaking, we try not to get caught up in the complexity of the already complex world of programming and digital image processing tools. By sticking closely to the visual content, we often come across simple solutions that directly check our target.

All of this gives us the feeling of moving in a sphere that has yet to come up with closed solutions, leaving the door open to a degree of passionate imagination, freedom and creativity. This gives us the chance to investigate while working and to understand the possibilities offered by this field and the meaning of real time in relation to telling a story. This is a mystery to us—a mystery that gradually unravels as we move ahead in the development of each project.

In the context of people dedicated to live cinema, references to figures from the early beginnings of the movies are constantly appearing, which is not really surprising. To a certain extent, it's rather like finding yourself at the start of something new, and the experimental game that follows all this is inevitable. Méliès, Griffith, the Russian filmmakers, and Abel Gance, for example, were pioneers who used technique and film language to good advantage through a lengthy experimental process. We are now witnessing a growing interest in live video editing, in addition to a usage of space, the interactive integration of the onlooker through sensors, multiple screens, and a great many experiences that reveal a thirst for activity in this area.

Perhaps we are being very optimistic by looking on this as a new medium. In any case, it is a driving force for creativity and interest, in addition to the search for a narrative form adapted to current communication systems and new broadcast channels.

Of course, after all we have said, this vast terrain remains to be explored, and its main feature is the powerful creative capacity that stems from freedom. The continuance of this form of representation lies in the hands of those who are determined to develop something that will gradually gain in importance and be of interest to an audience. Yet there is still a need to create an appropriate channel for diffusion and a corresponding market adapted to new communicative directions.

But on a personal note, we are fighting for a format that can be distributed through media like the Internet to reach individual users yet will also bring people together in a single space, resulting in the phenomenon of synergy generated when individuals come into contact with each other and participate physically in an event.