

Beautiful Pixels

Aesthetic Innovation in Interactive Online Art: The Case of BoyBlack

EDS LSE Innovation Research Programme Paper

M. Iqani

Abstract

In the context of broad-based technological innovation that has allowed new art-making and showing practices to become increasingly available to artists, the paper examines the possibility of aesthetic innovation in “interactive online art”, which is defined as art that is both made *with* digital computer technology and *for* exhibition in web spaces. It does so by examining a case study, BoyBlack.co.za, a work of “freestyle pixel art” that allows each viewer to create a “pseudo-unique experience” through its various interactive elements. A description and interpretation of the artwork’s main characteristics are contextualised with an interview with the artists, thereby framing the analyst/viewer’s readings with the experiences and intentions of the artists (and vice versa). This in turn prefaces an exploration of various seemingly opposing notions of postmodern aesthetic theory so as to locate positions upon its “continuum” for interactive online art. The paper concludes by mapping the BoyBlack.co.za artwork against the theoretical framework of postmodern aesthetic theory on the levels of form, content and context, and argues that the artistic innovation that interactive online artwork exhibits should propel a similar shift in aesthetic theorising.