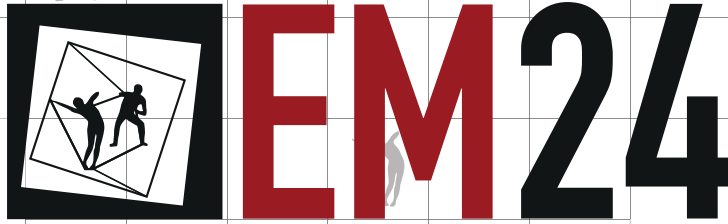


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**IN-PRESENCE /  
THE BODY AND  
THE SPACE**

The role of corporeity in the era of virtualization

Edited by: Marco Bovati, Anna Moro, Daniele Villa

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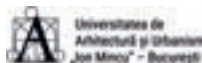
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The Department of Architecture and Urban Studies of the Politecnico di Milano organises at the School of Architecture Urban Planning Construction Engineering (AUIC), EURAU Milan 2024 "IN-PRESENCE / THE BODY AND THE SPACE - The role of corporeity in the era of virtualization", the eleventh edition of the international conference, which takes place from 19 to 22 June 2024.



```
const objLoader = new OBJLoader();
var index = 0;
var modelFolder = "<?= $kirby->url('assets') ?>/models/";
var modelFiles = [
  modelFolder + "1.obj",
  modelFolder + "4.obj",
  modelFolder + "6.obj",
  modelFolder + "10.obj",
  modelFolder + "13.obj",
];

function loadNextFile() {
  if (index <= modelFiles.length - 1) {
    meshes.forEach(mesh => {
      mesh.visible = false;
    });
    state.prevMesh = meshes[meshes.length - 2];
    state.currMesh = meshes[meshes.length - 1];
    state.currMesh.visible = true;
    scene.scale.set(0.8, 0.8, 0.8);
    animate();
    return;
  }
  var url = modelFiles[index];
  objLoader.load(url, (object) => {
    var geometry = object.children[0].geometry;
    geometry.center();
    var baseMaterial = new THREE.MeshPhongMaterial({
      color: 0x00ffff,
      polygonOffset: true,
      polygonOffsetFactor: 1,
      polygonOffsetUnits: 1
    });
    var mesh = new THREE.Mesh(geometry, baseMaterial);
    var geo = new THREE.EdgesGeometry(mesh.geometry);
    var mat = new THREE.LineBasicMaterial({ color: 0xffff00 });
    var wireframe = new THREE.LineSegments(geo, mat);
    mesh.add(wireframe);
    scene.add(mesh);
    meshes.push(mesh);
    index++;
    loadNextFile();
  });
  loadNextFile();
}
```

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# Virtualizing bodies in transformative platforms of corporeality: Embodied visualisation over flesh boundaries

## Key Words

Embodiment, Transformative, Platform, Flesh, Installation

When conceiving of the virtuality of a body, we are often confronted with the complexity of ascribing to it the material and distinctive characteristics that we recognise to the present flesh. Yet, in the contemporary context, there exists a field of experimentation that retains a corporeality even in the virtual realm. This is not the corporeality of a lacerated or impaired body, but rather the digital incarnation of a vital organism.

The present contribution aims to explore the possibilities of such declinations in the field of visual arts and design practices in order to thematise the potential of bodily extensions that take on the status of propagation of flesh in the virtual sphere.

Furthermore, the research intends to analyse the forms in which the discourse around the corporeal is handled in its visual representations, where its status of presence is manipulated, where it is made accessible.

The research is framed within an embodied perspective of mutual co-formation of space, mind and body, within a transdisciplinary approach that incorporates transformative practices and image representation profiles. The hypothesis is that, accepting the premises of an embodied approach, it is possible to address the subject corporeality and transpose it into virtual and/or digital spaces with an awareness that does not contradict its essence. At the same time, such proposals must present themselves with the awareness that they provide a cross-section in extending complex and in-relation entities.

In the first section, we intend to analyse experiences that arise as virtual organisms online and, from various perspectives, investigate the forms of materialisation and dissolution of the body. To do so, we aim to present works that, starting from the body, emerge to work on the body itself in a virtual space, firstly through online events.

This is the case with *Lilies in the Headlights* (29.10.2021-29.12.2021), an online exhibition curated by Giulia Menegale during the pandemic, and supported by the Arts Council England,

with commissioned works by Romeo Roxman Gatt, Loreum, and Costas Kazantzis. Secondly, the contribution aims to frame some of the platforms related to the theme of presence and corporeality to assess the responses and forms of deployment that the theme of the body is experiencing in the contemporary context. In this regard, we will mention the experiences of the Transmedia Research Institute, the dis.art platform, and the recent CThirteen community, a space for education and discussion among knowledge about the body through practices that place the variations of the virtual as access and screen to corporeality at the centre.

In this regard, experiences from the Transmedia Research Institute, the dis.art platform, and the recent community CThirteen will be mentioned. CThirteen is a space for education and discussion among knowledge of the body through practices that place the variations of the virtual as access and screen to corporeality at the centre.

These examples reveal, albeit with different origins, a common drive to experiment with corporeal re-materialisation in the digital that considers the body in its density over the mere flesh aspects. The breakthrough granted by the pandemic was not merely a parenthesis, but an opportunity to catalyse energies on an already active transformative process associated with the virtual which is not a fallback, but an operational choice in offering a representation of bodies that is conscious of its limits and uses the digital to reason upon the shifts of a relationship that must be considered in the contemporary era.

In the second section, the intention is to analyse the connection between the body and the virtual through installative displays. There are several ways in which physical reality and the virtual realm collide. Historically, it all relied on the audience's ability to imagine and speculate. Nowadays, however, digital technology has brought new ways of experiencing space. New spatialities that incorporate both the physical and the virtual. There are at least four major strategies used by artists to connect the physical body to this enhanced spatiality: visual, immersive, interactive and interconnective strategies. In each of these, the relationships between the audience, their bodies and the spatiality are entirely different.

The most essential way of achieving this desire is, of course, through the visualisation of any virtual dimension. By projecting images, many artists are able to add new layers of conceptual value to their works. They incorporate immaterial elements -such as time, memory, data, light, or essence/presence- into the physical dimension. This is evident in some very interesting sculptures by Daniel Canogar and also of the scenographic spaces designed by the artist -architect by training- Chris Ziegler.

Other artists, such as David Rokeby, a pioneer in the field of Media Art, pursue the immersion of the spectator in an alternative spatiality that offers a broader range of sensory experiences. Of particular interest in Rokeby's career is his artistic research on sound-driven spaces that react to the movement of the audience.

The real-time dialogue between a moving body and an enhanced space may be one of today's most spectacular features. Such is the case that there are artists who have become obsessed with exploring this design strategy. Interaction is the leitmotif of the entire artistic production of the French theatre company Adrien M & Claire B, both in their scenographic performances and in their art installations.

Finally, equally intriguing is the artistic research of the performance group Blast Theory on the social human condition and the consequences of living in a digital and socially networked environment. The interconnection between humans made possible by digital technology is historically unparalleled and therefore provokes new situations. Blast Theory's artistic praxis revolves around new social realities that, like in the virtual realm, are complex and not confined to a fixed context.

The contribution thus aims, through the analysis of selected case studies, to interrogate the possibility of a corporeal thought [Caleo 2021] arising from virtualised corporeality, subject to thermodynamic transformation processes driven by data, by the screen, by the online. The provision of resources derived from the body in the virtual realm offers a space to play and contest, to extend and reshuffle the boundaries of the material in terms of space and meaning.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## FIGURES

Fig. 1 - Source: [https://www.instagram.com/p/CwSP0ayloYj/?img\\_index=1](https://www.instagram.com/p/CwSP0ayloYj/?img_index=1)

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