



Aesthetics of Interaction in Digital Art (MIT Press)

By Katja Kwastek



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Since the 1960s, artworks that involve the participation of the spectator have received extensive scholarly attention. Yet interactive artworks using digital media still present a challenge for academic art history. In this book, Katja Kwastek argues that the particular aesthetic experience enabled by these new media works can open up new perspectives for our understanding of art and media alike. Kwastek, herself an art historian, offers a set of theoretical and methodological tools that are suitable for understanding and analyzing not only new media art but also other contemporary art forms. Addressing both the theoretician and the practitioner, Kwastek provides an introduction to the history and the terminology of interactive art, a theory of the aesthetics of interaction, and exemplary case studies of interactive media art.

Kwastek lays the historical and theoretical groundwork and then develops an aesthetics of interaction, discussing such aspects as real space and data space, temporal structures, instrumental and phenomenal perspectives, and the relationship between materiality and interpretability. Finally, she applies her theory to specific works of interactive media art, including narratives in virtual and real space, interactive installations, and performance -- with case studies of works by Olia Lialina, Susanne Berkenheger, Stefan Schemat, Teri Rueb, Lynn Hershman, Agnes Hegedüs, Tmema, David Rokeby, Sonia Cillari, and Blast Theory.

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Aesthetics of Interaction in Digital Art (MIT Press) By Katja Kwastek Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1343011 in Books
- Published on: 2013-09-13
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x .63" w x 7.00" l, 1.71 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 384 pages



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Editorial Review

Review

In *Aesthetics of Interaction in Digital Art*, Kwastek moves with impressive ease and careful scholarship across decades of aesthetic theory and artistic practice. Kwastek's book is the definitive study of this important body of art that lies tantalizingly on the border between the traditional art world and contemporary media culture.

(Jay David Bolter, Wesley Professor of New Media, Georgia Institute of Technology)

Katja Kwastek's outstanding book invites the reader into the fascinating world of digital art by exploring the complex relations among the technical construction, the implemented programs, the interface, and the contingent use of individual actors. *Aesthetics of Interaction in Digital Art* delivers a compelling, comprehensive overview of both the theoretical background of today's discourse along with rich case studies and concrete work analysis. It will be essential for practitioners and for those who are looking for precise investigations in current developments in art and aesthetics.

(Dieter Mersch, Professor, University of Potsdam)

Combine the meticulousness of German academia with groundbreaking work theorizing one of my favorite subjects and you have Katja Kwastek's masterpiece, *Aesthetics of Interaction in Digital Art*. The clarity of her reasoning process throughout affords numerous opportunities to engage in dialogue with her ideas. That is why this book has the capacity to inspire many more.

(Margaret Morse, Emerita Professor of Film and Digital Media, University of California, Santa Cruz)

About the Author

Katja Kwastek is Professor of Modern and Contemporary Art at VU Amsterdam.

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