

paper



## figure

Marikki Hakola

media artist, director, researcher, Kroma Productions Ltd., Magnusborg Studios, Porvoo, Finland  
marikki@magnusborg.fi, url <http://www.kiasma.fi/figure>

### Abstract

FIGURE is an interactive installation. Spectators are invited to take part in the formation process of the cinematic meaning. The interaction is based on the conversation between the moving body and cinematic elements. Spectators are photographed with the thermal camera. The image of the body is combined together with varying cinematic sequences by means of real-time video trick. The result is projected on the screen in the exhibition space.

FIGURE is part of my research project aiming at a doctoral dissertation at the University of Art and Design in Helsinki. The title of the dissertation is "Hypermontage - a Montage of the Interactive Moving Image", a study at the crossing point of media art and art philosophy in the framework of pragmatism.

According to Charles Sanders Peirce, the human existence occurs in a constant interaction between the human being and the world. Experiencing is cultural action. Philosopher John Dewey says that a work of art is not a separate object from the spectator. Art happens in the process of experiencing art. The art experience is the actual work of art.

I'm arguing that the formation of cinematic meaning is strongly dependent on spectator's interaction with the cinematic elements. I have applied a new concept of montage called hypermontage to express the enlargement of tasks and the character of film montage functioning in the interactive cinema.

**Keywords:** Pragmatism - Media semiotics, Film theory - Hypermontage

**Project URL:**  
<http://www.kiasma.fi/figure>

FIGURE is also an online work to be seen in the Internet. The Internet audience can watch the real-time stream from a FIGURE installation space and view interactions between spectators and the cinematic elements of the work. The stream is activated and available only when the Installation is exhibited. Meanwhile the web site is serving the FIGURE demonstration video for the spectator.

**Project Partners:** FIGURE installation is produced by KROMA Productions Ltd, an independent production company for multimedia arts located in the Magnusborg Studios, Finland. FIGURE belongs to the Finland State Art Collection. The first exhibition of the FIGURE took place in the Porthania, Helsinki University, 28.9.-16.11.2000. The exhibition was organized by Kroma Productions Ltd. in collaboration with the State Art Committee, The Contemporary Art Museum Kiasma, Helsinki University and VTT. Production year: 2000.

**Credits:** Designer, director, producer: Marikki Hakola  
technical design, camera, editing: Raimo Uunila  
web design: Riku Makkonen  
technical installation: Epa Tamminen  
technical assistant: Miikkali Korkolainen  
production secretary: Jaana Hertell-Amokrane  
supporter: Finland State Art Committee, production company: © Kroma Productions Ltd.

## FIGURE - Project Description

### About FIGURE - thoughts behind the work

FIGURE emphasizes the impact of the spectator's personal history and previous social and cultural experiences on the interpretation. The basis for the cinematic structure in FIGURE is the interaction between the elements produced by the spectator's own body language and the visual elements of the work. The parts of the image collage have an impact on each other's contents, interpretation and in that way on the formation of the cinematic meaning.

FIGURE's user interface is the spectator's body heat. The work is produced by shooting the spectators with a thermal camera, which registers the heat and the movements of the spectator and transforms them into a video signal. The image of the thermal camera is combined by using a real-time video trick with two separate DVD-image collages which include varying cinematic sequences. The images created are projected on the white surface in the exhibition space. The spectator views his/her own image in the reflection as part of the visual world of the work. The spectator's play with the reflected image may start...

Most of the spectators of the work were students of the Helsinki University. I followed their performance and making of their own "natural choreography" with my own PC through the Internet online. People cannot be identified by watching the strongly processed image. However, it seemed that the body language of the spectators changed remarkably, when attending the space several times when she or he already knows the name of the game. I could clearly notice the differences in the body language of the "first attenders" comparing to the "heavy users and hangarrounders". The spectators familiar with the work did act in a very conscious way with the work and used their bodies for expressing their feelings or just having fun in an exceptional social situation. After the first surprising experience spectators seemed to start creating their own choreographical patterns related to one's own social and cultural background.

Making a strongly interactive work of art like FIGURE makes me think of the essence of art and the role of an artist. I approach the theme believing that all works of art are interactive in their nature. A work of art needs an audience to exist in culture. In the case of FIGURE the dependence of the work of art on the spectator's experience and action is taken into extreme. FIGURE doesn't simply exist without the spectator's participation, not only by observing the work but also on a very concrete level of physical action. I hope the work provokes thoughts both on the changing character of work of art and the change in the roles of the spectator and the artist.



Still images from an online netcast of the interactive installation FIGURE 28.9.-16.11.2000 Porthania, Helsinki.

### Aims of Research - Hypermontage

#### The montage of an interactive moving image

In my research, I study film montage in the special case of interactive moving image and as a creator of cinematic meaning. The development and analysis of new forms of montage enable us to understand the central issue of interactive expression in a broader sense – interactive narration. The issue of new forms of montage expands to a challenge to develop a theory of new interactive and non-linear film narration.

In a book *Film as Art* Rudolf Arnheim introduces principles of montage, which also include the main points of early Russian film makers and theorists Pudovkin and Timoshenko. In linguistic semiology pointed out by Jean Mitry and Christian Metz i.e., montage is defined as organizing individual audiovisual, cinematic elements into a linear unity. Through montage, the individual cinematic elements form together understandable, cinematic language. Montage is regarded as a kind of syntax of film, in which the organization of the audiovisual elements corresponds to sentence analysis or the linguistic code of a natural language.



