Virtual Spaces as New Habitats: The Cybermove Initiative's Vision for Future Living and Social Dynamics

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Abstract

This paper examines the *Cybermove* project, an experimental exploration of the boundaries between virtual and real living spaces through artistic practice. The project investigates the potential of virtual spaces as extensions of real life and their impact on future living and social forms through the artist's behavioral art performance within a confined space, the creation of virtual reality experiences, and both online and offline exhibitions. The project is divided into three phases: the artist performs space compression behavioral art within a 12-square-meter room; explores virtual living spaces through 3D scanning technology and virtual reality experiences; and engages with the public through social media and physical exhibitions. This research not only showcases the contribution of the *Cybermove* project to the exploration of virtual living and social spaces but also reflects on how art serves as a powerful medium for social commentary, prompting deeper contemplation of future lifestyles.

Keywords

Cybermove, Cyberspace, Virtual Reality Experience, Future Living Spaces, Behavioral Art

Introduction

In the digital age, the blurring lines between virtual and real worlds compel us to rethink new forms of living spaces. The *Cybermove* project, set against this backdrop, explores how virtual spaces can expand and influence our real lives through multidimensional practices such as the artist's behavioral art, virtual reality experiences, and social media dissemination. This paper uses the project as a case study to analyze cyberspace theory, individual expression in the digital age, and the transformation of social interactions, aiming to deeply explore the potential of virtual spaces as extensions of real life and their impact on living patterns and social interactions. By examining the artistic practices and public engagement of *Cybermove*, this research offers a new perspective for understanding and reflecting on the evolution of human behavior and social interaction in the digital era, providing theoretical and practical references for exploring new forms of living and socializing in the digital age.

Related Concepts and Works

In discussing the theoretical background of *Cybermove*, we first focus on the core concept of cyberspace, introduced by William Gibson in his science fiction novel *Neuromancer* as a virtual reality world constituted by electronic networks.[1] This concept offers a new perspective for understanding human lifestyles in the digital context, particularly regarding virtual living and social interactions.

Furthermore, Michel de Certeau's exploration of "tactics" and "strategies" in *The Practice of Everyday Life* provides theoretical support for individual self-expression within constrained spaces.[2] This applies not only to physical spaces but also to cyberspace, where individuals use the internet for social and cultural activities, showcasing personal freedom and expression within a virtual environment.

Further explored through Donna Haraway's concept of the "cyborg"[3] and John Barlow's *Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace*,[4] the potential of cyberspace as a platform for free expression and social interaction in the digital age is emphasized. These theories lay the foundation for *Cybermove*, revealing how virtual spaces can serve as extensions of real life.

In terms of artistic practice, Tomas Saraceno's *Cloud Cities*[5] explore the fusion of virtual and physical spaces, presenting new possibilities for future living and social forms. These works not only challenge traditional concepts of space but also provide a tangible understanding of the potentialities of future living spaces.

Additionally, immersive virtual worlds like *Second Life* and *VRChat*, as well as social entertainment platforms such as *Fortnite, Animal Crossing* and *Minecraft*, exemplify virtual community platforms where individuals can establish social connections, create, and exchange cultural products. These platforms not only serve as practical examples of virtual living spaces but also highlight the role of virtual spaces in everyday entertainment and social interaction.

Lastly, *The Wrong Biennale*, an international online biennale showcasing digital art and internet culture, demonstrates the new modes of art display in the digital age with its decentralized and boundless nature. This provides a reference model for *Cybermove*, showing how new forms of artistic expression and community interaction can transcend physical boundaries.

Combining these theories and practices, *Cybermove* not only explores the relationship between virtual and real living spaces but also deepens our understanding of the impact of cyberspace on contemporary society's living modes and cultural interactions.

Cybermove

Cybermove is divided into three main parts: behavioral art performance, virtual reality experience, and exhibition (both online and offline).

Behavioral Art Stage

The artist conducted three acts of moving within a 12-square-meter room. For the first move, the living space was confined to 9 square meters, with only essential items kept after selecting and discarding possessions. The subsequent moves further compressed the space to 6 square meters and then to 3 square meters, progressively minimizing possessions. This process was not just a physical compression of space but also an examination and experiment with lifestyle, culminating in only essentials that could fit into two suitcases. Through this, the artist experienced a transition from material dependency to mental freedom.

Figure 1. The moving process of the room, shown in four stages: initial setup, after first move, after second move, and final state post third move.

VR Production Stage

Before the physical move, the artist used 3D scanning technology to create a virtual model of the room, which was then imported into a virtual reality environment. Both the artist and the audience could experience living in an uncompressed space through VR, despite the physical reduction of space. This part explores the boundary between virtual and real, and how technology changes our perception and utilization of space, investigating the potential of virtual technology to simulate and expand human living spaces.

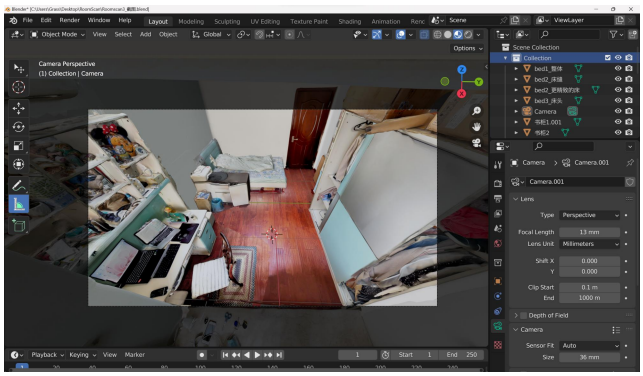

Figure 2. Digital model of the original room obtained through 3D scanning.

Exhibition and Social Media Dissemination

Cybermove expanded its influence through both online and offline exhibitions. In physical exhibitions, the artist set up a makeshift dwelling within the exhibition space, showcasing a video of the moving process using mini projectors, and inviting visitors to access the pre-move virtual space through VR. Online exhibitions compiled the process of behavioral art, virtual space production, and participation into videos, published on Chinese video websites like Douyin[6], Bilibili[7], and Xiaohongshu[8], engaging a broader audience in the discussion.

Figure 3. Setup and final view of the exhibition space.

Assessment and Future Development

The project garnered widespread public attention and diverse reactions. Many viewers resonated with the minimalist lifestyle, seeing material reduction as a way to enhance life's freedom and quality, and anticipated the impact of virtual technology on living spaces.

Figure 4. A Bilibili viewer's comment, "One backpack carries all my essentials for living."[7]

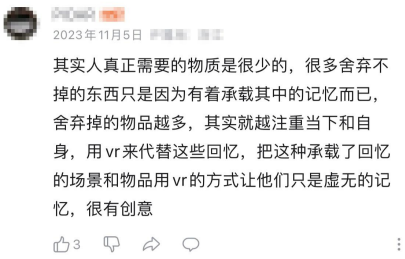

Figure 5. A Bilibili viewer's comment, "Human material needs are minimal, and VR innovatively preserves memories rather than the physical items themselves."[7]

Others questioned the comfort and functionality of the compressed space, pointing out the artist's experiment, while conceptually rich, was conducted under conditions not available to low-income groups, unintentionally reflecting a privileged perspective.

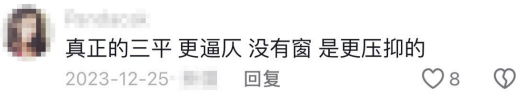

Figure 6: A Douyin viewer's comment, "The true 3 square meters is even more cramped and more oppressive without a window."[6]

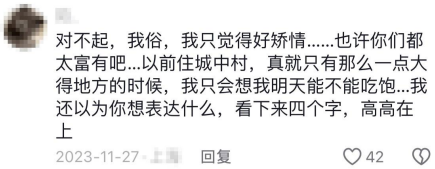

Figure 7: A Douyin viewer's comment, "Apologies, maybe you're all too well-off. Living in a cramped urban village, my only concern was my next meal. Your words seemed superior."[6]

The artist reflected on these responses, emphasizing that the project aimed to challenge and expand conventional notions of living space and material possession, and to speculate on future lifestyles, rather than presenting a survival challenge or material stripping. The artist acknowledged the socio-economic disparities, posing a hypothetical question: If we could freely construct our lives in virtual spaces, could we alleviate some real-world inequalities?

Considering the project's future direction, the artist proposed initial ideas to enhance societal impact and audience engagement. Recognizing public interest in 3D scanning and simplifying lifestyles, the artist plans to provide guidance through workshops, online courses, and manuals. Furthermore, the artist intends to explore VR technology for simulating living spaces, involving basic interactive design to allow audiences to experience different living concepts in a virtual environment. These initiatives aim to stimulate further reflection and discussion on the relationship between living spaces, material consumption, and personal lifestyles.

Discussion

Cybermove challenges contemporary societal norms of material consumption and living space requirements through personal experimentation and artistic expression, showcasing the potential role of virtual technology in future living forms. It prompts reflection on personal relationships with material possessions and explores how future integration of virtual and physical spaces might reshape our needs and use of space. The wide-ranging public debate not only reflects diverse societal values but also highlights art's power as social commentary, offering rich perspectives and foundations for exploring new forms of living and the pursuit of freedom and happiness.

Conclusion

This paper provides an in-depth analysis of the *Cybermove* project, exploring how it navigates the boundaries between virtual and real living spaces and examines the influence of cyberspace theory and digital life on contemporary living modes and cultural interactions. By dissecting core concepts of cyberspace, individual self-expression, and digital-age social interaction, this study aims to offer profound insights into new forms of living and socializing in the digital era.

Cybermove demonstrates the potential of virtual spaces as extensions of real life, challenging traditional spatial concepts and hinting at future possibilities for living and social forms. It reshapes our understanding of dwelling, socializing, and cultural interaction against the backdrop of ongoing digital evolution, inspiring further innovation in art, social science, urban planning, and technology development. As technology advances and society adapts, we anticipate a future rich with innovative practices and theoretical explorations that further the development of integrated living and social forms in virtual and real worlds. The Minimalist Living Experiment, spanning three months, encourages collective contemplation on global real estate

trends and the evolving concept of dwelling spaces. VR Production blurs the line between physical and virtual, challenging our understanding of possession and spatial limits. Social Media Discourse extends the project's impact, fostering discussions on real estate, minimalism, and privilege.

Feedback shows *Cybermove* transcends its initial focus, sparking exploration into how virtual living may reshape societal structures.

In essence, *Cybermove* challenges us to rethink the physical-virtual boundary, envisioning a decentralized future where space and societal norms evolve. The project serves as a catalyst for possibilities at the intersection of art, tech, and societal evolution.

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