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INTERACTIVE DOCUMENTARY: NEW WAYS TO TELL NONFICTION STORIES

Modern media industry undergoes remarkable transformations, caused by the processes of digitalization and media convergence. These processes, similar in nature, promote integration of technologies of content production and media products distribution, and the development of new media business models, focused on the use of cross-media platforms and cross-media content.

One of the research lines of the Interactive Art Department at the Saint-Petersburg State University of Film and Television is the study of interactive documentary storytelling, and also of the problems of the documentary film content adaptation to modern media platforms. Professional training of the future transmedia storytelling creators within the framework of the degree program “Multimedia Directing” requires the understanding of the special features of digital and interactive content creation in the era of cross-media communication.

And although the problem of film adaptation to digital environment is one particular case, it needs to be solved, and it needs to be solved with a great deal of attention paid to artistic and creative aspects, in which the narrative experience gained by the audience is of primary concern.

Interactive documentary storytelling covers all possible ways of telling a non-fiction story, which enable the recipient to gain experience not only from the perception and interpretation of the media message, but also from the physical real-time interaction between this message and the recipient. Various digital media are based on a documentary story: interactive cinema and interactive television, computer games and virtual environments, interactive installations and locative media, and so on. There also exist plenty of cross-media projects, created on the basis of documentary films, which involve several digital media at a time. Their creators are driven by the desire to record the events and phenomena of the real world, using special features of digital medium.

Today filmmakers have access to a huge variety of innovative facilities: modern data imaging methods, immersive 360° video, various cards, mobile applications and interactive interfaces. The time has passed when projects were created basically to implement some new technologies. A story is what today is in the center of attention, even if the means by which it's being told may happen to be quite unusual.

In the last few years the media environment has been enriched by innovative narrative projects, many of which has become available for study thanks for the Internet's fast-moving transformation into a full-fledged media-channel. This contributed to the increase of interest in interactive film and mainly in documentary web-storytelling. Different interactive documentary filmmakers have different taste for this or that genre, for this or that interactive storytelling form, for this or that descriptive manner. Some authors prefer branching narrative where transitions within a given text database (video, sound, photos, etc.) are subject to certain rules, and where the authors experiment with

the levels of user's choice within the controlled narrative. Others build nonlinear narrative with the viewer's/user's active participation, using the elements of the open content strategy. Some apply in their narrative a variety of multimedia tools, including 3D graphics and animation, others – only photos and voice-over. However, every author (by his or her best works) contributes to the enhancement of the language of the interactive documentary storytelling, developing various methods, means of expression, various ways of the viewer's/user's interaction of the content of the film.