

## **Psychic automatism in 3D digital art** (about Yet Another Face Experimental Artwork)

**Summary:** Petra Stefankova's digital artworks are based on an early 20th century surrealist automatic drawing method but she has adapted these principles to contemporary digital art practice using 3D applications. The surrealist technique refers to the psychoanalysis research of Sigmund Freud, the manifesto by Andre Breton, and drawings of Max Ernst. The composition and content of the artwork were strictly led by internal subconscious reactions. The process is a reflection of the artist's personal experience and the artist becomes a medium translating her subconscious internal reactions into a visual form playing with random elements based on the uncontrolled process executed in different, often strongly emotional life situations and fragile moments. Unsimilar to other methods of random drawing and form shaping in computer art, Stefankova's approach depends on the unique human perception and interpretations of her internal and external world.

***Beloved imagination, what I most like in you is your unsparing quality.***  
Andre Breton, Manifesto of Surrealism in 1929.

Sigmund Freud in his era caught the attention of public when he discussed his explorations and analysis of human activity without rational motives and focused on dreams and unconscious brain activity. Andre Breton with his fellows welcome the growth of interest in transformation of reality into a game of imagination. Fine artists, encouraged by the new direction of interpretation, began noticing and visualising their own thoughts, personality, emotions and results of the unconscious. They judged the world and looked deeper through their somewhat deformed glasses.

What happens if we apply „the uncontrolled process“ of human creativity in 3D digital art? Is it possible? We can experiment with various levels of control before getting the results into computer. The main purpose for this is to keep pure authenticity of human action (with various levels of brain control). The basis is an old fashioned pen or pencil drawing, which allows human's spontaneity to flow. In this case it is about a collaboration of the uncontrolled processes of the human brain with opposed methods and exact scientific discoveries. The experiment explores the boundaries and possibilities of getting a distance from the ratio driven creative process without trying to eliminate the effect of art education, personal predispositions and corrections.

In our world we are witnesses of hundreds of daily unconscious notes about our own mental and physical worlds – many people tend to doodle even if they don't think it's a drawing while chatting with a friend on the phone, while listening a lecture at school.... The goal is to collect the fragments of life and situations, which were difficult to catch in material – it's a drawing of crying after a bad day, drawing of travelling on a London's train on the way to work when people are stressed and sleepy in that particular moment, drawing of happiness and any other emotion. It's a discovery of people's hidden feelings and motivations behind a particular situation looking at their body expressions, actual acts, speed and rhythm of their speech etc. The artist is only a medium reflecting and reporting. It's about the society, it's about the artist as a deep self-portrait. I experimented with my own emotional control as well, the higher level of social perception and the ability to analyse these facts became stronger after my move to London, which was an important step for my personal and professional growth.

Emotional tension plays always a significant role, I tend to achieve the best results when I experienced something emotionally touching, negative feelings seem to affect this rather than the positive. In fact, the process of drawing in that case is an act of a deep catharsis. The tension is a great source of motivation and inspiration, which I often use for my work. Actually, the method of automatic drawing does not allow building the imagery on strictly predefined inspirations or guidelines, so I often draw when I feel that it's a physical and mental must in that particular

moment. As times goes on I produce hundreds and hundreds of such drawings, it's the crucial phase of the process of creation. It reminds me a fish that lays millions of eggs, but only a few of them actually hatch. It means, that I take some of the best or most interesting drawings and take them into their final 3D form with a focus on composition balance and colour engagement. The composition in my drawings remains random to keep the original authenticity, I only refine the drawing in the computer, often choose a detail from a larger structure, simplify some shapes and get rid of unnecessary details or anything what breaks the basic pattern rhythm.

The final stage of building the shapes in the CGI form is then refined so I can achieve a visually interesting and balanced image. The process of redrawing the stuff in computer is pretty much straight forward, I usually clean up the drawing first and get rid of anything unnecessary. The most important part here is then colouring based on lighting, texturing and post process – I collaborated with a London based 3D artist Roman Vrbovsky to achieve appropriate lighting. I don't rely on reality too much, I play with colour randomly often using the most realistic materials which are the real world textures.

Computer graphics is a method of synthesis, which can be and must be aesthetically attractive. This is similar to the fine artist of our past reflecting their era and deflecting from a pure imitation of nature (mimesis) to deform the reality with their own perception and mental processes. The same purpose should be brought to digital art, which „as an attractive and eye catching form“ can be effective more than anything else nowadays.

Digital art should be finding appropriate forms, which can address feelings, meanings, questions and answers to a wider audience – just then the creation is about art, it's about ideas visualized and refined which have a value and the artist is heard and accepted while he speaks. The thoughts are delivered, perceived and judged. Similarly like Damien Hirst provoked the attention of curators, media and even laic audience – this is how his thoughts became important and real. This is the main reason why I decided to bring all these sketches, notes and doodles into their other dimension. It was a long long way – as I started to experiment with psychic automatism in drawing in 1999 and always knew that their sketchy „virgin“ form is too pure to be accepted. It was about finding of a proper expression, which would have a potential to speak. Have I achieved it already?

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