Editorial

Issue 6

Issue 6 of *Digital Icons* explores the concept of transmediality as one of a series of common thematic strands, discusses new digital phenomena and launches a new creative and analytical project, *Digital Memoirs.*

The issue advances a set of theoretical concerns, focusing on the concept of transmediality as the dominant feature of contemporary cultural production. In this regard, Issue 6 expands on the ideas presented in Issue 5 *Transmedial Practices in Post-Communist Spaces*. In *'This is your show!' Mass Creative Practices in Transmedial Projects* (**6.1**), Natalia Sokolova uses three case studies to argue for the emergence of new creative industries and participatory creative processes. In particular, her article documents the transformation of a creative project into a transmedial phenomenon, and it places the cause for such a shift in the participatory nature of the creative projects in question. In her article, Alexandra Yatsuk extends the notion of transmedial practices to include the activities of media stars and their fans. Her *At the Border of 'Real': Stars and Consumers in Contemporary Formats of Media Systems* (**6.2**) analyses Russian reality show *Dom-2* and the discourse surrounding it. Yatsuk argues that the television programme contests existing media genres and formats and that scholars of media need to reconceptualise the boundaries defining media phenomena. Yatsuk employs a complex analysis to engage cultural practices emerging on the margins of the dominant cultural discourse and beyond existing media formulas. In her view, such innovation is grounded within the participatory, transmedial nature of social media, particularly *Vkontakte*. Christine Goelz's *"Through a Chilly Land" – between First-Person Shoot-Em-Up and Tourist Blockbuster. Jáchym Topol's Fictional Statement on the Possibility of Immersive Remembrance* (**6.3**) investigates the merger of different narrative strategies pertinent to literature and computer gaming. The scholar tracks the uses (and abuses) of the elements of first-person shooters in Jáchym Topol's novel and she discusses such transmedial borrowings in relation to cultural memory and historical accounts. Goelz begins with an analysis of the mediatisation of memory, and then addresses the issue of perception and historical representation. She puts forward concepts that enable an innovative reading of the literary text as a transmedial practice, and concludes by considering the relationship between creative writing and the medium.

Issue 6 discusses new cultural and social phenomena emerging on the digital horizon of Russian culture. Arseny Khitrov's interview with Mikhail Zygar' (**6.6**), the editor-in-chief of the Russian Optimistic Internet TV Channel Dozhd, is the first publication in a western jour-

nal that explores the emergence of internet-based television channels in Russia and the impact they have had on the editorial as well as political processes in the country. Dozhd has most recently emerged as an alternative to the Russian mainstream state-monitored television that promulgates Kremlin-sponsored views on social and political reform in the country, as well as to commercial television that either recycles television formats borrowed from other countries or promotes socially-disengaged and politically truncated programming. In their contributions, Tine Roesen (**6.4**) and Ellen Rutten (**6.5**) reflect on new online projects and associated social practices. Roesen analyses www.snob.ru, or what she calls 'a social network site for the elite', and Rutten examines www.openspace.ru, which she claims has become the central node for communication among Russian cultural elite. Both discuss the increasing role of the Russian-speaking digital intelligentsia and their attempts to create new creative industries online and offline. Roesen and Rutten also document online subjectivity 'in the making' as they register and analyse the Runet environment in which it operates. Their work will gain momentum in the future when other scholars might attempt to investigate online phenomena diachronically. In this regard, Roesen's and Rutten's contributions are extremely important as evidence of such online activity as well as of the specific critical apparatus that is available to us at the start of the 2010s.

Such an historical, anthropological concern is at the centre of the new scholarly initiative of *Digital Icons*.[1] In this issue, *Digital Icons* launches a creative and analytical project called *Digital Memoirs* (**6.7**). Its main objective is to facilitate a reflective discussion of the experience of digital media in Russia, Eurasia and Central Europe. *Digital Icons* aims to construct a collaborative historical narrative that would define use of digital media, including digital gadgets, digital forms of communication and digital practices, in a post-communist, post-totalitarian space. *Digital Icons* hopes that such a narrative would enhance our understanding of the role of new media in society, contribute to the theory of digital media and avoid the presentism of new media studies by adopting a critical historical perspective. The project straddles practices—creative work and academic reflection; and research disciplines—web anthropology, media studies, communication studies, (literary/art) history, folklore, fandom studies, etc. *Digital Memoirs* presents diverse voices of cultural authority: the journal publishes submissions of artists, researchers, media practitioners, journalists and people from other professions and walks of life.

In issue 6, *Digital Icons* presents two personal accounts of engagement with digital media. In the first entry, entitled *From the Typewriter to the Computer* (**6.7.1**), Liliya Yaschenko, a Moscow-based journalist, author and performer, reflects on her first experience of using the computer as a publishing tool in the 1990s Moscow. Written in a lyrical mode and interspersed with humorous observations and rich cultural allusions, Yaschenko's story documents the transition to new independent media in Russia in the 1990s and the role digital technologies played in this process. Set in the context of personal development and transition from the Russian provinces to the capital, Yaschenko's account is full of historical data that would be of great interest to media anthropologists as well as scholars of the Russian press.

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[1] I am grateful to Professor Almira Ousmanova for discussing the idea of post-communist media anthropology with me in May 2009, in a wonderful bar in Vilnius, Lithuania.

The other entry (**6.7.2**) targets a difference audience—artists, curators and cultural practitioners. In *Digital Saint Sebastian*, Nataliya Kamentskaya, an artist and curator working in the Russian capital, presents her first digital artwork *Saint Sebastian*, which she created using a computer in the 1990s, and speaks to the editor of *Digital Icons* about her experience of working with digital technologies. Kamenetskaya's account introduces the reader to the artistic setting of the 1990s Moscow and demonstrates the role of the computer in establishing creative partnerships and networks and facilitating the emergence of new artistic practices of the period. Her reminiscences are extremely personal—the artist is bold in recollecting specific events and mentioning names of her friends and foes—and shed light on the meaning of new technologies to a whole generation of Russian artists who have been incredibly active in the past twenty years and ultimately defined Russia's contemporary art and critical scene.

Finally, the issue concludes with report (**6.8**) and book review (**6.9**) sections. The reports provide information on two conferences and one cultural event that took place in 2011. The two conferences—*From Digital to Intercultural Revolution* (Passau, Germany, July) and *Virtual Russia: Digital Space and Post-Soviet Political Culture* (St-Petersburg, Russia, October)—were concerned with the impact of new media on cultural exchange. In particular, they addressed the issue of Russian cultural expansion on the internet. Presenters also addressed the problem of scholarly investigation of online phenomena, calling for further integration of academic disciplines and innovative research methods.

In his report on Moscow Biennale of Contemporary art (**6.8.3**), Vlad Strukov discusses video projection as the dominant cultural form. He considers a number of artworks, including Kamila B. Richter's *The Garden of Error and Display* and *Allegoria Sacra* produced by AES+F group, and critically assesses curatorial practices. He employs the term 'projectionism' to examine projecting art as a cultural form that transcends time in its linear syntagms, and perhaps it defines contemporary Russia as a culture existing in the mix of times, whereby chronological patterns are easily mixed and consumed in the endless flow of loops of memory and experience.

The book review section (**6.9**) provides reviews of two books, namely, *Digital Media and Democracy: Tactics in Hard Times* (edited by Megan Boler, MIT press, 2008) and *Digital Fandom. New Media Studies* (Paul Booth, Peter Lang, 2010). In the first review (**6.9.1**), Galina Miazhevich revisits media concepts that put forward in the volume three years ago and she presents the discussion about media studies in an historical perspective. In the second review (**6.9.2**), Sudha Rajagopalan critically assesses a new study of fandom cultures. She demonstrates how the book makes an important contribution to the concept of transmediality that *Digital Icons* raised in issues 5 and 6.

The issue was prepared by Sudha Rajagopalan, Ellen Rutten, Henrike Schmidt, Natalia Sokolova and Vlad Strukov.

Vlad Strukov, Editor.

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