

Centre Interlangues – Texte, Image, Langage (TIL UR 4182)
Université de Bourgogne

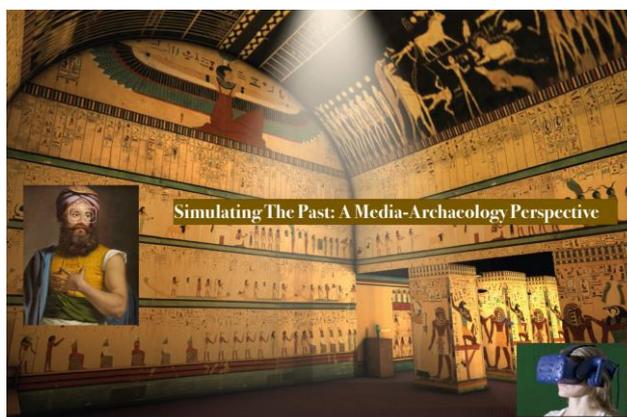
Séminaire de l'équipe *Image et critique*

« Intermédialités sensibles : restitution(s) du vivant »



Vendredi 29 mars 2024, 10h-12h

Séance hybride : Cortex (salle Hydrogène) et webinaire Teams



Massimo Riva (Professor of Italian, Brown University)

'Simulating the Past. A Media-Archaeology Perspective'

Modeling and simulation can be considered the prevalent mode of knowledge in our contemporary techno-culture. Computer-generated models are ubiquitous and data simulation increasingly pervades and regulates social activities. VR and AR applications characterize high-impact initiatives like the UNVR project, transform the museum as both a physical space and a virtual experience, and enable Cultural Heritage conservation and recreation. Neuroscientists and philosophers of the mind (Bostrom, Chalmers) seriously debate the possibility that we actually live in a simulation similar to what we call the "metaverse" – a hypothesis made plausible by emergent technologies such as machine learning, AI, and BCI. How is this new paradigm affecting the humanities?

In my recent monograph, *Shadow Plays. Virtual Realities in an Analog World* (<https://www.shadow-plays.org>), I focus on 18th- and 19th-century analog devices (cosmorama, magic lantern, panorama and stereoscope) that offered glimpses of the "metaverse" long before digital technology made the term – and the idea it conveys – current. Leveraging the digital format, each case study in the monograph features a 2.5D Unity model of a device, and an interactive simulation of the spectacle that the device provided, all based on historical sources (with a touch of imagination). The simulations have a dual purpose: to demonstrate how the devices worked and to illustrate the interpretation I propose in each case study. In short, in my media-archaeology exploration I adopt the feedback loop between past and contemporary technologies as a theoretical and methodological principle.

In this presentation, I will focus on the methodology I adopted in my recent monograph, *Shadow Plays*, to more broadly discuss the epistemology of simulation that informs contemporary digital culture. More specifically, I will address the theoretical and practical questions raised by designing the 2.5D (two-and-a-half dimensional) Unity models and simulations, and how this process has led my collaborators and I to consider how digital technologies affect our reconstructions, or regenerations, of the analog past.

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Programme du séminaire :

<https://til.u-bourgogne.fr/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Seminaire-IC-calendrier-2023-2024-1.pdf>