

Beatriz Escribano Belmar; José R. Alcalá Mellado

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The Development of Digital Narratives. Case study: Fred Adam and the pioneering multimedia interactive creations in the MIDE of Cuenca during the 1990s

José R. Alcalá Mellado
University Rey Juan Carlos
joseramon.alcala@urjc.es

Beatriz Escribano Belmar
University of Castilla-La Mancha
beatriz.escribano@uclm.es

Abstract

In the 1990s, the International Museum of Electrography of Cuenca (MIDE), thanks to a newly-created artist-in-residency program, welcomed artists from all over the world who experimented with new media during this historical era of pioneering Media Art. One of the first artists to visit the MIDE was Fred Adam, a French artist, still a student at the École des Beaux-Arts in Nantes, who carried out countless researches in this creative field during his stay. One example that had a greater repercussion was the creation of digital narratives in interactive multimedia. This work seeks to put some of the pioneering media artworks into value, building their story, and working to recover and preserve them and update their languages so that they become accessible again. Only through this institutional and personal commitment to history can we recover, divulge and give access to the immense artistic heritage that generated and continues to generate the art that uses or has as a reference on new media.

Keywords

Media Art Histories, Media Archaeology, Interactive multimedia, Contemporary Art

Histories of media art in Spain. The production of digital art in the workshops of MIDE at the beginning of the 1990s

What you cannot see, what does not have a storytelling, does not exist.

This popular saying could be applied to the history of the activities of what can now be considered Media Art at the International Museum of Electrography - Centre for Innovation in Art and New Technologies (MIDECIANT) in Cuenca, Spain. This museum-research centre belongs to the University of Castilla-La Mancha (UCLM). It was inaugurated in May 1990 and commissioned by the Rector of the UCLM to Professor José R. Alcalá, a pioneer artist of Media Art in Spain. He had been contracted only a year before as Guest Teacher in the School of Fine Arts in Cuenca. Alcalá began organizing some workshops of artistic electrography thanks to a collaboration agreement signed with Canon Spain. These could be used by artists and researchers from all over the world thanks to the MIDECIANT scholarship program. At the same time, the permanent collection of electrographic artworks (which was based on several biennials and private collections) was expanded owing to the artworks donated by artists themselves and with the works that the museum-centre produced in its own workshops. Shortly after commencing, the workshop expanded its production to the field of Digital Art through the incorporation of computers and electronic technologies as they were then being marketed.

At the early date of 1993, MIDECIANT produced artworks made with interactive multimedia infographic programs, which were recorded for distribution on CD-ROMs. Its distribution and marketing by offline media reached very few places of sale, such as bookstores of the most advanced contemporary art centres (or those contemplating the creation of art using new technological means). This was also happening at the same time in a few other places, such as United States, Canada, Japan or Europe, in centres such as ZKM in Karlsruhe or Ars Electronica Centre in Linz.

Today, unfortunately, these artistic creations belonging to the so-called Media Art are no longer accessible. This is because the media on which these digital creations were recorded (CD-ROMs) can no longer be read by current computers. Neither can they be put into operation by the operating systems of today's computers. And the software and programming languages with which they were created have been replaced by others that are, unlike those older systems, accessible from online networks.



Figure 1. MIDECIANT, Electrography permanent workshops, Cuenca (Spain), 1990.



Figure 2. MIDECIANT, Installation at its Medialab. Cuenca (Spain), 2001.

This is the reason why MIDECIANT as an art institution which is dependent on an educational and research organization (UCLM), has assumed the museum's responsibility to recover these creations of early digital art based on interactive multimedia which were produced in its workshops and laboratories. The goals were to make them accessible again, for which it is necessary to translate their languages and operating systems, to migrate them, to emulate them or to reinterpret them to new ones—if the artist allows it—, to consent to be disseminated online using open and free standard protocols (creative commons, copy left, open codes, etc.).

By building a specific storytelling for each piece and each author, putting them in value and contextualizing them within the general story of a new History of Media Art, we promote and disseminate these artworks within the international arena.

The communication that we present in this article tries to report on the first results of this process, which is still in the middle of development.

With this, we intend to provide some concrete data, some unique stories about the construction and dissemination of the History of Media Art in Spain, which demonstrates a broad, pioneering, and productive view on global Media Art. We have decided to frame this complex task within the Media Art Histories' research field (object of the Conference RE: TRACE 2017), using the methodological approach of Media Archaeology. At the same time, we are coordinating the creation of the *Spanish Archive of Media Art* (AEMA) from MIDECIANT which will become a part of the Iberoamerican Network of Digital and Electronic Art and is currently in the process of being incorporated. The results and documentation can be implemented in international platforms, such as the Archive of Digital Art (ADA), which is promoted by the University of Krems and led by Professor Oliver Grau.

Sotos v.1.0: A pioneering experience in interactive multimedia narrative in Spain

Autumn of 1993. Fred Adam, a young French student at the *École des Beaux-Arts* in Nantes, first appears in Cuenca's MIDE workshops; attracted to this place after reading a curious article in a famous French publication on Spain in which this university museum-centre was mentioned (Bouffet et.al. 1992).

"Following the *Routard Guide*, you will arrive in Cuenca and visit the International Museum of Electrography", then located in the historic Carmelites' Convent. He was so fascinated with this artist-run-space project focused on New Media Art that he made an important personal decision that would change his life: staying in Cuenca. His fascination with this small town located in the middle of the mountains of the centre of the Iberian Peninsula, and the creative potential of MIDE, do not make him doubt that this place was where it should be. Nothing would ever be the same in MIDE, or in Cuenca, or in the School of Fine Arts after his visit. This is his little known history and a part of his contributions to the development of Digital Art.

At the beginning (in the early 1990s), the *International Museum of Electrography*, located in the Spanish city of Cuenca (160 km east of the capital), offered the analogue and digital-laser photocopiers and other xerographic machines that the Canon company had given as part of its collaboration agreement with the centre-museum only to its users (artists and resident researchers and guests). Gradually, these first machines were set up in the same space with computers, digital cameras and all kinds of

electronic devices for the processing of images and sounds. In addition, each new visitor or resident contributed new and valuable information, new ideas and new media, previously unknown in Cuenca. Thus, during the same initial years, coinciding with the appearance of Fred Adam, MIDE was beginning to develop interactive multimedia projects, thanks to the basic knowledge already possessed in that early period by young fellows of the centre (among them, Ricardo Echevarría, Luz Gil, Jorge Santamaría and Kepa Landa), as well as the director himself (Alcalá)).

Adam joined this young team of multimedia art production, while he was trying to finish the works corresponding to his Master's project in the Nantes school. Once finished, he returned to present it, but, incomprehensibly, it was not admitted by the academic leaders of the French school, who had left little by little inclining towards positions much more conservative. This is another of the many reasons that drove him back to Cuenca and live permanently in a small town called Sotos up in the mountains.

Adam is fascinated with the rural life of Sotos. For him, as a French citizen, this town cannot be more picturesque and he feels how its small community lives immersed in its own ancestral memory which surfaced continuously in the conversations with its inhabitants, now his neighbours. He wants to record that. To do this, he decides to make a documentary about Sotos, but from the implementation of new narrative strategies that makes possible the use of a revolutionary computer program of the time to create interactive multimedia called Director. A software program still incipient and quite limited, as it is still in version 3.0. Despite its many techno-expressive limitations, the innovations in its functional possibilities allow him to adapt the technology "like a glove" to the peculiar narrative and aesthetic conception. In MIDE, everyone is attracted by this strange aesthetic: digital but very surreal; filled with backgrounds as black as the infinity of the computer screen-window; characters, objects and elements covered with photographic textures, but with digital "skin", elaborated by the chromatic effects of solarisation obtained by Adam through the manipulations that he submits to the images through his deep knowledge of software programs like Photoshop (the current version at that time was not yet multilayer); representational naturalism, but from the emerging "de-constructive" creative philosophy of the "copy & paste" characteristic of Macintosh technology, which was faithfully followed in MIDE.

The result was *Camera Obscura. Sotos v.1.0*, an interactive multimedia production, recorded on a physical CD-ROM for distribution.¹ Nevertheless, this first "digital narrative product" is nothing more than a "photographic collection" of relevant "Sotos characters", taken manually by Fred, and then digitized to create an infographic production of visual files mounted on the space-time line of Cast of the Director program, accompanied by the voices of its protagonists (also recorded in a stealthy way) digitized. As the author explains:

The interesting point of the photographs made with a shoe box was the exposure time and the camera object itself. Taking pictures with a shoebox and revealing them in the bathroom was an act of magic, a true ritual to create a first surprising relationship with the inhabitants of Sotos. The exposure time was also very important. I will never forget those 30 seconds of immobility needed to get the exposure of the portraits I performed in the streets. Those 30 seconds of silence and immobility were great moments of deep and precious communication. They helped me weave a special relationship with certain people of the village. [...] The subsequent processing in the computer of all this material generated in an analogical way was the moment of the analysis of the experiences, a work of exploration of the personal and collective unconscious. It was no longer a matter of creating simple audio-visual signs to be contemplated; it was an inner journey into the depths of our civilization. *Sotos v.1* [Camera Obscura] was to put the cards on the table and establish new exploration routes that had drawn the light on the photographic paper. (Adam 2017, s/n)

Camera Obscura. Sotos v.1.0 was, for the first time in art history, an audio-visual narrative shown on the screen of a computer, which was capable of interacting with its user, and created from a rather static but highly novel graphic development to offer unprecedented solutions around a very basic script, while no longer following the rigid linear form of traditional paper book technology.

1 <https://vimeo.com/221246290>.



Figure 3. Fred Adam. 1993. *Camera Obscura. Sotos v.1.0*, CD-ROM based Interactive Multimedia, Interface of its interactive navigation, Screenshot. (10/06/2017).

Fred wanted all the interactive elements of this rudimentary graphical interface to be as intuitive as possible, avoiding signs whose meaning had to be known previously by its user (Fig. 3). To hear the voice of the characters appearing on the screen, Fred had inserted the image of an ear to click on. To advance between screens, he had placed advance signs (which, in other versions, were photographs of legs in a forward and backward position). With each new character appeared on the screen naturalistic photographs of objects belonging to them. A magical micro world of images and sounds through which the viewer (now a user) could go through at his whim, entering the hidden world of small town Cuenca guided by its own residents. The pinhole (stenopeic) images of their characters in black and white refer us to a distant and ancient fantasy world; their voices and the precarious sound of their daily actions—like the “ax of Isidoro”, the town’s gardener, cutting barks of trees from the nearby forest—allow us to approach them, feel very close to them; also be able to share some personal objects, reproduced in a naturalistic form on the screen since it was scanned directly. All this created a very intimate atmosphere, full of complicity with the user.

Although it is necessary to recognize that in this initial version of *Sotos* a script constructed in accordance with the new concept of arborescence (as it will happen in following versions, also realized in MIDE three years later) does not yet exist. But a "back and forth" linear navigation model at the discretion of the user can be seen which anticipates the creation of the future nonlinear and interactive scripts based on the elaboration of an "open" index according to the capricious desires of its users. Just two years before, in 1992, George P. Landov had published his essay *Hypertext; The convergence of contemporary critical theory and technology* which was translated into Spanish and published in 1995 by Paidós Ed.

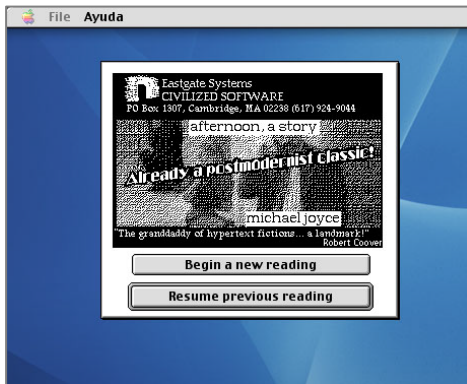
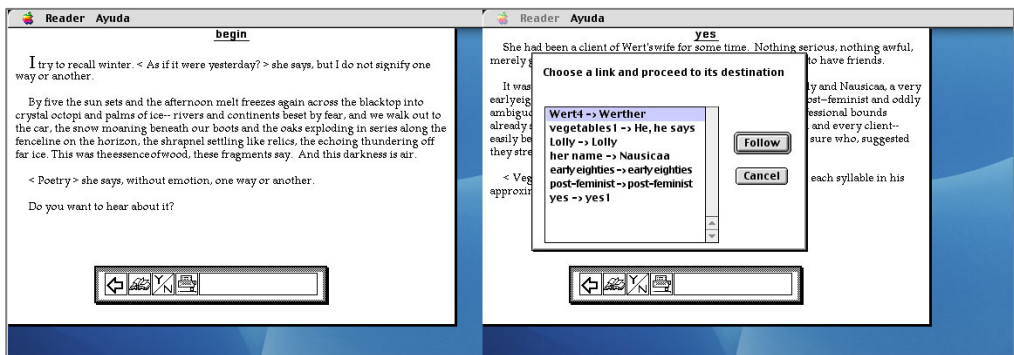


Figure 4&5. Michael Joyce, *Afternoon, a story*, Hypertext writing Environment, 1987.



And just a couple of years later his *Theory of hypertext* was also published. These two texts became the theoretical basis of the multiple techno-artistic speculations that were developed in pioneering times in the centre of Cuenca in the form of artistic creations, research projects or articles and theoretical-critical essays.

The birth and initial development of interactive multimedia creations which would coincide with the incipient development of the Internet—although they would still have for several years a "locality" that did not yet participate in the incipient globalism that favours the Internet to the point that Fred Adam himself defines these productions as "locative media"—, were marked by a deep analysis and a varied experimentation around the potential of digital narrativity. These investigations were heirs to the pioneering hypertextual novels, which were physically distributed and copied on 3 1/2 computer diskettes, as is the case for *Afternoon, a story*, the "first bestseller" of this new type of literature. Its author was the American writer Michael Joyce, and was published in 1987. In its publicity, this one was presented like the first "Hypertext Writing Environment".

The emergence of computer technology incorporated the screen interface to the literary narrative. Its software—capable of generating interactive settings, a multitude of varied multimedia resources and RAM and ROM memories to save what was read—would allow, for the first time, a reading experience proposed by the writing of Julio Cortázar for his experimental novel *Rayuela*, and other predecessors such as *The Garden of the Paths that fork off* by José Luis Borges, as well as the ideas of *Opera Aperta* by Umberto Eco, as something personalized, memorized and offered as an option to remember. The reading system itself allowed the reader to save settings and her book status at any time. In other words, the reading of this new digital novel opened up the script to multiple possible readings and enabled an upsetting of the classic Aristotelian plot. This was finally converted into a real hypertextual reading exercise, *rhi-zomatic* (Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari), not a mere experimental proposal only of potential and propositional character. The hypertextual narrative was now utilized by the most experimental artists willing to become "digital narrators" as an authentic gift that finally enabled their derivation in extraordinary hypermedia narratives, incorporating e.g. images, sounds into the hypertext. Its extension to the hypermedia range also affected the classic and invariable narrative structure—from its invention, one hundred years ago—of cinema.



Figure 6. Fred Adam, Ricardo Echevarría, Luz Gil & José Ramón Alcalá. *MIDE Navigation 94*, Interactive Multimedia, Screenshots from a guided travelling around its screens, 1994.

Evolution of digital narratives. *Sotos v.2.0 and v.3.0*, MIDE's contributions to emerging digital art

Between the first and second version of *Sotos* multimedia were three years. As Fred Adam continued to research through new small personal digital creations (such as *Pavlov for Human*²), the team that had been trained at MIDE for those productions (and joined the young Frenchman) began to develop innovative proposals. According to Adam himself:

While I was personally immersed in a local narrative, the debate at MIDE was more focused on the potential and limits of an interactive narrative. How the digital contents were navigated and, later, what kind of metaphors we could apply to the narrative structure. [...] were, logically, failed attempts, because the way we did the narratives did not allow dynamically generating the content to be able to respond to the exponential growth of narrative ramifications. (Adam, in Alcalá 2017, s/n)

All the developed multimedia productions at that time were contaminated with a “pop” aesthetic and with that magical realism constructed by Adam through delirious digital iconographies that proposed the construction of a highly aesthetic electronic space and arranged to be navigated—virtually walked through—following the model of the naturalistic-dreamlike simulation of the surrounding reality.

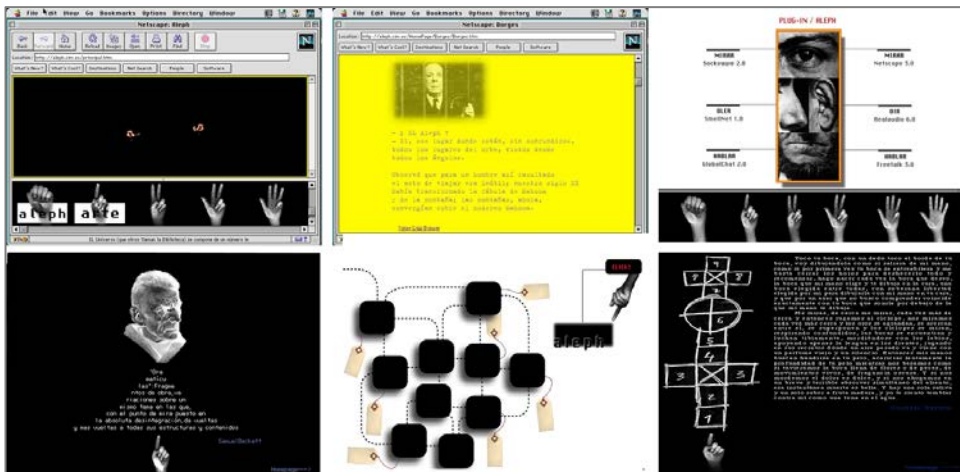


Figure 7. Ricardo Echevarría & José L. Fernández, *Aleph-arts.org*, Screen selection of its first interactive interface, Snapshots, 1996. © Echevarría/Fernández

2 previa.uclm.es/profesorado/gnoltra/MEDIATECA_MIDE_LACAIXA/mediateca.html.

As we know, this simulation model of virtual space failed. With the passage of years a standard of digital-virtual representation based on the formal minimalism of the semantic hyperlink was consolidated. The electronic space was going to become a place crossed by infinity of hyperlinked routes, which are shown through its simple and textual statements. The information contained in this will be pure information, written on the computer screen, which is now understood as a two-dimensional metaphorical space without any graphics to decorate it. Information that is always susceptible of being clicked—activated—by the user to be transported to a new one, constituting an infinite network of nodes, links, routes and virtual paths that, little by little, would saturate the electronic space and its online networks. Of course, this was not how Fred had imagined the architectural construction of electronic space. The young French creator wanted to transpose the real world into this new virtual-digital-electronic world full of dimensional potentiality through a highly aesthetic simulation representation.

The influence of the young Fred Adam in the MIDE had been decisive. Ricardo Echevarría, who just conceived the net art website *aleph-arts.org*, designed his first interface following Fred's ideas, creating a formal symbolization that paid homage to the Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges. Helped technically by the Spanish programmer Jose Luis Fernandez, Echevarría filled the screens of the first web of *aleph-arts.org* with colourful digital images from the symbolism of Borges. But all this highly simulative-allegorical virtual world of the net art website would disappear in its following versions because of the incorporation of the philosopher, critic and curator Jose Luis Brea—also teacher of the School of Fine Arts of Cuenca at that time.

The influence of Brea's ideas on how the electronic information and communication space (EICS) should be managed and represented led to the complete transformation of the formal structure of *aleph-arts.org*, making it the formal minimalist hypertext appearance that made it famous. Then, MIDE fractured into two streams of creative thinking: minimalists and simulation-symbolists. A duality of thought faced around fundamental concepts on which the evolution and development of the construction, management and habitability of the EEIC depended. This confrontation was in line with the two important cultural and digital art pioneers in the international sphere: Don Foresta and Roy Ascott. It was publicly discussed for the first time at the international meeting *Art / Cognition; Differentiel (s)*, held at the École des Beaux-Arts in Aix-en-



Figure 8. Fred Adam, *Sotos v.2*, the beginning travelling, Screenshot of the navigation video, 1995.

Provence (France) between 5 and 17 July 1992, organized by the French school itself in collaboration with the cultural association Cyprus, the bio-informatics group of the École Normale Supérieure de Paris and the Université de Hawaï to Manoa, and attended by members of the MIDECIANT team. Foresta advocated artists' use of high-tech media and high-tech technological systems for incipient tele-transmissions (and their consequent tele-creations); that is, using real-time broadcast systems (whose main model was television and whose cost was prohibitive for individual use) which he publicly defended as the future of emerging telematic art. Ascott, on the contrary, defended the use and development of low-tech systems of low quality and poor definition—but very affordable and versatile and open protocol—and whose main model was the incipient Internet network. Today we all know who would win that debate in the future and why: speed, multiplicity, efficiency, accessibility, at the cost of assuming rudeness, coarseness and a very limited artistic expression, sacrificing formal beauty, mannerist aesthetic and polyvalent sensoriality. Unfortunately (or not?), Adam's creative line—and that of MIDE environment—was positioned on the losing side.

Fred Adam made a second interactive multimedia version of his account of life in the small town where he lived with a greater ambition on

narrative and aesthetics. This new version of *Sotos* is an attempt to describe the trauma of the Spanish civil war which Fred was detecting from his first contacts with the inhabitants of the town. This is a transitional version, much more ambitious in terms of narrativity and navigation systems than the first. In this second version (Fig. 8), the piece incorporates an interesting beginning which, however, will disappear in the next version, the third and final one. This is a brief QuickTime of traveling in Fred's Volkswagen while approaching Sotos—similar to a road movie—until arriving, crossing its main street, to the town square.³ Meanwhile, a voiceover tells us that in the Spanish Civil War there were no losers or winners, only victims.

But Fred will abandon this idea as the guiding thread of the script of the piece because it was too loaded with political ideology. In this way, this second version was unfinished. In October of 1996, Fred Adam begins the production of the third version of *Sotos* (the last one). Thus, he himself explains how he approached this new narrative strategy of the final version:

During one of my last walks through the town of Sotos, in 1996, I found on the floor a sheet of newspaper where you could read in large letters 'A world that no longer exists'. It was perhaps my final farewell to the history of the people, the moment to move on to address other issues, such as the environmental problem from the internet and globalization. But, above all, I was referring to this temporal force that causes all places to change, where nothing is eternal, everything changes. Many of the older Sotos people on the CD-ROM are already dead and the children have grown up. Even the village streets have changed. No longer is that nice big house of the early twentieth century that overlooked the town square. (Adam, in Alcalá 2017, s/n)

Therefore, the subtitle of this latest version #3 of *Sotos* will be: "A world that no longer exists." The new script, much more ambitious and complex, was made up of a series of cross-stories that revolved narratively around these same main characters that appeared in the first version, enlarged in number and in stages. These functioned as autonomous micro-narratives, but could be related to each other at random, depending on the choices made by the reader-user.

3 <https://vimeo.com/221252107>.



Figure 9. Fred Adam, *Sotos; Un mundo que ya no existe. v.3*, Initial sequence, Screenshot [13/06/2017; vimeo.com/221244978], 1995.

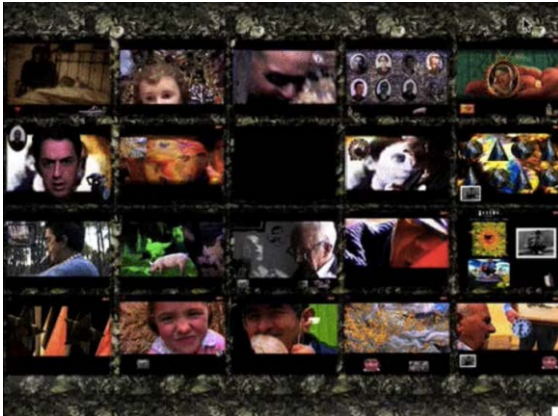


Figure 10. Fred Adam. *Sotos; A world that no longer exists. v.3.*, Index displayed by sequences & characters. Screenshot, 1996.



Figure 11. Fred Adam, *Sotos; A world that no longer exists. v.3*, Arboreal index with sequences & characters. Screenshot, 1996.

For this new version Fred created an opulent aesthetic with a digital graphics reminiscent of Pop Art style, full of colours and filters of Photoshop but limited to the 256 colours of his basic palette, as allowed by Lingo language version 4.0 of the Director program. In this way, he composed small pre-recorded audio-visual scenes, interweaving them into a narrative plot dominated by an open script that followed an index of tree-structure graphically shown as a new navigation menu, and using the metaphorical representation of the tree, one for each character and situation, each with several branches-clips navigable through multiple paths chosen arbitrarily by the viewer/user. Each branch of this metaphoric tree alluded to the different sequences/acts/chapters of *Sotos'* story, written by Fred himself.

The metaphor of the tree is based on the idea that the forest which borders the town of Sotos is common property of all its inhabitants. In this new version of *Sotos; A world that no longer exists* (Fig. 10-11), each character-event is symbolized by a tree, whose ensemble composes a navigable digital forest within the hypertext system of the work through eligible paths, metaphorically incarnated by its multiple branches intertwined with each other and interconnected with those of the other trees.⁴ The narrative structure was supported by the "journey" strategy. Thus, Fred's initial idea—which was only partially implemented in the second version—was that the application had to be opened with the sequence-traveling of an approach to the people, a metaphor for the "foreigner's", "the French's" trip, from his native country to Sotos, filmed from his Volkswagen van, which is approaching the town, making its entrance through its streets to park in its only public square. Although this traveling was finally eliminated as an initial sequence, version 3 allows us to either start from one of its two indices that graphically display its tree-script: that of tree-icons or that of sequence-icons; or from the initial screen-sequence that places us in the bench of the town square where different characters and icons begin to appear. We can continue—actuating—our journey through the micro-stories about the daily life of Sotos and their main characters.

4 <https://vimeo.com/221244978>.

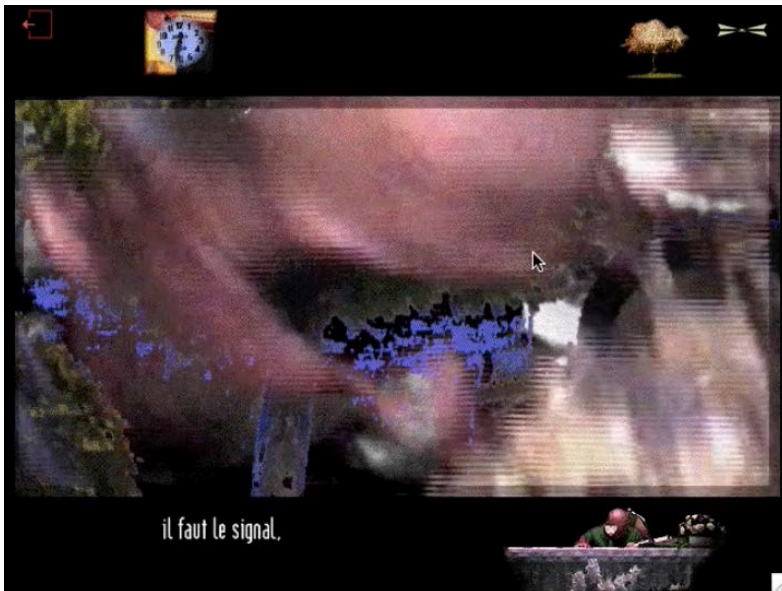


Figure 12. Fred Adam, *Sotos: Un mundo que ya no existe. v.3.*, Sequence of the village's priest, Screenshot from video navigation [13/06/2017, <https://vimeo.com/221244978>], 1996.

During the evolution of each micro-story other characters or distinctive elements appear referring us to other micro-stories, which, if activated by the user, will be transferred to a typical scenario of each of them, starting a new story, which follows the current narrative strategy of virtual walking through as "surfing" (Fig. 12).

After his navigation through the various micro-stories, Adam's artistic aim to tell the people's lives to the reader-user of *Sotos v.3* concluded by following a narrative structure corresponding to a development process as "natural" as the real experience of the traveller that reaches this remote and picturesque place and begins to experience its history progressively and its characters as a sum of microhistories. All this was attempted in a temporarily distended and random happening, casual relationships—intended or fortuitous—as Adam himself did in his real life in his process of knowledge and integration in the tiny and lost town of Sotos, in the middle of the mountains of Cuenca.

The result of the piece, which is inevitably characterized by the techno-expressive primitivism of all the pioneering media works of art of the 1990s, implies the creation of one of the first hypertext narratives of the history of art and digital culture in the period from the 20th to the 21st century. The story of the town of Sotos which Fred Adam tells us -from

within, as authentic and privileged protagonist -, following a revolutionary discursive form that had to be invented ad hoc, using for that the high digital technology of the period, has lost nothing of its original freshness, seduction and interest twenty years later. On the contrary, we dare to affirm that it is gaining and expanding day by day.

Conclusion

From the perspective of looking back—almost three decades later—and the abundant first-hand information accumulated and already fully available and discernible, it becomes necessary to rescue these first digital productions that were abandoned due to the dominant tendencies in digital technologies. Doing so, we can understand the beginnings of this new culture in its complex totality, and what structure and appearance the bricks of their pillars had. If we really want to immerse ourselves in the atmosphere of debate, reflection, creative excitement, and aesthetic and ideological discourse that dominated the artistic scene in the beginnings of digital art, which today is hegemonic and normative, we must necessarily gain access to the study and in-depth analysis of these primitive pioneer creations, now abandoned and forgotten. It is also very probable that its rescue, valuing and diffusion, especially among the creative layers, will generate an effect like “contagious empathy.” This could allow for new expectations and modelling new trends by taking old models as reference, which were discarded by the course inertial imposed by the canonical version of History, as we have seen so many times in the Western History of Art.

The first version of this multimedia art project was distributed in 1994 by MIDECIANT, included in *Multimedia Narrations*, the first compilation of interactive art projects developed in the workshops and laboratories of the centre, and recorded in CD-ROM format. The latest version (v.3.0) was distributed by MIDECIANT as part of the catalogue—also on a CD-ROM platform—edited by the centre of Cuenca from a selection of interactive multimedia pieces produced in its own workshops for the contemporary art festival *Situaciones*, held at the Faculty of Fine Arts of Cuenca in 2001. However, unfortunately, neither had these pioneering creations much impact nor did the rest of these digital publications created by artists around the globe. The limitations of the electronic device used for its recording and distribution greatly limited its distribution (only through few specialized bookshops of contemporary art centres). In ad-

dition, these CD-ROMs needed to be run on expensive and perfectly equipped computers to be visualized and enjoyed by a few users interested in this type of digital art. They had to access these multimedia pieces by buying them "blindly," because their content would not be revealed until the CD-ROM was unpacked and placed on a computer with a compatible operating system. With these limitations and difficulties, and before it was possible to create a consumer culture of interactive multimedia art pieces, came the development of a new Internet much more capable and powerful, which, through new Flash technology, managed to assume and disseminate online—and also offline—artistic interactive multimedia productions.

Unfortunately, one of the great tragedies of early digital artworks is that they were realized using software like Director. These were not—or have never been—compatible with the present open languages of programming, which is the reason why we have not been able to make translations and updates in order to make them accessible on the Web. Thus, today, stories narrated through multimedia and user-created interaction using programs like Director and programmed through its Lingo language can no longer be visualized or navigated through. The preservation of the multisensorial experience of Fred Adam's *Sotos*, has only been possible through the recovery of the original files, and its subsequent reprogramming—thanks to the magic and the talent of several expert programmers—taking access to a strong economic investment. It was worth it, no doubt.

Thus, the question of the preservation and subsequent restoration of such pieces of Media Art from the 1990s is not a trivial matter. Therefore, it requires commitment and responsibility on the part of the institutions to ensure that they are not irremissibly lost—or, which is basically the same, that it is no longer possible to access their contents.

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