

Herbert HRACHOVEC

***From Maulbertsch to MMORPGs.
On Digital Cross-Media Entertainment***

Impressive baroque frescos adorn the ceilings of a number of churches and palaces in Bavaria and in the realm of the former Hapsburg monarchy, Franz Maulbertsch being one of the era's most prestigious painters, who created several masterpieces on what is nowadays Hungarian territory. His frescos in the girl's college in Eger have recently been transformed into a video animation by an Austrian artist, Thomas Steiner. Juxtaposing those frescoes with contemporary technology highlights the issue of 20th century artistic „advances“ vis a vis the historical background of painted masterpieces.

Meanwhile, however, the grandeur of pictorial celestial transactions has been supplanted by the trappings of cyberspace and the most recent instances of heavenly visual play are to be found in MMORPGs (Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game) such as „City of Heroes. City of Villains“ developed by Cryptic Studios and published by NCsoft. „An MMORPG differs from a regular computer role playing game because its environment is perpetual. People log on, join the game, take on their role and leave whenever they wish, but the game continues.“ (<http://www.answers.com/topic/mmorpg>) Such games show telecommunication at its cutting edge, synchronising and synthesizing thousands of participants in a playful, ongoing, imaginary war. While virtual communities have been investigated extensively, the implications of comprehensive, closed-circuit, participatory video-interaction on a global scale deserve closer attention. Those baroque extravaganzas in 18th-century cupolas might be a good place to start.

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