Multicultural Videos: An Interactive Online Museum Based On An International Artistic Video Database

Jorge Mora Fernández
MEC/Fulbright /USC Interactive Media
Postdoctoral Researcher
315 S. Virgil Avenue Apt. 301
Los Angeles, CA 90020, USA
+1 858 335 1223
info@multiculturalvideos.org

ABSTRACT
Multicultural Videos (MCV), www.multiculturalvideos.org, is an Interactive Online Museum based on an Online Video Database developed by an International Community of Artists from many creative disciplines and cultural heritage. MCV is an online space where people share, create, learn and promote culture, arts, cultural heritage and self-expressions through on-line videos. The project is designed initially to support two vibrant applications: a Virtual Video Gallery to collect Multicultural Heritage & a Collaborative Video Festival titled “Art Without Borders: The Babel Remix”, about similarities and differences on creative processes around the World.

Categories and Subject Descriptors
H.4.3. [Information Systems Applications]:Communications Video Applications. Artistic Video Database.
J.4. [Computer Applications]: Social & Behavioral Sciences, Sociology, & Arts and Humanities, Multidisciplinary Arts.
K.3.2 [Computer Milieux]: Computers & Information Science Education. Videoblogging Literacy & Computer Science Education.

General Terms
Management, Documentation, Design, Experimentation, Human Factors, Languages, Theory, Legal Aspects.

Keywords
Multiculturalism, Interactive Museum, Multimedia Cultural Heritage Database, Remix Culture, Collaborative Videos.

1. MAIN THESIS PROJECT
The main thesis of this project, www.multiculturalvideos.org, is to show how an art focused web site and an online video editing tool can serve the development of worldwide collaborative creative projects and cultural heritage conservation. Multicultural Videos demonstrates how people sharing creativity, and distributing it with on-line videos, see Figure 1 visual concept, can inspire new users to share their arts and creative talents while improving the content and software tools like in collaborative projects experienced by Schaefer M. [1] and the MIT’s Interactive Cinema Group [2]. In that sense, MCV through its Gallery and Remix tool is experiencing that bigger immersive phenomenon that happens when two or more human beings share their creativity; a breakthrough in cultural, psychological, emotional and linguistic barriers, like Multiplayer Experiences such Toontown [3] and Emotional Videogames[4] do. The goal of the thematic Festival “Art Without Borders: The Babel Remix” is to develop remixes based on the gallery database, and new uploads, to create a higher coherent narrative based on the users constructive interactions, as I. Moreno defines [5], and their collective creative conscience, see on-line successful experiences Meadows’ interviews [6]. That is why the secondary thesis of this project is demonstrating that it is possible to create coherent interactive collaborative video narratives based on submissions from an online community and database of artistic contents.

Finally, MCV is a free multicultural resource for learning about arts from different parts of the World, for conserving cultural heritage, for expressing yours personal talents through video, for creating audiovisual discourses through the online editing tool, and for developing innovative, multicultural and collective emerging artworks, following C. Pierce observations [7].

2. CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIELD OF THE INTERACTIVE ON-LINE MUSEUMS
Although there are many interesting web based projects focusing on the development of virtual galleries (including the Saatchi Gallery, New Art TV, Rhizome: the Art network or the Citrus Gallery by the Croquet Consortium…), none of them is focused...
on the integration of emerging and established artists with the exploration of their technical and creative processes in video, the interested reader can refer to the additional bibliographies in Annex #1 for a complete description of researched webs. In that sense, MCV is a free democratic video tool available to any type of artist from any background that wants to share their talents with the rest of the world. This is a contemporary social phenomenon that the “Converge of Culture”, like Jenkins describes, is producing [8]. MCV provides direct access between creators, curators, museums, and galleries through the contact info provided by the artists at the end of each video on the gallery and on the remixes.

This project is also unique because no other interactive online museum presents the option of collectively remixing the contents of the gallery database. This project’s initial festival “Art Without Borders: The Babel Remix”, was inspired by the concept of collective interactive narrative, like the exquisite corpse structure of surrealist poems and paintings, and the study of the similarities and the originalities of each culture and art discipline around the world. J. Campbell [9] pioneer on cross-cultural researchers, defended the idea of how every culture has its cultural ritual of creative innovation. Part of the goal of this project is to share the remix of cultures and inspire additional worldwide projects, exhibitions, and educational tools in traditional and contemporary arts via online editing and distribution. For this festival, the best remixes and the latest artistic videos will serve as a model for the development of exhibitions in different countries showing the latest updates of the MCV collective artwork in progress. In this way, the exhibitions from one place to another will change based on the latest interactions of artists uploading their videos, and the new video-artists, editors and co-authors remixing them.

### 3. PROJECT INTRO AND MOTIVATIONS

Multicultural Videos grows from the interest in researching constructive interactions following the I. Moreno [5] concept related to online videos. My primary research interest is focused on how to apply interface and narrative design to invite users to become creators, like C. Pierce[7] describes, through constructive interactions.

The main hypothesis of MCV is that there is a common ground between the motivations, principles, emotions and inspirations that drive independent artists from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds to express through the arts. MCV also embraces an interest in the commonalities of audiovisual language that emerges from the conjunction of myths, icons, techniques, art and crafts, etc., of different cultures since the artistic audiovisual database and remixes will grow through time. That common ground can show us a lot about the human perception and psychological immersion that invite people, from different cultures, to interact constructively within a multidirectional communicative system, which adapts to human cultural and perceptual ergonomics, see [10] Moreno-Muñoz. The primary research interest is focused on investigating the constructive interactions, which generate contents through user participations. These constructive interactions motivate an emerging generation of online video creators to upload and remix video clips. Specifically, Multicultural Videos is inspired by emerging social habits and by the increased interests in the development of constructive interactions related to online videos. This phenomenon is considered to be an expression of shifting social practices enabled by the potential of self-expression and interactive audiovisual literacy, with significant consequences for the evolution of culture and communications, Manovich L. [11].

In that sense, MCV develops an experimental creative social space where a collaborative festival based on narrative open rules, where the players can propose rules, Zimmerman [12], video content, and free online editing tools can invite participants to share their creative processes and interests. An open narrative & embracing theme such as “Art Without Borders: The Babel Remix”, and a compelling online editing tool, based on [http://eyespot.com/mixables/ArtsWithoutBordersTheBabelRemix](http://eyespot.com/mixables/ArtsWithoutBordersTheBabelRemix), invite participants to develop their own meaningful content, like Pierce researches within MMOG [13], within the open genre of experimental video creation. Once the project will be launched widely the proposal of weekly upload and remix themes will invite a diversity of styles, interests and narratives.

### 4. MAIN RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions underline the conception of the www.multiculturalvideos.org project:

- What do motivate artists to share their creative material to another artist or creators to remix it?
- How the collective artwork and the work in progress are overcoming the traditional individual processes of art creation?
- How can open interactive narrative rules encourage the participation, through improving the flow of the experience, Csíkszentmihályi [14] on the creation of a collaborative video?
- What are the creative and critical questions that would come from the encounter of the individual artistic egos with the collective reinterpretation of the remix culture?
- How demythologizing the creative process can help artists to have more objective feedback and creative improvement of their arts while inviting traditional users to lose the fear to show their creativity?
- How do dynamic Internet tools serve the creation of collaborative narrative videos?
- Is it possible to create a coherent, collaborative narrative composed of short video clips from different directors, like different Future Cinema researches suggested [15]?
- What are the relationships between the creative processes of independent video artists and videobloggers?.
- How can we motivate videobloggers interested in art to record and upload their own videos or artistic friends videos?
- What kind of on-line editing tools are most popular and effective for teaching arts and on-line audiovisual literacy?

### 5. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The interactive essence of Multicultural Videos is functioning as an online gallery and remix tool for international artists, curators, video makers, editors, art professors and students as well as other users interested in the arts. The project is designed initially to support two specific collective spaces: a Virtual Video Gallery & a Collaborative Video Festival.

The Multicultural Videos Virtual Gallery supports an international community of artists in the creation of an online exhibition space. In this gallery, video artists may share their arts and talents internationally with the public, curators, exhibitors, and museums.
In the MCV Virtual Video Gallery artists from any discipline: dance, sculpture, new media, painting, arts-and-crafts, cinema, architecture... upload videos that are a maximum 100 Megabytes each. This will allow authors to show their best creations, techniques, creative motivations, processes, backgrounds and special experiences.

The Collaborative Video Festival will sponsor “Art Without Borders: The Babel Remix” For this festival, an international community of video mixers (video artists, editors, amateurs, etc.) will be invited to remix their favorite artists within the MCV gallery database. They can remix the database using the MCV Virtual Video Gallery Videos and/or by adding their own contributions related to the contest theme. The best remixes will be chosen by the viewers and a professional jury, to become part of the collective feature “Art Without Borders”, a internationally collaborative video creation about independent arts and creative processes around the World.

In terms of the web distribution, MCV has a partnership with Eyespot to use their remix & publishing tools following the next future strategies:
- To give the users the possibility of personalize videos, making them personal, and allowing them to publish or to send their favorite videos or remixes to other videoblog websites, through email, and to mobiles.
- To let the users to download videos to their computers to develop advance remixes with other offline editing and effects software.
- To empower the users to share their experiences posting their comments and rates on our website.
- To develop a collaborative Festival proposing new themes through time to motivate new remixes.
- To promote other related communities on our website and including international galleries and curators contact interested in World arts.
- To encourage the users not to bury what they have got. Since the website embrace both consolidated artists and new talents all creative video tentative will be welcome.

5.1 Interface Design Evolution

Since the MCV project embraces different type of users it mainly synthesizes on two types of navigation approaches: browsing/contemplation and interaction/creation, the web site had several iterative designs to achieve the best immersion and participation of the potential users. We identify three type of main users with different motivations: online video watchers, artists videobloggers, interested in showing and distributing their artworks, and remixers, looking for quality and creative video material to develop their artistic mixes. These roles and motivations are exchanged by the same users depending on the moment of their type of interaction, moment on the visit or how familiar they are with the website and the remix tools. In that sense a clean, creative but functional design was the goal.

The first design, Figure 2, was looking for icons to invite to the exploration of the web’s functionality using a mix of symbolic and mysterious design on its buttons. We were looking for the artistic value around the main attraction, the central video. In Figure 3, we were looking for keeping the attention even more on the central video approaching the buttons as well as introducing thumbnails at the bottom to develop a fast navigation through the videos to get a good taste about the main content.
The look and feel of the final MCV website design, Figure 4, is a functional user-friendly space with some artistic iconic and symbolic touches, mix that Meadows [6] and Moreno [5] suggest. Visitors can have a first quick idea of the main core and goals of the website through the text intro, the main central video displaying the last artistic video uploaded in the gallery, and the video menus available through the thumbnails at the bottom of the videoplayer.

Basically, in terms of flow, the first thing that grabs our attention on Figure 4 is the artistic video, giving importance to the last artist who uploaded his/her video; the second thing are the thumbnails, to provide an introductory experience of the content, the third thing are the columns of buttons left and right that display further functionalities, to have a more immersive experience, uploading, remixing and learning the how.

In summary, we aligned and simplified the icons to provide direct access to the complex content and to make functionality clearly understood. The bottom tabs and thumbnails are organized on functional and content pairs, the last upload and the most view of the gallery, and the last remix and the most view of the collective festival. They offer a whole view of the video sections. We placed on the left the buttons for artists to upload and check the gallery, and for remixers to reedit and participate on the festival. On the right columns, the buttons for new users that wanted to improve their experience are available, so after having watched the videos offered at the bottom by the thumbnails and tabs they can access them easily. On this last version, the iconic-symbolic buttons are more push [5], encrypted, although balanced on their communicability through animations activated just doing a mouse roll over, which shows the complementary texts to clarify their functions. They are push buttons waiting for the user to explore. We offer on them basic functionalities for the different type of users who want to immerse themselves on the MCV project, watching, uploading and remixing videos. In general terms, the left column are dedicated buttons to display functions for artists an remixers, while the right columns serve to basic complementary tasks like showing how, contact, search, and an audiovisual trailer synthesizing the conceptual spirit of the project.

All the navigation is simplified and accessible from the home page, so the user can focus on the artistic video content, and on the remix tools. The design avoids any visual noise, which breaks the design ergonomics [10] as well as provides all the needed tools at hand. All that is what makes the main page a pull interface even using some push buttons. These can be easily explored and used by any age, from children to adults, while the communicability design quality and interest is kept. This innovative and simple design also supports the future applications of this tool for teaching contemporary and traditional universal arts and audiovisual editing within high-schools [19]. Multicultural Videos thereby recognizes established independent artists as well as first-time participants who are interested in becoming video artists. This concept opens the possibilities of participation to new talents [8] of any age.

5.2 Web Functionality

We have seen the main web in the Figure 4. These section pictures represents samples of how other parts of the MCV websites will work, like the Uploader, Figure 5, the automatic video display on the main web and on the Online Gallery, Figure 6 and 7, the remix tool, Figure 8, and the Festival, Figure 9. Once the Uploader compresses the video, Figure 5, the last uploaded video automatically appears at the bottom, on the thumbnails at the tab of “Gallery Recent Uploads”, playing it on the main page, Figure 6. These designs have been developed looking for a functional user friendly interface [6] for artists and viewers from all ages, see Annex 1 for analyzed and related web sites.

When artists upload videos they will be also automatically available on the Gallery, Figure 7, and on MCV Free Media Set of the Festival for the festival “Art Without Borders: The Babel Remix”, Figure 9, and on the Remix tool, Figure 8. The user will remix videos from MCV gallery using the Eyespot editing tool and publishing them online.

![Figure 5. The Uploader allows any video format of 100 Mbs](image)

![Figure 6. MCV Home Page plays automatically the last upload video and make the most popular available through the tabs.](image)
The Latest Remix will be published on the MCV Web Site automatically on the “Festival Last Remixes”, third tab of the Figure 6. The updated MCV main page will show then the most recent uploaded videos, remixes, most viewed, and selected collaborative videos for the festival “Art Without Borders: The Babel Remix”.

The open narrative used on the Festival, Figure 9, is a science fiction narrative where “Earth’s Artists, Creators and Remixers” collaborate, submitting artistic videos and cultural remixes, to demonstrate that multiculturalism is possible on Planet Earth. These video collaborations will grant the Earth as a new member of the ICEC, “The Interplanetary Cultural Exchange Consortium”.

There are several remix examples, on the Festival Gallery, that shows the differences, similarities, originalities and reinterpretations of art disciplines and cultures, Figure 10. These remixes are also both displayed on the main page of MCV and on the Mixable Site of Eyespot reaching more users on that way.

5.3 Technical Flow Chart

The following graphic, Figure 11, describes how Multicultural Videos is using the Remix Tool & Video Hosting Eyespot technology, how it is technically integrated and what will be the user’s flow experience and navigation.
6. USER FEEDBACK

6.1 Process Description

Although on August 2008 is on early stage and a lot is being developed, since the beginning of the project there were conducted studies of users feedback to ensure MCV was fulfilling a socio-cultural need. Interviews have been conducted and users feedback observations, taking into account all suggestions from objective users. The developed methodology had been based on two strategies. One of them based on personal interviews and workshops: a) showing the project and b) asking for their opinions and perspectives on the different areas: design, content and functionality. The second strategy has been continuing users feedback sent through the Web contact link, where there is a user feedback form, which goes directly to the Multicultural Videos email, so the MCV Website can be progressively improved.

The following comments are a collection of the most meaningful feedbacks, 58, so far, from a variety of independent artists, interactive museums professionals, interactive media creators and professors after presenting to them the MCV project, its digital video gallery and its collaborative video remixer.

It has been found the majority of the feedbacks very useful since they brought new perspectives to the project that were not think about. It also helped in doing several iterations at the level of design, around 10, and at the level of programming, 5 completed in total. The last updated version will be launched soon.

6.2 Summary of Positive General Comments

- It will be great for video artists to find resources and also for Video Djs to collaborate with independent musicians.
- It is genius! That is a perfect tool for creating collaborations between artists, museums and for curators looking for new artists.
- This can serve for the promotion of artisans from developing countries and create new markets for them.

- It is an easy and useful tool to learn to edit and motivate creativity, especially for young adults.
- The idea is really good, and what I have seen works well. The fact of creating links between people from distant geographical spaces and of unifying them through an artistic creation, I believe, can generate very interesting results.

6.3 Summary of suggestions for developing better designs and programming

- First develop the functional tools with an attractive and easy design to attract the users and then add more functionalities through time, a web site like this it is a continuous work in process. If you build, they will come!
- The design & functionality of the Website is meant to attract creative minds. Simple is better. It is an experimental website.
- To create a more immersive interface experience, focus the interface design on the central artistic videos.
- You should create a tab menu at the bottom, with the best and last artistic videos and remixes, to easily show the type of contents MCV offers.
- To create user comments and rating based on trust, so people who are more active within the community will get more credit and power to moderate contents than the occasional visitors.
- To develop an advance search tool based on the MCV database to search by the name, country and different tags details.
- To develop an automatic video subtitle and a contact info tool.

6.4 Summary of suggestions for building a better MCV community

- The community will tell you what they want. Create a framework for the community and based on the feedback you will build the rest. It is like a city you build the best you can and improve it with the citizen suggestions and needs.
- The MCV web site community design will grow as the community grows based on their requirements following the Web 2.0 strategies, so you will need to include more user’s rates, tags, annotating, commenting and publishing on several blogs.
- Promote on the main page the last uploads, best rated, and/or meaningful user-personalized content.
- Use widgets to include ratings and to distribute to other social networking sites.
- Embedded buttons within the player to send and publish their favorite to mobile, email, web, etc.
- Create contests or festivals to motivate the users to share their creative entries.
- Promote communities to connect people creating an email list of artists and curators to announce the launch, updates and news of the project.
- Promote independent groups to form around the content provided, videobloggs or art critics, director’s discussions and message boards, etc.
- Once you have a lot of videos it will be great to include a page with links to an international collection of galleries and museums as well as curator organizations.
- To develop several thematic festivals for each artistic discipline to connect and communicate artists and curators.
- To develop advanced search tools for finding aesthetic and narrative content related videos.

7. FUTURE CONTRIBUTIONS AND PROSPECTIVE APPLICATIONS

**Multicultural Videos** will also contribute by generating new audiences and satisfying the entertainment & cultural needs of today’s multicultural digital World: the browsing/contemplation and the interaction/creation. In order to improve the next MCV web generation and keep satisfying those habits, an observation of the user feedbacks will be done thought the online questionnaire provided on the contact page and though the interactions with the uploaded and the remixes videos. That will also provide some info about the questions: What do motivates artists to contribute their material to other unknown artists to remix them? How are the relationships between artists, users, and remixers through time using the MCV project? How the limits on the roles of each user’s type change through the visits?

In brief, other MCV’s contributions to the field will be:
- To encourage cultural heritage collection and exchange and collaboration among artists, curators, educators, students and art lovers, so they can share a collective vision of the social and cultural contexts, where participants develop their artworks. The first benefit is that curators will be able to connect easily with international artists, and to evolve globally their network for future exhibitions, collaborations and conferences. Meanwhile, this set of collaborative tools generates a context for multidirectional communications where independent artists can develop a productive cultural dialogue, which will inspire new creations.
- To innovate the organization of online audiovisual production by developing collaborative videos about cultural habits, creative processes & techniques around the world.
- To distribute the work of independent artists worldwide and to celebrate the cultural diversity of online videos. To generate an extended network markets among independent artistic curators, artists and investors.
- The Multicultural Videos interactive museum, by virtue of its wealth of content and technical simplicity, serves as a functional tool for teaching while playing, see Gee’s concept [19], contemporary and traditional world arts, audiovisual communication literacy or interactive cinematic courses at universities, community colleges and centers for secondary level education, such as high schools. The free online collaborative editing tool helps to satisfy and improve the high-priority educational the Unesco has underline on the areas of Communication & Information: the online & audiovisual communications, and the local conservation and the global diffusion with respect and understanding of the World cultures.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Multicultural Videos is becoming through its constant implementations a more efficient “Cultural Heritage Multimedia Database and On-line Museum”, which serves to the educational dialog and the artistic collaboration between creators, curators, galleries and educators. Some of the research questions have been answered while another need longer user interactions, time and web technical improvement to be complete answered. MCV has attracted several artists on its offline presentations and online demonstrations. Artists have been posting videos on the gallery and the remix festival even before it has been launched, during its alpha version. Some authors has been asking for a video camera to record and to participate including their artistic talents. MCV has been also providing with technical and educational support on its itinerant exhibitions and workshops; already presented in Los Angeles, USA, at the “Push Start” exhibition, Division of Interactive Media, University of Southern California; in Cusco, Peru, at the “Qorikancha: Inca’s Temple of the Sun”; and in September 2008, at the Dpto. CAPV II, Facultad de Ciencias de la Información, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain.

MCV has also demonstrated so far that, in terms of aesthetics, it is able of creating simple coherent visual discourses and collaborations based on different video submissions, to see several examples visit the Festival at www.multiculturalvideos.org. The main theme of the Festival “Art Without Borders” will embrace, through time, the results of a more advance narrative coherence, and more complex creative relationships between cultural contents. All the videos will show in their credits the artists and participants who were part of the festival. The new mixes and montages will also give credit to the artists who provided the original videos for each version. The accumulation of authors on the credits at the remixes develops a new way of distribution of the artistic videos from the gallery, since people who are interested in certain authors could always see the original clips visiting them at the gallery or at the festival remix.

MCV already creates a multicultural dialog and cultural heritage preservation based on artistic videos that show their collection of visual, mental, and creative representations, techniques and values. These motivate the constructive interactions build on traditional and emerging forms of artistic practices, offline and online. We are currently living in a genuinely global media ecology, in which MCV aims to facilitate a multicultural creative dialog based on audiovisual communications. The online video gallery can serve to overcome some communication barriers and to find similarities through the human need of communicating feelings, different cultural visions of the world and cosmologies through the arts. At the same time, an online collaborative game experience experimenting on interactive collaborative cinematic narrative is built through the creation of the collective video festival “Art Without Borders: The Babel Remix”.

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10. REFERENCES


11. ANNEX #1: WEB REFERENCES

Table 1

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