

Mixed-realities: opening the Beijing Olympics

This paper explores the typologies of mixed-reality used in the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics as a lens through which to create discourse on the human / technological interplays which unfolded during this event. These new media strategies will be discussed in relation to the socio-cultural, political and creative landscape of New China.

A contemporary, performative, mixed-reality paradigm is described in an examination of strategies embodied in the use of physical scrolls, large format screens, and mass choreographed content to create dynamic scenes reminiscent of computer information visualisations. Moreover, dramatic shifts in scale (a typical Chinese convention), used in this case, to purposefully create confusion between people and pixels, are critiqued in relation to democracy, power, ownership and control. The play on historical and future narratives through the use of design and ritual is also considered. This paper is in essence an investigation into the digital tropes of cloning, repetition and geometric patterns connecting ideas of social and technological conformity, and Chinese notions of authenticity, in ways that do not necessarily play out as they do in 'Western' cultures.

Finally, the tensions between digital virtuality and physical materiality within the spectacle will also be explored - wherein reflections on these two states are manifest through the use of wearable technologies, choreographed movement and traditional dress. These strategies are summarised in a consideration of the thinking behind the use of digital enhancements in the telecast.