

GLINT: AUDIOVISUAL GLITCHES

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Abstract

This paper explores the idea of glitch through an audiovisual project called *Glint* and how the concept of glitch can be marked as a manifestation of digital culture.

Glint is a 3-minute video project that combines digital typography and sound design via the concept of “glitch,” conducted as a part of an ongoing PhD study [1]. The study researches occurring patterns between two domains that would imply an existing ideology of digital culture. Glitch as a malfunction and a drawback occurring in the system manifests the existence of technology, media used and the implemented interface. It occurs as a common ground and an intermediary in both visual and aural domains.

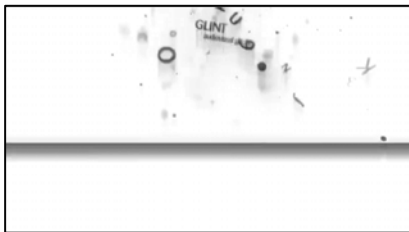


Fig. 1. Screenshot from the title sequence of *Glint* video. (© Funda Senova Tunali.)

The essential motive for choosing a theme that resonates with the idea of error and malfunction is to trace a possible pattern occurring in both domains. The project was conducted in a digital environment by using image editing software, motion graphics and compositing software, music production software, audio editor and various plug-ins.

Naming the project *Glint* has several purposes. The name *Glint* carries multiple connotations with it, *glint's* meaning being “a glimpse, glance or gleam,” “a tiny quick flash of light” and “a brief or slight manifestation or occurrence” indicate more than just a phonetical resemblance with the word *glitch* [2]. A glitch occurs as a momentary manifestation within the system and disappears afterwards; it is unexpected, unpredictable and has a shocking effect. The video



Fig. 2. Screenshot from the *Glint* video. (© Funda Senova Tunali.)

Glint suggests such an experience—a narrative that is shaped by assigning glitch-alikes, which give significance and contribute to the context of the composed audio and visual materials. Glitch as a manifestation does not effect the content and its organization; however, it affects the viewing experience intensely. A glitch creates momentary alienation while creating an uncanny effect and conveying information about the media that it is manifested on. A glitch that occurs in a system diverts the attention of the user/viewer/participant, troubles him/her and results in a discomfoting experience. *Glint's* aim is to produce an audiovisual experience that is stimulating and intriguing via the use of constructed glitch-alikes, which would not cause such a discomfoting experience.

The number of artists exercising the concept of glitch in visual and aural domains is increasing. Some artists work with pure glitches by forcing the tools to generate them, while others work with glitch-alikes mainly by synthesizing them. Iman Moradi stated that “[i]n forcing a visual glitch, there is an element of unpredictability that makes experimentation worthwhile and rewarding” [3]. In such manner, it is worth noting that there are various ways of achieving glitches and glitch-alikes; furthermore, both pure glitches and glitch-alikes demand excessive experimentation. The designers who are working with the concept of glitch should be very well aware of the processing tools, such as computer hardware and software, and should have a clear grasp of the significance and operation of these structures not just as tools but also as materials that enhance the interactivity of the user/viewer/participant.

The *Glint* project was composed by

using glitch-alikes. Although glitches are undesired occurrences, the video project tries to challenge this understanding by adding the concept of intentionality, thus transforming the notion of glitch into a design element. In a designed piece, every element consistently carries intentionality. Since design is a problem-solving activity, accident or coincidence within a work are not acceptable in terms of design decisions. Design is a conscious activity, since the whole process is shaped by those decisions made by the designer. Moreover, if the objective within a work is to achieve an expression that looks accidental, then it is solely based on the pure consciousness of the designer. Hence, considering *Glint*, using glitches as design elements within the project brings a variant viewing experience that forms the audiovisual continuity and consistency throughout the video. Selecting a common theme such as glitch that can be applied and has already manifested itself in both domains serves as a relating aspect that forms a common audiovisual language, which is based on same principles. Thus, *Glint* is also based on the intentionality of the designer, although it tries to create a sense of ghost in the machine that has its own logic, operating system and out-of-control feeling.

When visual glitches are generated by designers, they are considered glitch-alikes because of their mimicry of pure glitches and their production methods [4]. They are the calculated, designed, formed, synthesized, faked and interpreted forms of malfunctions that are generated by the system accidentally. So *Glint* becomes absolutely not a project that is formed by the compilation of pure glitches. It imitates the visual and the auditory characteristics of glitches on a

conscious level to present an alternative viewing and listening experience.

Glint tries to address the representational status quo of technology, digital media and the culture's reception and reflection of it. It attempts to represent the signifiers of digital media by implementing hypermediacy, by which the user/viewer/participant is always reminded of the existence of the medium that the content is offered through. Instead of creating an immersive and immediate experience, it is constructed upon the principle of hypermediacy, where the user is always made aware of the technology—in a sense made aware of the window/display with which s/he uses to reach out to the content by remediating the data as a conscious decision made, using a fault, a drawback of that very same digital technology. The glitches act as actualizations of many possible manifestations, which the user of digital technologies can encounter any time.

The analysis of *Glint* is aimed at revealing similar patterns of production, development, distribution, and consumption. When the project is broken up into pieces and analyzed, each part can be considered as a system with which assumptions can be made about a larger system that encompasses the relatively small ones.

The analysis of the project consists of the study of the preparation, growth of research, accessing and processing knowledge, generation of ideas, making of sketches and storyboards, transformation of such ideas into visual and audio materials, the software and hardware used in this process, the association of these software, the GUI that the designer and the viewer are confronted with throughout the process, compilation of the audio and video tracks, distribution

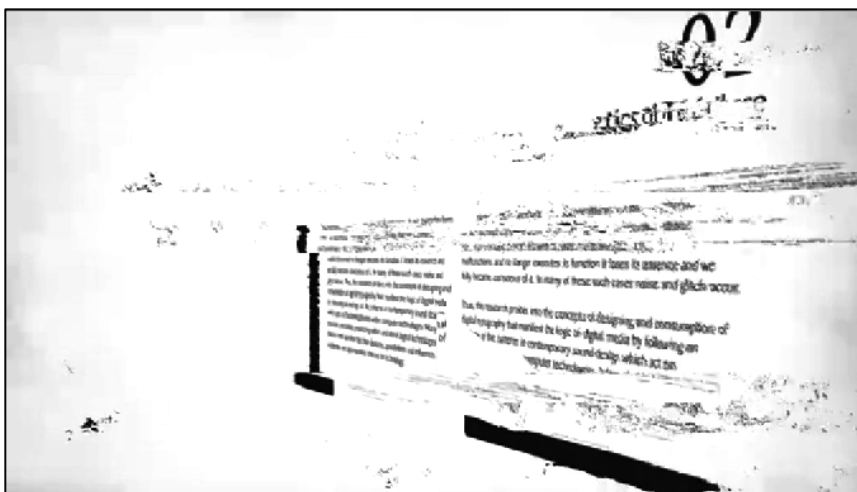


Fig. 3. Screenshot from the *Glint* video. (© Funda Senova Tunali.)

channels and means, the distributed signifiers, the relationship between these signifiers and the status quo, people who consume this project by accessing, watching and reflecting on it, and the culture that is originated by these consumers. The analysis of each of these stages and elements is aimed at manifesting the digital culture, which has its own rules and ideology—thus, has an operational logic.

Digital culture is shaped by the role of the designer; the assumed responsibility that s/he undertakes, the equipment used in achieving this goal, the distribution channels and the ways in which the production is utilized and consumed are different indicators of digital culture. So the process from the production to the consumption of the project indicates what Manovich calls a *cultural interface*, where people can interact with data through the use of computers [5]. Although the video itself is a complete, closed form where no additional data can be used once it is finished and rendered, the way that is produced, distributed and

accessed are designations of open forms and they welcome feedback mechanisms. Thus, it also has implications of interactivity and participation. To this extent, *Glint* manifests itself not just as an audiovisual project but also as a project pinpointing the continuum from production to consumption of digital outputs.

References and Notes

1. An extended version of this paper appears as a sub-chapter of a PhD dissertation that will be submitted to Bilkent University, Institute of Fine Arts, Department of Graphic Design.
2. Dictionary.com <www.dictionary.com>, accessed July 2010.
3. I. Moradi, A. Scott, J. Gilmore & C. Murphy *Glitch: Designing Imperfection* (New York: Mark Batty Publisher, 2009) p. 9.
4. I. Moradi, *Glitch Aesthetics* (UK: University of Huddersfield, 2004) p. 8.
5. C-O. Wong, K. Jung and J. Yoon, "Interactive Art: The Art that Communicates," *Leonardo* 42, No: 2, 180-181 (2009).
6. L. Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2001).

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