

ArsMeteo: Artworks and Tags Floating over the Planet Art*

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we present *ArsMeteo*^o, a Web 2.0 portal for collecting and sharing digital (or digitalized) artworks, like videos, pictures, poems and music. The *ArsMeteo*^o contents are enriched with a variety of meanings by the tagging activity of all users of the community, both authors and visitors. In this setting, innovative artistic approaches to tagging and tag-based browsing has been thought in order to create a dynamic and fertile background for artistic experimentation and cooperative artistic creation.

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1. OVERVIEW

ArsMeteo^o (<http://www.arsmeteo.org>) is a new art portal for sharing artworks and their emerging, connective meanings. It is inspired by an idea of the artist *Giorgio Vaccarino* and opens with a planetary vision of the Earth Planet flown over by evolving clouds of words and images. The main aim of the project is to create a new space for a community of artists and art lovers, where a great variety of *up-to-date* contents about art and culture may converge, and where artists can find a dynamic, interactive and fertile background for *artistic experimentation* and *cooperative artistic creation*. Another aim is to create a background for the growing of a new artistic culture by using new technologies. Without any intermediation, artists can interact on the same artwork, simultaneously; thus different ages, cultures, languages, ways of life can merge and generate a new level of composite culture. The web platform combines innovative social tagging and tag-based browsing technology with functionalities for

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Figure 1: The ArsMeteo portal entrance.

collecting, accessing and presenting works of art together with their meanings. Other Web 2.0 art portals explore the experience of social tagging and folksonomy in the context of art museums [3, 2], aiming mainly at creating digital archives and certifying the existence of artists and artworks which are already known in the art-system.

ArsMeteo^o goes one step beyond. It enables the collection of digital (or digitalized) artworks and performances, belonging to a variety of artistic forms including poems, videos, pictures and musical compositions. Meanings are given by the tagging activity of the community. All contents are accessible as “digital commons”. Artists and visitors may express their own reception and meanings about the works of art by annotating them with words (*tags*): semantic references, mental associations, descriptive attributes, emotions, insights [1]. Users can rate the relevance of tag-artifact relations, by clicking on the plus and minus symbols next to the tag. Such rating activity allows the system to associate a weight to a tag related to a given artifact, which will affect the ranking of search results. Even though the meanings given by the tagging activity are intrinsically anarchist, the social dynamics of the collection of tags spontaneously leads to the emerging of common patterns, and then to the aris-

ing of relations of similarity between artworks which form the *ArsMeteo*^o *folksonomy*. Currently, the portal gathers a collection of about 5.870 artifacts produced by over 216 (mainly) living artists, it has received almost 140.000 visits within less than two years (currently about 300 hits per day), and it has collected over 30.000 tags (an average of 13 tags per artwork).

The tagging activity of the community provides a basis for browsing the works of arts and finding new unexpected relations among artists and artworks. The browsing experience is different from time to time: new artworks and meanings can be added anytime, so the connections continuously change, reflecting the evolution of the community and its latent perception of a sort of impermanent “zeitgeist”. Moreover, traditional tag-based browsing has been re-interpreted in various ways according to different innovative *navigation metaphors*. Users can choose to browse the contents according to a rather standard tag-based navigation or according to the experimental navigation metaphors respectively called *Art Time Machine*, *Argonaut* and *Serendipity*, briefly depicted below.

This dynamic environment naturally engenders constructive contexts, where users can invent new forms of trans-individual artistic actions and reflections. In the last year we already observed the emerging of *artistic group actions*. New artifacts have been created by collecting, recycling and recontextualizing fragments of artworks from different users and from different media or instances. Different users synchronized their creative potential and generated new artworks and languages building upon (or reinventing) contents: new poems were created as rivers of words by the simultaneous and interactive tagging activity of many users; a new visual alphabet (*Alfameteo*) emerged by reinterpreting some artworks as alphabetic letters; in “The table of Niépce” series, many authors started to play, again by using digital technologies, an artistic game of collective painting, which was invented in 1979. Finally, the community gave spontaneously rise to a reflection on the evergreen question: what is art? The tag-answers to this artwork-question are changing and floating like the community minds.

2. ARSMETEO LAB: NAVIGATION

In the last year, in the section *ArsMeteo*^o *Lab* of the web portal, we experimented various folksonomy-based artifact searching methods which refer to different navigation metaphors and are briefly reported below.

Tag cloud driven navigation: users browse contents by accessing a search page, where a tag cloud visualizes the most used tags of the folksonomy. When clicking on a tag T , the user accesses a page, whose left side contains previews of the artifacts tagged by T . Such results can be browsed page by page and are ranked, taking into account the relevance rating. On the right side, a new tag cloud, made of all the other tags related to the retrieved artifacts and tagged by T , is reported. This interface opens the navigation to new unexpected connections with other artifacts, described by the new related tags, but not literally by T . See [1] for details.

The Art Time Machine: the whole *ArsMeteo*^o archive, which consists not only of tagged artworks but also of forum posts and events, can be accessed by year. This historical view was advocated and very appreciated by the community, since it allows an historical perspective of the overall art-

related activity performed on the portal. It creates the basis for a sort of “History of the *ArsMeteo*^o Art”.

Serendipity: users can find resources without performing an explicit and systematic search. When a user chooses a graphical artifact, the starting point of the search, the system puts a preview of such resource at the center of the search page. Then, the artwork is encircled by the previews of 24 graphical resources randomly chosen among all those which are tag-related with the initial choice. The user can then continue to browse by clicking on one of the surrounding resources: the serendipity game restarts by putting the new resource at the center of the page. Notice that here the interface does not show tags: they can be visualized and inserted again only by accessing the presentation page for a specific resource.

Argonaut: the idea is to visualize by *ArsMeteo*^o artworks the evocative power of (poetic) sentences and text. The user starts by writing a sentence on the proper text area. Thus artworks tagged by words occurring in the sentence drop down from the top of the page. They stop below the user text, by enriching it with a new visual awesomeness.

3. COMMUNITY

ArsMeteo^o started in a national context: most of the users are Italian, contemporary artists. Authors of the uploaded resources appreciate *ArsMeteo*^o both as historical archive of their artistic work and as a space for sharing, discussing and experimenting new form of collaborative actions. The community is very active in describing contents by tags; currently, each artworks has an average of 13 tags (we call this number *descriptivity index*). Since the community is growing very fast, in order to give it the time to get acquainted with the new contents and give feedbacks by tagging (keep the descriptivity index high), we implemented the *SlowMeteo policy*: artists cannot upload more than 3 new resources per day. The risk of too many uploads is that interesting artworks can be unfairly neglected.

For many of the *ArsMeteo*^o authors the portal was a first appealing opportunity for accessing and exploiting the new social potential of web-based technologies. Some of them entered in this new world thanks to the help of other more technologically skillful users that play the role of *digital curators*. The activity of the digital curators enhances accessibility of technological-social infrastructure to a broader spectrum of users, trying to bridge the cultural digital divide. We plan to promote the use of *ArsMeteo*^o for creative and playful activities to be used for educational purposes, and get the youngsters acquainted with art. Finally we would like to remark that many important services/applications issues arose thanks to the interaction with the community.

4. REFERENCES

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