Amusique

KELLY MÉZINO
CÉDRIC PLESSIET

Presentation of the artists

Kelly Mézino

A multifaceted artist with a background in live performance, Kelly Mézino collaborates with Cédric Plessiet in her role as a model. Since their meeting in 2016, the artist-researcher duo has been exploring the many dimensions of the avatar. Through both technical and sensitive approaches, they delve into notions of "extimacy" and representation. Offering a more organic and realistic perspective, Kelly brings to their joint works a palette of bodily expressions that questions the relationship to the double-other and the virtual.

Driven by a strong sense of aesthetics, she co-constructs a sensory relationship with the image, where the spectator's interactive role is to create a dialogue with the digital entity: the Kellynoide. This work, rooted in deep identification, is approached through the lens of the real: collecting traces, voices, textures, and gestures of the model, to enable recreation. This process allows for an analysis of the real/virtual and reality/imaginary relationships across various media. Thanks to the tools developed through their collaboration, Kelly Mézino expands her practice, pushing the boundaries of representation on a stage where the avatar fully belongs.

Cédric Plessiet

Cédric Plessiet is a university professor and head of the Digital Images and Virtual Reality team (INREV, EA410 AIAC) at Université Paris 8. Both a digital artist and a researcher, he has exhibited his work at numerous digital art festivals (Ars Electronica Linz, Recto Verso, Laval Virtual…) and presented his research at major conferences (Eurographics, Visigrapp…). His current research focuses on semi-autonomous virtual actors and digital doubles, involving fields such as motion capture, real-time engines, and virtual reality.

As both an artist and a programmer, he develops his own tools, which he uses in digital artworks exhibited in France and abroad. He is the author of numerous articles and book chapters in the fields of digital art and computer science.

Since 2016, he has been collaborating with Kelly Mézino on the Kellynoïde project — the creation of an autonomous double used for research, performances, conferences, and digital artworks. Together, they have co-authored several articles and book chapters, and presented their work at international scientific conferences and major digital art festivals.

Each caress shapes a dream

Digital artist Cédric Plessiet and performer/singer Kelly Mézino revisit «Le Violon d'Ingres», the iconic photograph by Man Ray portraying Kiki de Montparnasse's back adorned with violin f-holes. In their immersive digital artwork, they extend and transform the symbolic power of this surrealist image into a sensorial, emotional, and participatory experience.

The installation engages touch, sight, and sound to recreate a subtle connection between the artist, the model and the viewer. Wearing a VR headset, the viewer is invited to gently caress a silicone cast of Kelly Mézino's back, embedded with sensitive pressure sensors. Each gesture doesn't merely act on a body: it transforms the entire virtual environment.

The digital double of Kelly responds through song, while the space itself begins to shift: tattoos appear, light pulsates, the scene breathes. The world responds, like an intimate echo chamber, to the emotion carried by the touch.

The piece offers an exploration of emotional haptics: a kind of touch that doesn't control, but moves. The sensors don't just read the strength or position f-of the hand. They interpret the quality of the gesture, its tenderness, hesitation, or intent. An embedded AI interprets these emotional cues and generates a sensitive response. Touch becomes a poetic language, an affective act.

The muse's body becomes a living interface, an instrument for emotional expression, a surface of resonance. The sensuality of the original photograph is here reinvoked and transposed into a virtual world: the viewer is no longer a passive observer, but an actor in an intimate ritual, within a work that blurs the boundaries between perception, interaction, and emotion.

The work opens a reflection on augmented intimacy, on what it means to touch a virtual body that reshapes the surrounding world in response? How can the virtual become a space of presence, connection, and shared affect? Far from being a simple avatar, the digital muse becomes a threshold-being, a channel between the human gesture and a sensorial world in constant recomposition.

Drawing on the aesthetics of surrealism, cyberfeminism, and affective generative art, this piece questions the roles of artist, model, and viewer in the age of sentient interfaces. It subverts traditional roles: the model is no longer passive: she sings. The viewer is no longer distant... They touch, they initiate. The machine is no longer a tool... It listens, it feels, it transforms.

Haptic affects and digital sensibility

At the heart of Amusique lies a silicone bust, cast from the back of performer Kelly Mézino, and supported by an internal PLA structure 3D-printed to fit her form. This lightweight yet durable skeleton houses 30 pressure sensors, delicately embedded across the entire tactile surface.

When the viewer places a hand on it, they experience a sensation that is strange, intimate, and disarming , the impression of caressing a muse's back.

The sensors are divided into six sensory zones, each connected to an independent Arduino board. Each Arduino sends a simple message to the central system [zone, channel, pressure]translating the gesture into interpretable data.

The most stimulated zone at any given moment triggers a response. This may be sound or visual feedback, depending on the location and quality of the touch.

Each viewer interaction contributes to the evolution of the virtual environment , not through automation, but through a sensitive dramaturgy.
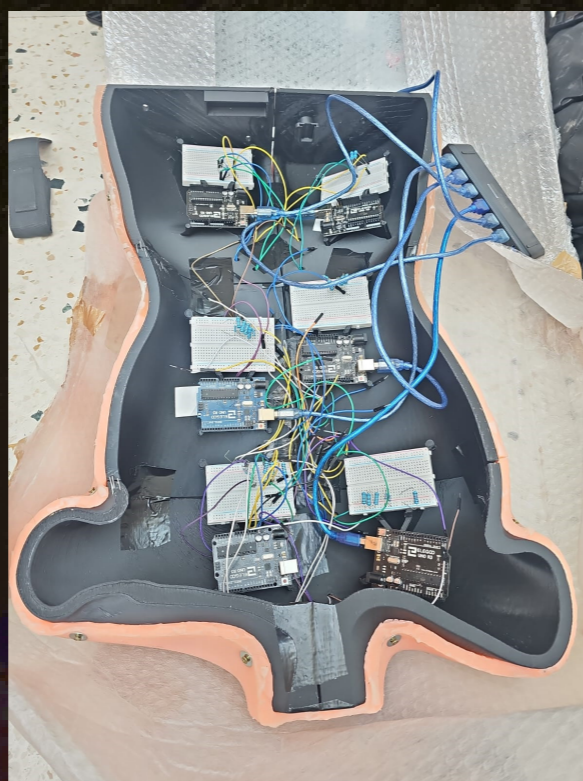

Gradually, as interactions accumulate, an interaction graph is built, guiding the scene toward different visual and poetic atmospheres: dreamlike, in the spirit of Man Ray; enigmatic, echoing de Chirico; or surreal, reminiscent of Magritte. Fragments of poetry, like Éluard, Prévert, may be woven into the experience, resonating with the viewer's gestures in a shared emotional space.

The system offers a form of emotional haptic feedback: it doesn't merely register pressure, it senses intention. A soft stroke, a sustained press, a hesitant movement… each elicits a specific response.

The machine doesn't listen to what is done, but how it is done. And from that listening, it recomposes the visual and sound environment, as if it were responding not to a command, but to a feeling.
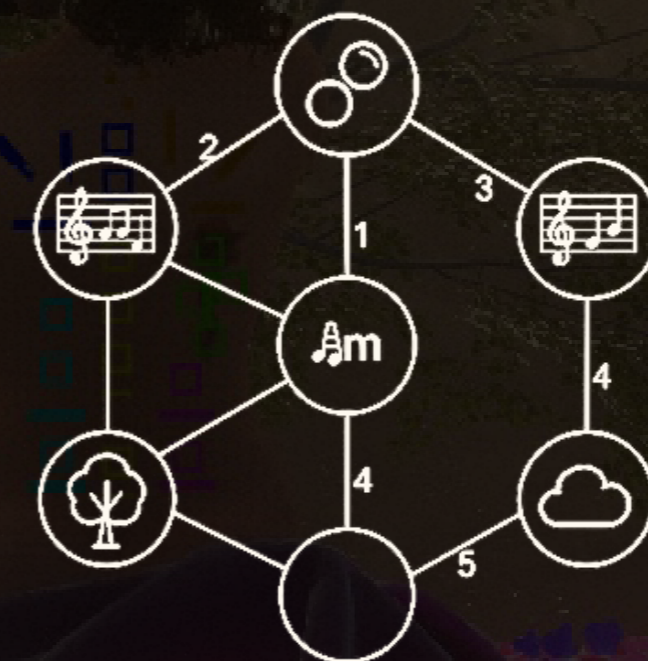
Event graph Sample
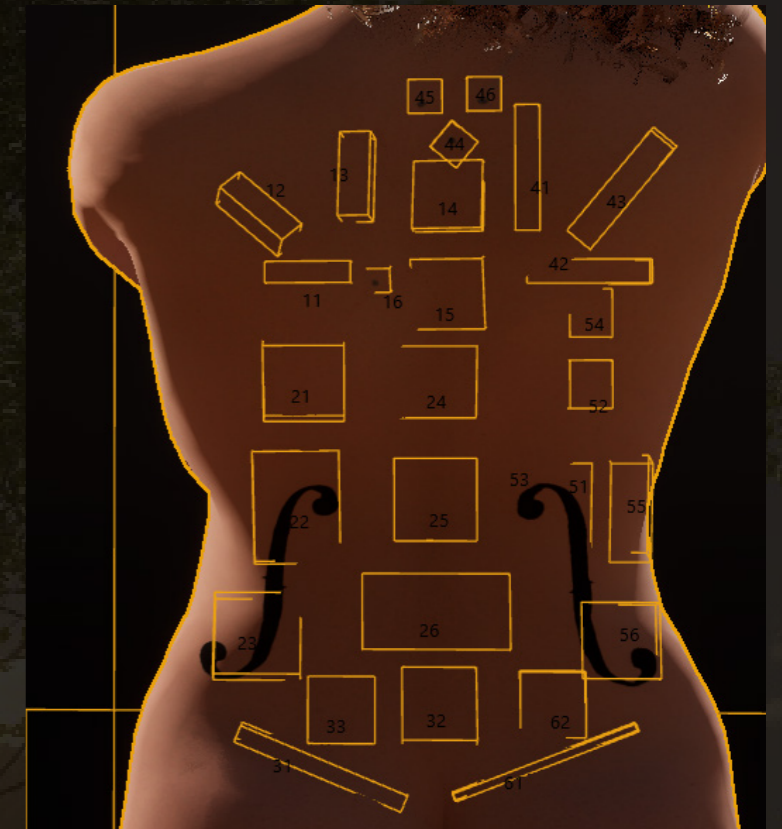
In addition to touch, the installation integrates a Leap Motion sensor that captures the viewer's freehand movements in midair. These gestures interact with floating elements in the scene... Fish... Bubbles... Butterflies... Clouds.... Fragile presences that respond to motion, proximity, and direction.

This second mode of interaction extends the intimacy of touch into the surrounding space, inviting the viewer to sculpt the ambient world with their hands.

Installation

Floor Dimensions:

Interaction area: 1 m × 1 m

Participants:

- The spectator: equipped with an HTC Vive headset, a Leap Motion sensor (for gesture tracking), and a microphone (for real-time voice input).
- The Silicon Bust and with captors and arduino

Technical Setup:

- VR station: a high-performance VR computer located at the rear, connected to the headset, and hidden in the pedestal
- VR base stations: two tracking units positioned in the corners of the space to enable precise spatial tracking.
- Wired connection between the station and the headset (via an overhead or floor cable).

Installation Time:

- Setup: approximately half a day
- Teardown: approximately one hour

BASE
STATION

BASE
STATION

VR
HEADSET

COMPUTER

SCREEN

SCULPTURE

MOUSE

POWER
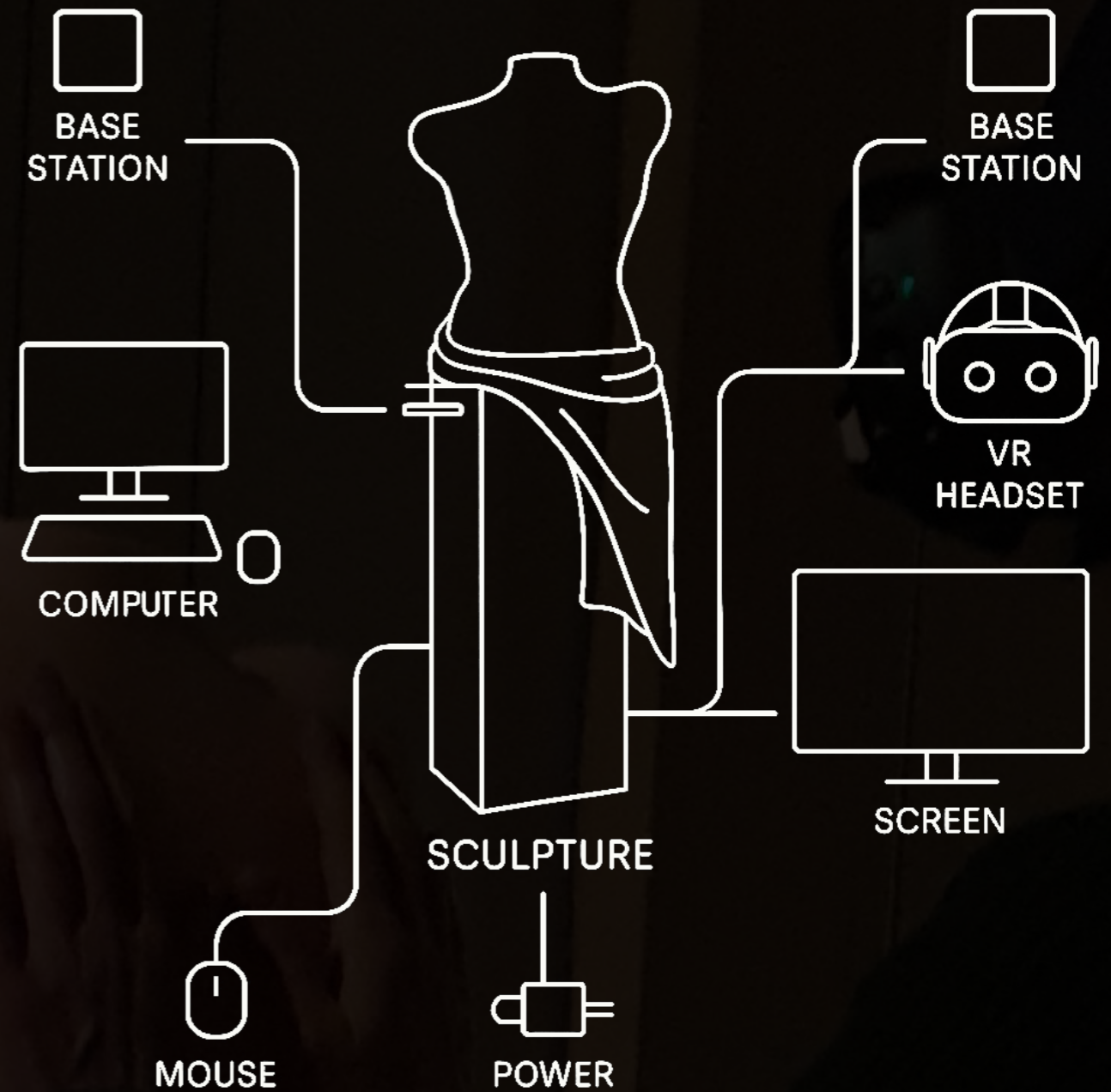
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