Editorial: Performing Personality in Game Characters and Digital Narrative

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, digital character design has undergone a significant evolution, spurred by the introduction of cutting-edge technologies such as motion capture and wearable devices (Reuter and Schindler, 2023). These tools have unlocked unprecedented opportunities for crafting and performing character personalities (Berry et. al, 2022), enabling a more nuanced, expressive, and realistic representation of both human and non-human characters in video games, animation, and digital narratives.

The workshop "Performing Personality in Game Characters and Digital Narratives", held on October 12, 2024, at the University of the Peloponnese, served as a platform for researchers, practitioners, and enthusiasts from diverse disciplines to explore these innovative technologies and their intersection with creative practices in character design. The goal was to push the boundaries of traditional character development by using motion capture and wearable technologies to inject characters with dynamic personality traits and emotional depth, enhancing immersive storytelling experiences. Held at the historical Vouleftikon Building in Nafplio, this workshop was part of the CEEGS 2024 Conference under the theme "Reimagining Games, Art, and Performativity". The conference offered a dynamic space for discussions on the historical intersections of games, art, and performance, inviting scholars, designers, and artists to submit proposals within these thematic areas.

The workshop was a collaborative effort between three academic institutions, including the *University of the Peloponnese*, *Ionian University*, and *Aegean University* attracted 45 participants, and featured two main components: theoretical presentations and hands-on activities in a motion capture lab.

PRESENTATION OF ABSTRACTS

In the first part, selected works, reviewed and accepted through an evaluation process, were presented. These contributions focused on various aspects of character design, such as the interpersonal expression of personality across different game

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genres, the integration of natural elements as characters, and the application of machine learning to analyze emotional expressiveness. Presentations included:

- Interpersonal Expression of Personality Across Different Game Genres, by *Chrysanthi Patergiannaki* and *Anastasios Theodoropoulos*.
- The "Face" of the Earth: Designing Natural Elements as Characters in Movement Annotation Game, by *Lori Kougioumtzian*, *Katerina El Raheb*, and *Maria Roussou*.
- Character Design in Video Games: From Concept to Creation in the Digital World, by *Demi Proutsou* and *Anastasios Theodoropoulos*.
- Real-Time Skeleton Tracking for Large-Scale Embodied Interactions in Virtual Environments, by *Orestis Zestas*, *Anastasios Theodoropoulos* and *Nikolaos Tselikas*.
- Using Machine Learning for Facial Emotion Expressiveness Rating of Actors, by *George Xyrafis*, *Anastasios Theodoropoulos*, and *Christos Tryfonopoulos*.
- Body Signals as Digital Narratives: From Social Issues to Digital Characters by *Vilelmini Kalampratsidou* and *Katerina El Raheb*.
- Non-Human Characters Interaction Using Animating Human Dolls, by *Giorgos Nikopoulos*, *Anthoula Kolokotroni*, and *Panagiotis Kyriakoulakos*.
- Non-Human Character in Action by *Giorgos Nikopoulos*, *Anthoula Kolokotroni*, *Katerina El Raheb*, *Marina Stergiou*, and *Dimitris Baltas*.

These aforementioned works underscored the interdisciplinary nature of modern character creation, with contributions from game design, animation, human-computer interaction, and biometric data science. The diversity of topics highlighted how motion capture and biometric sensors are reshaping the way digital characters perform and express their personalities.

HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES: THE MOCAP LAB

The second part of the workshop involved practical, hands-on activities in the *Mocap Lab*, where participants worked in groups of approximately five people to apply the theories discussed earlier in real-world settings. Each group was provided with a pre-defined scenario and tasked with choosing between two avatars. They then explored possible movements from existing animation databases, such as Mixamo, to bring their characters to life. The activity culminated in an interactive session where one group member narrated the story while two others, wearing ROKOKO motion capture suits, performed the actions. The movements were mapped onto the selected avatars in real-time, enabling participants to see the immediate impact of their performance on the digital characters. This exercise demonstrated how embodied interaction influences personality traits and emotional expression, highlighting its potential for creating more nuanced and immersive storytelling experiences in games and digital media.

The workshop concluded with a *Round Table Discussion* among the workshop organizers, where the focus was on insights from game studies and their practical application in character design. The discussion explored future directions for integrating motion capture and wearable technologies specifically and emphasis was

placed on how interdisciplinary collaboration—bridging game studies, technology, and artistic practice—can push the boundaries of creative expression. This fusion of storytelling expertise from game studies with advanced performance technologies is opening new possibilities for creating immersive, dynamic characters tailored to interactive gaming experiences.

CONCLUSION AND LOOKING FORWARD

The "Performing Personality in Game Characters and Digital Narratives" workshop marked a significant milestone in the ongoing exploration of how motion capture and wearable technologies can transform character design. By leveraging these innovative tools, we can craft more dynamic, emotionally resonant characters that engage audiences in deeper and more meaningful ways. The insights gained from this workshop are just the beginning of a larger conversation about the future of digital characters in interactive storytelling. As part of the ongoing IMAGINE-MOCAP project, funded by the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation (2024-2026), we continue to investigate the potential of motion capture, wearable technologies, and live coding to refine how digital characters express, communicate, and perform. Our shared goal is to inspire further research, foster collaboration, and continue advancing the field of character design, ensuring that digital personas remain authentic, emotionally connected, and engaging. This editorial, along with the workshop proceedings, will be published by the University of the Peloponnese Library and made available via DOI for the benefit of the academic community. We invite further exploration and collaboration in this exciting area of digital storytelling and character creation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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