

# Mutable Artistic Narratives: Video Art versus Glitch Art

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## Biography



Ana holds a PhD in Fine Arts from the University of Granada and is a professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of La Laguna, Tenerife. Her PhD thesis focused on the communicative capacity of images in literary classics, including the *Divine Comedy*, with a comparison of the illustrations of Dante's work created by different artists.

Ana is a professor in the Early Childhood and Primary Education degree programmes, in which she teaches contemporary art and education. She is also a lecturer and coordinator of the specialisation course in drawing, design and visual arts in the Education Master's Degree programme. Her current research focuses on promoting play as an element of learning, as well as creating teaching resources related to visual culture for people with disabilities. She has participated in national and international conferences, most recently at the Texas Art Education Association conference, where she gave presentations on art installations for children as generators of play and learning, and visual diaries as a form of expression and knowledge.

## **Abstract**

**This project analyses a set of different innovative video formats for their subsequent incorporation and application in the fields of art and education.**

**The aim is to conduct a historical review of the evolution of video art, in which images, video and experimental and instrumental sound play an essential role. In addition, it will explore the contemporary work of emerging artists who use the video art format and how the field has evolved over time. The conceptual framework is based on examining the video art format, its reflection in contemporary visual culture, and its application in the field of education.**

**The methodology is based on independent and active learning through the principles of *learning by doing* and *learning by teaching*. The study participants are primary education students who create their own pieces using a set of established patterns with a theme related to the aesthetic or didactic experience. Furthermore, this project will present different examples of video art, video installations and glitch art.**

**The purpose of exploring text, image, colour, and sound, combined with the use of new technology, is for students to develop a sense of curiosity, critical thinking and artistic experimentation. This creative process serves as a constructive contribution to different topics. The dynamic approach reflected in video art and glitch art provides opportunities for active learning and self-criticism. It encourages students to explore their environment by handling and experimenting with familiar elements, while establishing symbiotic relationships between artistic concepts and combining different areas of knowledge through an interdisciplinary approach.**

## **Keywords**

**Glitch art, video art, art education proposal, contemporary art, education.**

## **Introduction**

The introduction of video into contemporary visual culture should be contemplated not only in terms of visual representations, but also from the perspective of the artist's creative process, which constitutes a break with other more traditional visual formats. According to Mayer (1997), the medium of video offers a vast array of practical possibilities, while also being complex in format.

As a result of the tool's unprecedented usefulness, video conveys far too much information to be counted amount the traditional plastic arts. It supports characteristic that would connect it more appropriately to the temporal arts of music, dance, theater, literature or cinema. Nor is it a tangible object, and fine art almost invariably is, but rather the ethereal emanation of a whole set of complicated electro-magnetic devices. In fact, video is more an end than any one specific means; It is a series of variations on an audio-visual theme that has been in continual progressive flux since its inception. (Mayer, 1997. Cited in Meigh, 2006, p. 1)

New artistic media include components that influence our environment and are present in our daily activities. In education, importance should not only be placed on the tools or media that can be used, but also on the lexicon. This is the visual language created in fields like advertising and graphic design, which is materialised through semiotics to study the signs and symbols that respond to our communication needs.

It is crucial to highlight that the processes involved in creating art, through convergent and divergent techniques, and its evolution, are more important than the end result. In art, this is

most commonly achieved through divergent design processes and projects. Nowadays, from an educational perspective, it is important to apply these processes through subjects in a cross-curricular manner with a view to promoting cultural enrichment as a foundation of knowledge and exposure to contents among our students.

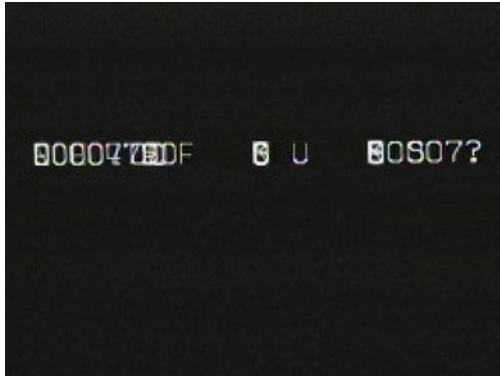


Figure 1: Digital Experiment at Bell Labs, 1966-67. Nam June Paik. Retrieved from: <https://www.eai.org/titles/digital-experiment-at-bell-labs>

Figure 2: Soundsuit, 2009. Mixed media including synthetic hair. Photo: James Prinz Photography. © Nick Cave. Retrieved from: <https://art21.org/artist/nick-cave/>

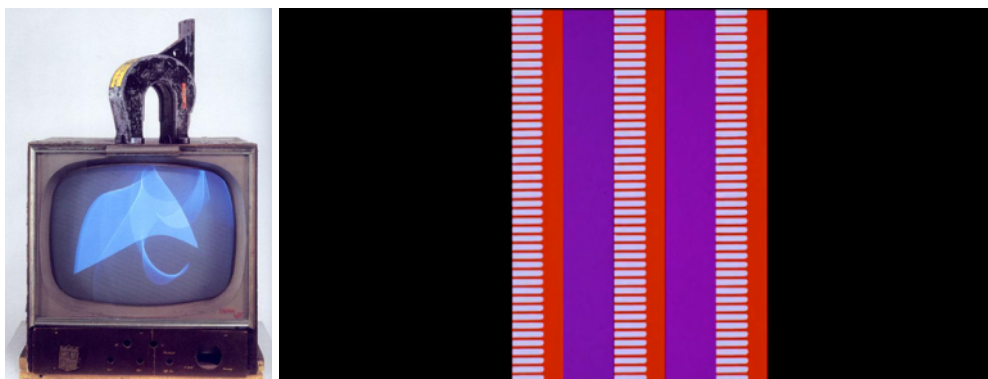


Figure 3: Magnet TV, 1965. Nam June Paik. © Nam June Paik. Retrieved from: <http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/magnet-tv/>

Figure 4: Synchrony, 1971. Norman McLaren. Retrieved from: <https://www.nfb.ca/directors/norman-mclaren/>

Another important aspect is the great variety of video formats that have been employed,

ranging from digital projects such as the work of Nam June Paik, more manual processes such as the animations of Norman McLaren, and video installations, such as the use of sensors to detect movement in the work of Nick Cave, who creates garments that express the complexity of identity that surrounds us.

In Nam June Paik's digital experiment at Bell Labs (1966-67), the artist experiments with the medium of a computer, in which we observe a shifting dot on a background.

### **Audiovisual media concepts: video art and glitch art**

Video is an experience that is shaped by space and time. It is nomadic and influenced by the cultural, technological and environmental developments in its specific visual culture. According to Assche (2009), the term "video art" responds to a set of parameters:

The term "video" has evolved so much that it is important to redefine it today. In the 1960s and 70s "Video Art" was the expression which defined the appropriation of the video signal and the television set, an appropriation of the world of television to the world of art, a metaphor of seeing according to the artist Nam June Paik. (Assche, 2009, p. 28).

The field of study of visual culture has expanded as the analysis of images and audiovisual media have become more complex. As Apperley (2015) states, digital aesthetics have gradually encompassed a broad spectrum of visual arts through the idea of glitch art.

Indeed, 'failure' has become a prominent aesthetic in many of the arts in the late 20th century, reminding us that our control of technology is an illusion, and revealing digital tools to be only as perfect, precise, and efficient as the humans who build them. New techniques are often discovered by accident or by the failure of

an intended technique or experiment. (Cited in Apperley, 2015, p. 236. Cascone, 2000, p. 13)

## **Visual path through the history of video art**

In the mid- 20th century, a new and complex form of interpreting art emerged. This new arrival was known as video art, which included video created by artists, experimental video, and artistic television. “Guerrilla TV” was a new form of television. This novel genre influenced art movements, theoretical conceptions, and technological advances while maintaining a connection with social and political activism. This new movement came about at a time of major social change that affected the society, economy and culture. It involved dynamic formats and innovative art projects which were often political. The artists that employed video as a visual resource adhered to artists influenced by the Fluxus group and body art. Their work fell under pop art, Arte Povera, performance art, contemporary dance, minimalist sculpture, avant-garde music, experimental film, conceptual art, and drama, as well as other interdisciplinary cultural proposals.

Video art is also clearly an international phenomenon. From the outset artists working with video have not only drawn from diverse cultural influences, but they have also imported ideas and attitudes across national boundaries, enriching and nourishing the wider fine art practice as well as re-appropriating ideas and approaches from other disciplines and media. Distinctive practices from one country have been grafted onto another, so that in order to grasp the complex history of artists’ video one must have an overview of the approaches and attitudes that have contributed to the genre. (Meigh, 2006, p. 2)

Video art is structured into different types and hybrid subtypes. Importance is placed on analysing and experimenting with the multiple aspects of this complex artistic phenomenon.

There is a direct relationship between video art and television and, although this connection has been difficult to conceptualise, numerous artists have criticised and questioned several of its components. Essentially, both formats share a common technology, in terms of their presentation, experimentation with images, and sound processing. Consequently, conceptualising and analysing these works of art can be highly complex.

Throughout the history of video art, studies have focused on the relationship between its use and the technology it offers as an artistic medium. For this reason, we have selected a combination of well-known and new pieces. Initially, we trace its historical context and chronology, since the influences transferred to art activities are cumulative and enrich the proposals, particularly in terms of technical aspects and access to production equipment.

The evolution of video art is analysed in relation to technological advances, which are reflected through different works. It is important to acknowledge the key importance of access to technological resources in promoting artistic creativity and its relationship with the cultural context from which it originates.

The aim is not to study the evolution of technology as a way to analyse the content, but rather to establish the chronology and to examine the various approaches and themes used by artists related to different forms of representation, content, and meaning.

During the period under discussion (from about 1960 until the early 1990s) there has been an extraordinarily rapid development in electronic and digital imaging technology. Advances in the field have transformed video from an expensive specialist tool exclusively in the hands of broadcasters, large corporations and institutions into a ubiquitous and commonplace consumer product. In this period video art has emerged from a marginal activity to become arguably the most influential medium in contemporary art. (Meigh, 2006, p. 3)

Glitch art is similar to previous materialist approaches to images used to create movement for avant-garde cinema and video art pieces, by experimenting with different formats to produce changes in still and moving images.

## **Narrative video art formats as an artistic and educational paradigm**

This section addresses the application of glitch art in the field of education in terms of its approach to artistic images and videos that are meaningful from an educational perspective. The contemporary art world responds to nomadic narrative models that eclipse all previous art forms. Today, artistic practices are becoming globalised. This notion is examined in the book *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds*, in a chapter titled *Art's globalization in context*.

The biennials, which have spread rapidly over the entire globe, contribute to a new mapping of art regions that are in competition with each other and aspire to developing a profile of their own. [...] Other forms of narration are required in order to do justice to the geopolitical situation which is mirrored in art. Therefore, a plurality of narratives rather than a single history can best describe the current situation. The hegemonic role of a unitary art world is a thing of the past. (Belting, Buddensieg and Weibel, 2013, p. 50).

The following subsections will attempt to clarify the meanings and narrative forms of three models analysed from an artistic and educational perspective.

### **Video art as unique pieces**

This section presents pieces by video artists that enrich visual content through the use of unique conceptual components.



Bill Viola (b. 1951), [...], began his long exploration of the physical and spiritual self in his single-channel videos of the 1970s and 1980s. For Viola, [...], video is an intensely personal medium that contains within its power a full range of expressive possibilities. [...] Viola toyed with the electronics of a videotape recorder in his 1973 video *Information*. He used a technical mistake (a self-interrupting signal) to create a sequence of images he could control from the outside. (Rush, 2005, p. 113)

Bill Viola, an acoustics and music specialist, uses the interplay between light, shadows, and sound as a central element of his work. In one of his pieces, *Playing Soul Music to My Freckles* (1975), he recorded himself with a loudspeaker on his back. In another work, *Non-Dairy Creamer* (1975), the artist's reflection in a cup of coffee gradually disappears as he drinks it.

The self and non-self, fundamental concepts on Eastern mysticism, have long interested Viola and play a central role in all of his work to the present day. (Rush, 2005, p. 113 - 114)

Viola's reflection in the eye of an owl in his 1986 work, *I Do Not Know What It Is I Am Like*, became the artist's icon. This work is inspired by a Sanskrit text that analyses the relationships of living beings through a personal narrative. Viola examines his knowledge of himself, portrayed through a metaphysical journey that involves five stages.

The aesthetic of video artists of the 1970s, such as Vito Acconci and Joan Jonas, and their use of simple technology, influenced the work of female artists, such as Pipilotti Rist, and the Americans, Cheryl Donegan, Sadie Benning and Phyllis Baldino, who addressed personal and political issues. Pipilotti Rist's video, *I'm not the Girl Who Misses Much*, is clearly influenced by the work of Marina Abramovic. In this piece, she records herself dancing while repeating

the lyrics of the pop song of the same name. Her movements serve as a parody of the degrading portrayal of women.

In her piece, *Line* (1996), Cheryl Donegan challenges the work of Jean-Luc Godard and his chauvinistic portrayal of women through the actress Brigitte Bardot.



Figure 5: *Line*, 1996. Cheryl Donegan. Retrieved from: <https://www.eai.org/titles/line>

Meanwhile, the American artist, Sadie Benning, approaches the video format as a sort of diary. Her work with the medium of video, which began in the late-1980s, conveys a spirit of improvisation in its personal narrative style. Her work is a visual record of the artist's life as an adolescent captured with a Fisher-Price toy camera. The recordings took place in the young artist's bedroom over a period of three weeks. It depicts the start of her emerging sexuality as a lesbian, with short films such as *If Every Girl Had a Diary* (1990) and *Flat is Beautiful* (1998).

### **Video installation as an innovative creative space**

Video installation is a form of contemporary art that combines the technology of video with the creative format of art installations which occupy a space that involves the spectators. Specific video installations have been created for a variety of exhibition spaces, as well as urban, industrial and natural spaces. In this format, incorporating the space and context into the narration of the piece is fundamental. The only elements needed to set up a video installation are monitors,

a projection system and a dark space.

While, in video installations, the visitors actively participate and interact with the piece, this notion is pushed one step further in interactive video installations. Here, the spectator helps to create a narrative sequence that unfolds in the space. Therefore, the participatory role of the audience is more visible in interactive video installations. In other formats, video is presented in such a way that the spectator becomes part of the storyline, such as the character in a film.

Nam June Paik, a Korean-born American artist, is considered to be the pioneer of the video installation genre. He used television screens in different ways in his sculptural works, such as creating walls out of stacks of televisions and projecting videos to create immersive environments.

Another renowned artist of this genre is Wolf Vostell who created *6 TV Dé-coll/age* in the Smolin Gallery in New York in 1963.

Other pioneering artists include the master of the medium, Bill Viola, as well as Garl Hill and Tony Oursler, who represented a generational shift in the genre. Gary Hill created complex and innovative video installations through a combination of projections, monitors, and different technologies (e.g., laser discs, DVDs, and innovative digital devices) to create immersive and interactive experiences for visitors. In the piece, *Tall Ships*, first shown at Document 9 in 1992, the artist created a dark space with terrifying images of figures sitting on a wall. As visitors entered the space, the projected figures approached them, creating a sense of mystery connected to the underworld and reminiscent of *The Odyssey*.

On the other hand, Tony Oursler used small video projectors placed on structures and sculptures, and played with the light of images, projecting them onto different objects. The first multi-screen installation, *60 TV sets*, was exhibited at Gallery House, London, in 1972. The piece, created by David Hall in collaboration with Tony Sinden, was later expanded to *101 TV sets* (1975).

In addition, Sam Taylor-Wood's early installation pieces are significant examples of filmed elements displayed as a series of projections. Her 1994 work, *Killing Time*, shows four people miming to an opera score. From that moment on, multi-screen video pieces formed the focus of her work.

A leading figure in the genre is the Iranian artist Shirin Neshat who employs cinematic techniques in her video installations. The first examples of using technical problems in the media art genre include *Digital TV Dinner* (1978) by Jamie Fenton and Raul Zaritsky, Dick Ainsworth's deliberate creation of glitches in audio files, and Bally Astrocade's manipulation of videogame consoles. In *Digital TV Dinner*, images are created through glitches caused deliberately by the artist who modifies automated processes. As Brown (2011) explains:

Bit-depth, gamma range, object edges and noise were some of the new compositional elements that analog and digital signal processing made apparent. Over the following decades this new semantics permeated image culture at large, becoming the *de facto* material basis by which media is produced. (Cited in Betancourt, 2016, p. 35. Brown, 2011, p. 5).

### **The internet as a format for video installations**

The internet has become a medium for broadcasting news and disseminating advertising, scientific information and other contents. However, it is also used in the field of education for the transmission of knowledge.

As Assche (2009) explains in the chapter entitled *Video, A Contemporary Time-Space* in the book *100 Video Artists*, the internet now plays a fundamental role in the development of video art as an artistic medium.

The internet is a major factor nowadays, not only for creation itself but also for the distribution of Works. It already influences the duration and editing of works meant

for this form of dissemination (more so than television did at the time), but also the emergence and knowledge of works for a much wider public. (Assche, 2009, p. 34).

According to Christiane and Levy (2015), the mistaken aesthetics of glitch art gives rise to a new visual format for perceiving post-internet art as a relationship between digitally-created art and contemporary art. At the same time, there exists a dialogue between digital art and traditional art, since these glitches had already been experimented with in traditional media.

The stoppage presented by the glitch reconfigures technical failures in both the new aesthetic and post-internet art as a transfer from digital technology into Contemporary art: the role of glitch and technical failures is symptomatic of the convergence between digital and traditional art, in the process (simultaneously) normalizing these failures as a material demonstration of digital technology. (Cited in Betancourt, 2016, p. 76. Christiane and Levy, 2015, p. 27-43).

Scott (2009) experiments with glitch art techniques with images. Specifically, he works with projections for video jockeys (VJs) to analyse the artistic aesthetic of glitches.

Data visualization isn't real glitch, but it has buckets of glitch aesthetic, and the process of finding good images involves luck and technological experimentation, which are both part of the game of finding real glitches. [...] (Scott, 2009, p. 20 - 21)

Finally, Betancourt (2016) expresses the value offered by the idea of expanded cinema to generate new formats of aesthetic representation:

Expanded cinema bridges the transition between historical materialist film practice and Contemporary concerns, not least with the "end of film". The same technical

concerns with how digital technology relates to earlier traditions is apparent in the particular emphasis on technical failures of these mechanical systems as the now obsolete and celluloid cinema becomes a historical medium rather than an ongoing and current, widely available and common commercial technology. (Betancourt, 2016, p. 82)

### **Glitch art applied to the educational field**

“Glitch” is a term frequently used to describe pieces associated with electronic, experimental, and noise music. Over time, VJs and other visual artists have expanded the term to incorporate other visual arts, including digital art.

Glitch art is created by modifying digital files to produce a technical fault. Files are manipulated through hardware to generate errors in still or moving images.

Michael Betancourt classified five different types of data manipulation used to create glitch art: datamoshing, misalignment, hardware failure, misregistration, and distortion.

### **Specific applied methodologies**

This study proposes two suitable types of teaching methodologies: *learning by doing* and *learning by teaching*. *Learning by doing* is a comprehensive didactic approach that involves the active participation of the student. According to Pestalozzi, this learning process requires harmony between rationality, emotions and manual activity. Therefore, it has cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor learning components.

*Learning by teaching* is a method used by Jean-Pol Martin as a teacher of vocational training, in which the students prepare and teach short classes. Through this method, the students use their own teaching techniques to impart knowledge.

These active methodologies generate a higher level of student participation and can be used

to create images and videos about the topics of interest, such as environmental awareness.

### **Project design: Practical application of glitch art as an educational resource for environmental awareness**

The implementation of this teaching proposal is based on studying modern, avant-garde, post-modern art, and contemporary artistic practices with digital media.

Firstly, we will study artists who use the medium of cinema and video. The precursors to cinema included other art movements such as the Burlesque. In the early-20th century, the avant-garde movement comprised New Objectivity film-making, Cinéma Pur, Kammer-spiel-film, Expressionism, Cubism, Surrealism, Dadaism, Suprematism, Lettrism, Futurism and the experimental group formed by Visual music, Experimental animation, and Absolute Film. The Absolute Film movement was popularised in the 1920s and 1930s by Viking Eggeling, Walter Ruttmann, Hans Richter, and Oskar Fischinger, who focused on the aesthetics and narrative of non-linear films and employed the drawn-on-film animation technique created by Steven Woloshen. The 1940s saw the emergence of poetic realism, independent cinema and auteur film, the documentary film movement, underground film, social realism, French New Wave, and Neorealism.

Later, in the early-1960s, the Structural Film movement arose, followed by Nouveau Réalisme, a form of expanded cinema used to describe a film, video, multimedia performance, or immersive environment that pushes the limits of cinema and rejects the traditional one-dimensional interaction between the public and the screen. The term is used by American film-maker Stan Van Der Beek, when artists and film-makers create more participatory roles for the viewer. During this period, we also encounter Remodernist Film, No Wave Cinema and Cinema of Transgression.

Video offers new possibilities in the digital format. Original films have been reinterpreted by

groups such as the Berlin School of film-making and the British Black Art Movement. Today, contemporary artists are looking for new artistic approaches based on the use of fine arts, the legacy of cinema, electronic art, and new forms of artistic expression, such as Mumblecore and the New Burlesque.

Of the terms that make up modernism, it is important to highlight certain aspects, as they represented turning points that caused postmodernism to evolve with new innovative concepts. Foster (1996) states:

Minimalism breaks with late modernism through a partial reprise of the historical avant-garde, specifically its disruption of the formal categories of institutional art [...] By the same token, it prepares the post-modernist art to come. (Foster, 1996. Cited in Rees, 2010, p. 13).

After analysing the different approaches to glitch art, the most suitable option for the educational context is misalignment, as it can be studied using open-access programs, such as Audacity, which do not require complex systems and are easy to use. Therefore, glitch art, and specifically misalignment, will be the focus of this project for a group of university students who are studying to become primary school teachers. The students will walk around the island of Tenerife and observe their surroundings, focusing on degraded areas. The aim is to raise awareness about environmental issues, such as ecological footprints, recycling, etc. Subsequently, these guidelines will be presented and taught to children at schools. After taking a real photograph of a degraded space, the university students convert the image into an audio file in Audacity. The next step is to modify the sound file to create effects. Finally, they will save the original image and modified audio file which will be converted into a distorted image. In this case, the visual distortion represents environmental destruction.

The topic of this activity has been selected deliberately to respond to the current serious en-



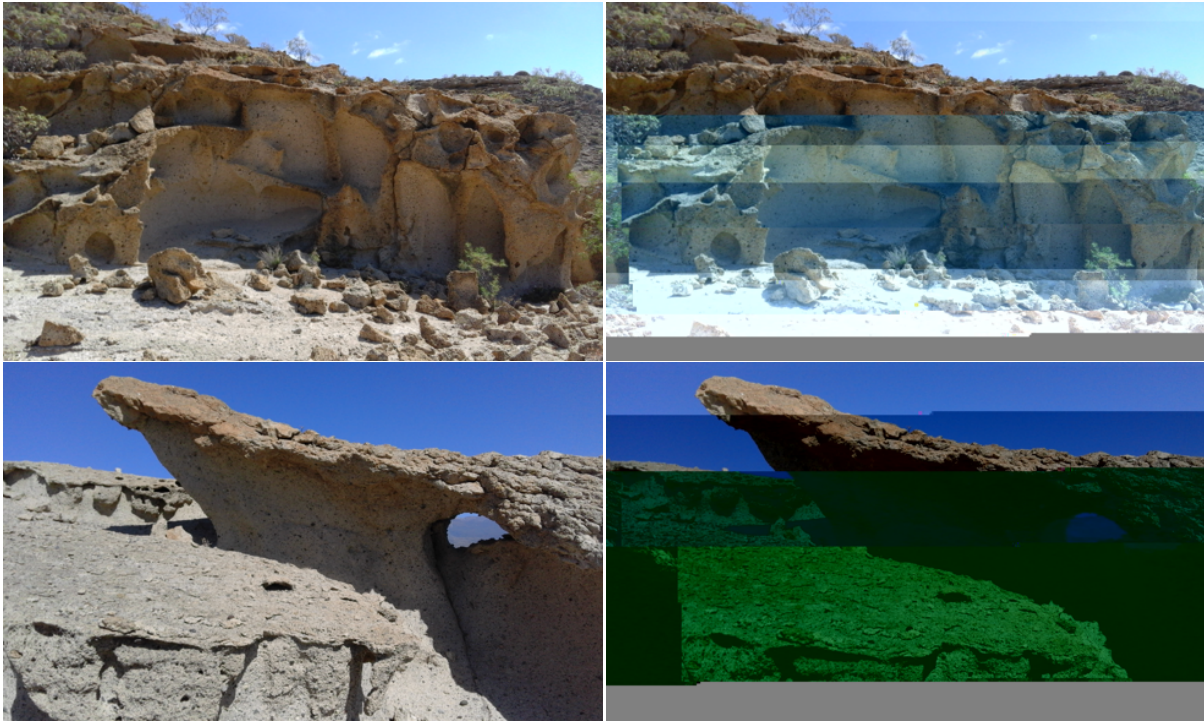


Figure 6: Original Image #1. Location: Derricaderos, Tenerife, 2016. Ana Marqués Ibáñez.

Figure 7: Glitch art Image #1. Location. Derricaderos, Tenerife, 2016. Ana Marqués Ibáñez.

Figure 8: Original Image #2. Location: Derricaderos, Tenerife, 2016. Ana Marqués Ibáñez.

Figure 9: Glitch art Image #2. Location. Derricaderos, Tenerife, 2016. Ana Marqués Ibáñez.

vironmental issues that are leading to natural disasters. It is crucial to present the Canary Island archipelago in schools from the perspective of sustainability and ecology to raise awareness about environmental conservation. In this regard, environmental awareness can be promoted in art education through projects like this.

Another alternative is to promote the Canarian identity, as stated explicitly in the educational curricula of all Spanish autonomous communities, to help instil the values, traditions, folklore and festivals of the Canary Islands. In this case, we present cardboard horses created and exhibited by children and adults in a parade in San Cristóbal de La Laguna, a city whose architectural and cultural wealth have earned it the status of UNESCO World Heritage Site.



Figure 10: Original Image #3. Location: La Laguna, Tenerife, 2016. Ana Marqués Ibáñez.

Figure 11: Glitch art Image #3. Location. La Laguna, Tenerife, 2016. Ana Marqués Ibáñez.



Figure 12: The Kodak Moment, 2013. Michael Betancourt. Retrieved from: <http://www.hz-journal.org/n19/betancourt.html>

Figure 13: Extrafile Vs. Monglot. Bascii, 2011. Asendorf, Kim y Rosa Menkman. Retrieved from: [https://networkcultures.org/\\_uploads/NN%234\\_RosaMenkman.pdf](https://networkcultures.org/_uploads/NN%234_RosaMenkman.pdf)

Figure 14: Glitch #04 – Iltoraed, 2004. Unknown author. Retrieved from: <http://www.beflix.com/works/glitch.php>

The video artist Jamie Boulton demonstrates the creative process of producing errors by manipulating digital files. When manipulating a file in Audacity, he selects part of the file and adds sound effects. By adding an effect to an image file, the program takes the file and changes the data to produce a result. Some artists who have worked with this medium include Michael Betancourt, Rosa Menkman, Jonas Downey, and Nick Briz.

## **Didactic material to create Glitch art**

The teaching material created will be related to the aforementioned methods through practical learning processes in which the students create their own images and videos to apply glitch art.

In *learning by teaching*, the students engage in a creative process based on artistic thought, using conceptual maps, infographics, and cartography. However, they also develop new teaching methods to explain contents and their perspectives to their classmates.

In this way, the students' work is established by designing images with these two specific methodologies and testing their effectiveness in the classroom through surveys and rubrics that they create. The subject matter will be related to protecting the environment and raising awareness. The individual pieces created by the students will be presented in portfolios. As Grundell (2016) states:

[...] the portfolio captures a trivial but productively interesting dispersion. The photographed moments are related conceptually, if not visually, with the glitches.  
(Grundell, 2016, p. 97)

## **Conclusions**

By analysing the evolution of video art throughout history, we encounter different work methodologies that can be applied in education and images that can enrich the perspective and imagination of our students in the area of art. This provides a wide range of possibilities for students to learn different forms of teaching and artistic creation. It is a complex and diverse field with interrelated ideas that can enhance their work process.

Ultimately, it is fundamental to consider not only the final pieces of art or how the different methodologies are applied, but also to focus on the actual work process, and how to work collaboratively to share artistic and educational knowledge.

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