

PhD project: *Familiar Interiors. Branding strategies in post-digital art displays in the 21st century* by Stefanie Marlene Wenger

Chapter 1: Reference Space – the Display as Anagrammatic Interior

What is an Anagrammatic Interior ?

Peter Schneemann coined the term “anagrammatic space” to describe a phenomenon in contemporary art, in which the vocabulary of familiar spaces of social encounter is isolated and brought into the museum space. The transferred fragments of these very specific interiors work as “counter-spaces” of the white cube when brought into the institutional framework. Anagrammatic Interiors not only refer to, but recreate realities that are usually encountered outside of the museum such as the waiting room, the supermarket, the stage, the private living room and the shed – the vocabulary of anagrammatic room types in contemporary art is extensive. The quotation of specific interior settings and designs is used to evoke an authentic experience in the museum space that is familiar from totally different contexts outside of the art space.

The first chapter of my PhD will use the concept of the Anagrammatic Interior to analyze contemporary displays of post-digital art, that make use of branding and visual merchandising strategies to create familiar interiors.

Case Study 1: *New Eelam*, 2016-ongoing, Christopher Kulendran Thomas in collaboration with Annika Kuhlmann

New Eelam is a hybrid between an art project and a Start Up that promotes an alternative housing model with shared home ownership for apartments in booming cities around the world. The aim of the project is to cater to the increasing demand for mobility and changing modes of work and leisure by digital natives.

This speculative artwork operates on many layers. The videos in the installation convey the ideological reference points that are based on Neo-Marxist ideas of a globally connected community through digital technologies and historical references to Tamil Eelam. Another video works like an infomercial to promote the progressive mission of *New Eelam* in the style of an Apple commercial.

In the museum space, the different versions of the display can be seen as prototypes for the living space that will be offered by the *New Eelam* app service. The multi-layered structure as well as the wide variety of display settings in one artwork offer an ideal starting point for the analysis of Anagrammatic Interiors in post-digital displays.

<https://new-eelam.com>



Method – A Typology of Interiors

Based on the concept of the Anagrammatic Interior, the first chapter conducts a typology of interiors. Taking *New Eelam* as a starting point, three main types of interiors are defined and analyzed: The Living Room, the Fair Booth and the Concept Store.

In addition to the case study, other examples are considered that use similar strategies of creating familiar interiors. What all the examples in the corpus have in common is that the spatial setting of these displays, the materials, lighting and design, is used to create a commercially connoted space whose aim is to present and sell a certain product or service. The artists rely on visual merchandising and branding strategies to create “Brandscapes” – carefully designed interior spaces that convey the atmosphere and lifestyle of a brand. Because of the direct link to marketing and branding, a comparison with examples of the commercial space such as Airbnb interiors and store design is undertaken as part of the analysis. Moreover, Anagrammatic Interiors of the 1980ies and 1990ies are taken into consideration to identify similarities and differences between current, post-digital displays and comparable examples of earlier periods of installation art.

The Living Room – Prototype, Production Space, Product



Christopher Kulendran Thomas, *New Eelam*, 2016 – ongoing, Hamburger Bahnhof Berlin 2017



Cécile B. Evans, *Hyperlinks or It Didn't Happen*, 2014 – ongoing, Frieze New York 2014



Shawn Maximo, *Pyre*, 2019, Roehrs & Boetsch Zurich, 2019

The Fair Booth



Christopher Kulendran Thomas, *New Eelam*, 2016 – ongoing, 11th Gwangju Biennial 2016



Timur Si-Qin, *Permier Machinic Funerary: Part I*, 2014, Taipei Biennial 2014



Simon Denny, *Blockchain Visionaries*, 2016, 9th Berlin Biennial, 2016

The Concept Store



Christopher Kulendran Thomas, *New Eelam*, 2016 – ongoing, 9th Berlin Biennial, 2016



DIS, *DISown – Not For Everyone*, 2014, Red Bull Studios New York, 2014



Debra Delmar Corp., *MINT*, 2016, 9th Berlin Biennial, 2016