

Co-Individuality through Liminality

A telematics experience to create a shared identity beyond borders

Carla MOLINS-PITARCH

carla.molins@citm.upc.edu

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: Carla Molins-Pitarch, PhD, MFA, is a creative technologist, experience designer, researcher and educator working in the intersection of design, technology and science to bring a tangible instance to complex scientific concepts.

Abstract

Co-Individuality focuses on the concept of an individual by investigating a person's identity and their relationship with other identities when in isolation. The starting point is defined by the thoughts of political tensions, and conflicts creating a fracture in relationships between people of shared cultural identities. Namely, different worldwide conflicts are disrupting daily lives and generating anxiety and uncertainty for most of the population involved in those unprecedented situations. The focus is not on the conflict, even though the instance of isolation emerges from a political situation; instead, I aim to approach this project from the point of view of a politically uprooted person.

The ongoing uncertainties in lasting conflict areas reveal that, in the near future, many people could become citizens of everywhere and anywhere at the same time, imposing a sense of a temporary loss of identity. Each individual's background shapes this identity to keep a connection with the roots of an entire group alienated in an ephemeral political space.

My goal in this experimental project is to answer one question: can technology represent what occurs in the liminal communication space across a real or even a fictional border? This liminal space is where everything is possible: what cannot be real in the current political situation can be real in this space. *Co-Individuality* proposes the creation of a shared identity through a telematics experience that connects two individuals through liminality. This connection brings together two individuals in a collaborative yet intimate interaction, resulting in a co-individual live portrait.

Keywords: Identity, virtuality, presence, telematics, telepresence, technology, liminality, creative technology

Carla MOLINS-PITARCH

Co-Individuality through Liminality

A telematics experience to create a shared identity beyond borders

Liminal entities are neither here nor there.
(Turner, 1969)

Co-Individuality as a performative act against political uprooting

In an era marked by persistent political turmoil and cultural dislocation, exploring identity and its transformation through isolation becomes increasingly pertinent. This paper investigates the concept of Co-Individuality, a term that encapsulates the dynamic interplay between individual identities within liminal spaces created by both real and fictional borders. This investigation builds upon the thoughts of Victor Turner, who described liminality as a space of ambiguity and potentiality where individuals are no longer in their previous state but have yet to transition to a new one (Turner, 1969). In this liminal space, identities are not just fluid but are in flux, existing between individuals and continually shaped by interaction and redefinition.

As explored in this paper, the concept of Co-Individuality emerges from the performative and interactive dimensions of creative technology. The integration of telematics, a field that combines telecommunications and informatics, facilitates this exploration by enabling real-time, collaborative interaction between individuals in disparate locations over the Internet. This approach draws inspiration from the performative arts, particularly the works of Richard Schechner, who emphasized the transformative potential of performance in reconfiguring personal and collective identities (Schechner, 1985).

Central to this technological, interactive, and performative exploration is the use of openFrameworks, an open-source C++ toolkit for creative coding. The project creates a digital liminal space where two individuals can engage in a co-individual collaborative portrait experience by connecting two application instances using the TCP protocol over the Internet. This

interaction resonates with the ideas of Roy Ascott, who is a quintessential figure in “telematic art” used as a medium for collaborative creativity and shared consciousness (Ascott, 2003), and Paul Sermon’s *Telematic Dreaming*, where two separate interfaces are located in different locations working as custom intimate video-conferencing systems (Sermon, 1992).

Therefore, the paper addresses a critical question: can technology accurately represent the transformations occurring within the liminal space of communication across borders? Through this research question, the project aims to reveal the potential of technology not just as a tool for connection but tentatively as a medium for the reconstitution of identity in politically uprooted contexts. By positioning individuals in a shared, ephemeral space, the project fosters a temporary yet profound sense of co-individuality, challenging conventional notions of identity and belonging.

Fragile political contexts towards a numbing identity loss

I cannot deny that this research comes from my personal disenchantment with multiple political scenarios. Year after year, the fragile political panorama has pushed me to explore issues of loss of identity further as many democracies weaken and leave a trail of disoriented and detached citizens. Starting with reflections on myself, I have expanded my focus to study the issues facing individuals within broader systems, the complex relationships between individuals, the mutability of identities, and the pervasive sense of alienation.

The foundations and frustrations that seeded this project started after the surge of political instability in Catalonia in October 2017 and have continued to grow until today. The following newspaper article summarizes how international media reported on the conflict and how it could have reflected on expats without context and real-time communication who relied on video calls to connect with relatives for face-to-face information. The article “Flags, passion and anger: reporting from a divided Spain” by Sam Jones was published in *The Guardian* on 25 November 2017, and dug into the deepening political crisis between Catalonia and the Spanish government. The piece provides first-hand accounts of the events surrounding the disputed independence referendum held on 1 October 2017, illustrating the profound divisions within Spanish society and the challenges journalists faced covering such a polarized event. It highlights the fervent emotions, nationalistic symbols, and escalating tensions that characterized the push for Catalan independence and the subsequent response from the Spanish government.

For a while, the uncertainty loomed heavily as repression, violence, misunderstanding, and media manipulation flowed for a couple of months, regardless of the political take on the subject. European indecision in mediating the conversation between Spain and Catalonia only exacerbated this uncertainty, leaving many of us far away, in a state of liminality – citizens of everywhere and nowhere at the same time. The sense of identity was shattered for a while, requiring a different lens to assemble it back. My creative exploration supported me on this quest.

Envisioning a solution for temporary loss of identities

This experience deepened my interest in the idea of a temporary loss of identity, shaped by the unique backgrounds of individuals trying to maintain connections with their cultural roots while navigating an alienated and ephemeral political space. Unfortunately, these reflections are not limited to Catalonia alone but resonate differently with numerous posterior international situations.

Since 2020, the political upheaval of Brexit has similarly thrust millions into an identity crisis as people grapple with their place in a divided United Kingdom and an increasingly fragmented Europe. This separation's bureaucratic and emotional toll has left many feeling disconnected from their national and continental identities (Moskal and Sime, 2022).

Additionally, the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine has generated a massive refugee crisis, forcing millions to flee their homes and seek asylum across Europe and beyond (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2025). These individuals face the harrowing challenge of preserving their identity while integrating into foreign societies under the shadow of a conflict that has disrupted their lives. This massive displacement raises profound questions about identity resilience amidst forced migration and the search for a new sense of belonging (Fóti, 2024).

In a very different way, in the United States, political polarization has created deep divisions, fragmenting communities and altering the fabric of social cohesion. The stark ideological divides have left individuals questioning their affiliations, values, and identities within an increasingly fractured society (Kleinfeld, 2023).

These Western-world-focused conflicts that affect people I care about, alongside my personal experience, fuel my exploration of whether there can be a connection between individuals without the intervention of rigid political or social systems. Can technology, art, and shared experiences create spaces where identity is in constant flux, collaborative, and co-constructed? How can individuals maintain a sense of self while engaging in a collective redefinition of identity across borders, both literal and metaphorical?

Though still unanswered, these questions guide my work and hope. I hope that through these shared experiences, we can uncover new ways of connecting, understanding, and evolving our identities in a rapidly changing world, even if it is just in safe, interactive, and/or performative spaces.

Identity and spatial presence

Many other artists have approached similar questions before me. In particular, one analog interactive piece deeply touched me: Marina Hulzenga's project *Awasitipahaskan*. Hulzenga, an artist, designer, and curator based in Alberta, explores spatial environments by blending art and design. Her work investigates how exhibition design can tell specific stories, encouraging social discussions about the spaces we inhabit. Her site-specific installation (Figure 1) explores the intersection of indigenous and European knowledge



Figure 1. Marina Hulzenga, *Liminal Space || Awasitipahaskan* - spatial installation, 2014-2020, dimensions unknown, Design Academy Eindhoven, Netherlands, <<https://marinahulzenga.com>>.

systems, focusing on transitional zones where cultures meet and interact. The outermost of four circles opens a site inside the gallery with the question, “Where are you from?” As the viewer looks to the center, each circle imparts a phrase and corresponding visuals that open up the space for contemplation and communication about the impacts of borders, the histories of indigenous peoples on the lands, and alternative ways of seeing the world around us (Parzen, 2019). These conversations are mobilized through the use of the border as a signifier of liminality. The word “Awasitipahaskan,” derived from Cree, means “in-between” or “liminal space”, which aligns closely with my focus on spaces where identities are fluid and transformative.

In Hulzenga’s work, she creates physical spaces that serve as platforms for understanding how knowledge is produced when different cultures encounter each other. Similarly, my project exemplifies how technology can make digital liminal spaces, allowing individuals to engage in intimate, co-individual experiences across real or fictional borders.

Both of our projects explore the dynamics of identity formation and cultural exchange within these in-between spaces. While Hulzenga uses physical installations to navigate these themes, I use digital tools to connect individuals and foster shared identity in a collaborative space. Our approaches may differ, but our shared interest in the transformative potential of liminal spaces ties our work together.

Hulzenga’s work is a spatial installation about borders. It may not have an apparent relation to my work, but we share some concerns. Is there a way to avoid borders? Could we have a temporary state without considering borders?

I wondered if it is possible to recreate a Limen through technology. My project takes place in two different spaces simultaneously connected

through a network to create just one entity. “Limens” are “threshold” spaces where one is neither in nor out (Turner, 1974). Also, if this were possible thanks to technology, can technology make present what is both absent and imaginary?

Telematics experience as a packaged co-created identity

So, what technology am I using to achieve my goal? Before settling on any given technology, I want to frame the experience well.

In exploring the concept of co-individuality, the technological need stems from the ability to connect individuals across digital spaces, which allows for the co-construction of identities. This connection is nurtured by the many examples found in Madeline Schwartzman’s *See Yourself Sensing: Redefining Human Perception*, questioning how technology can reshape our understanding of perception and self-awareness. Schwartzman argues that new sensory technologies, particularly those enabling virtual and augmented experiences, can expand human capacities to sense and interact with the world and others (Schwartzman, 2011). Schwartzman’s argument aligns with *Co-Individuality*’s attempts with digital tools to mediate the creation of fluid, collaborative identities in a shared space. In her work, Schwartzman emphasizes the importance of using technology not just for functionality but as a means to extend and transform human experiences, opening up new ways of perceiving identity and interaction. This extended human experience is part of the so-called sought liminality.

Building on this, *Co-Individuality* explores the potential of telematics not simply as a tool for remote communication, but as a medium for generating intimate, co-constructed portraits across distances. Paul Sermon’s *Telematic Dreaming*, shown in Figure 2, provides foundational models of intimate telepresence, where strangers engage in meaningful exchanges through the shared inhabitation of a virtual space (Sermon, 1996). The idea of becoming intimate with a stranger in a digital space is both daunting and appealing, and warrants further exploration.

Similarly, the project draws closer conceptual alignment with works like *The Machine to Be Another* by BeAnotherLab. This decade-long exploration enables participants to inhabit the perspective of another person through



Figure 2. Paul Sermon, *Telematic Dreaming*, 1993, <<http://www.v2.nl/archive/works/telematic-dreaming>>.



Figure 3. BeAnotherLab. The Machine to be Another as depicted in the interview “BeAnotherLab Creates Transformative Experiences with Tech – Brought to you by Hyundai”, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjIOUaioYpI>.

embodied audiovisual simulation (BeAnotherLab, 2012), as shown in Figure 3. Additionally, they have worked on *Body Swap*, where participants dissolve individual agency into a common one in a VR experience. This kind of interaction, which is indeed rooted in empathy and performative embodiment, reveals how digital systems can create powerful affective and identity-shaping experiences (De Oliveira et al., 2016).

The theoretical backdrop of media performance further strengthens this argument. As Chris Salter explores in *Entangled*, interactive environments collapse the distinction between technology, body, and environment, creating situations where meaning and identity emerge from interaction rather than predefinition (Salter, 2010). Similarly, Steve Dixon’s *Digital Performance* frames telematic interaction as a hybrid performative act, wherein the interplay of liveness and mediation generates new performative grammars (Dixon, 2007). These frames help articulate *Co-Individuality* as a situated, performative act, grounded in the materiality of media and real-time engagement. Within this framework, technology and embodied telepresence converge to challenge boundaries around identity.

These precedents inform the methodological core of *Co-Individuality*, which aims to foster new forms of recognition and mutual reflection through interactive and responsive telematic portraits. By centering the moment of encounter where two individuals connect across borders, languages, and physical space, the work foregrounds not a born identity, but an emergent, relational one. Through this intimate co-presence, the project opens a space in which identity becomes not only visible but negotiable, shared, and transformative.

Co-Individuality uses these insights to propose a framework in which technology and bodies converge to challenge and transform identity, creating a space for political and social dialogue and offering a potential radical solution to issues of belonging, alienation, and political conflict. Hence, we

define the role of technology, when applied creatively, as an enabler of new forms of perception and interaction for human communication. The use of telematics as a shared digital space, where individuals can collaborate and engage with one another in real-time, supports rethinking identity and addressing the conversation about pressing political and social issues, while promoting a re-evaluation of identity as contingent, negotiated, and always in process. Telematic performances anchored in media art practices can serve as a tool for intimacy, experimentation, and critical reflection in response to real-world social fragmentation (Sermon, 1996).

The technological infrastructure of telematics facilitates this by providing a virtual space where individuals from diverse backgrounds can connect, collaborate, and explore their identities in ways that would be difficult to achieve in the physical world. This tentative virtual space aligns with the notion that, in liminal spaces, “everything is possible” – where individuals can temporarily step outside the constraints of their fixed identities and explore new forms of self-expression and connection.

Co-individuality offers a space for individuals to connect beyond borders, engage with others in shifting and transformative ways, and reimagine their roles in a fluid, ever-changing political landscape, making telematics an ideal medium for the project to realize Turner’s take on liminal space. It is not just a technological encounter but a means of practice-based artistic research to explore new forms of interaction, identity, and political action in an increasingly divided world.

Technology and aesthetics to enable the co-Individuality liminal space

A telematics experience from a technological standpoint is not new, but different approaches change the perception of end-to-end users and passive audiences. Therefore, I want to highlight three projects that enabled face-to-face communication in different ways and critically comment on them to frame *Co-individuality* better.

First, *Portrait Machine* is an interactive photography installation that visualizes the relationships between visitors by analyzing various features like clothing, hair color, facial expression, and their positioning within the frame. It highlights the similarities and differences among these traits, emphasizing our shared connections and individual uniqueness. The installation shown in Figure 4 generates striking visual patterns and playful contrasts. Theodore Watson created *Portrait Machine* in collaboration with Kyle McDonald, produced by Nina Meilof for CBK Amsterdam (Watson et al., 2009). The connectedness and shared individuality resonate deeply with the goal of *Co-Individuality*.

Later, Kyle McDonald created *Sharing Faces*, which was commissioned by the 4th APAP Making Lab in collaboration with YCAM Interlab. For eight months, pictures were exchanged between Anyang, Korea, and Yamaguchi, Japan. All visitors at either location had their expressions and poses matched in real-time with images of someone else who had previously stood before the installation. Thousands of people engaged with the work



Figure 4. Theodore Watson, *Portrait Machine*, 2009. Collaboration with Kyle McDonald; produced by Nina Meilof for CBK Amsterdam, <<https://theowatson.com/work/portrait-machine>>.



Figure 5. Kyle McDonald, *Sharing Faces*, 2013. Anyang, Korea, and Yamaguchi, Japan, <<https://theowatson.com/work/portrait-machine>>.

appearing in Figure 5, experiencing their reflection through another person's face (McDonald, 2013). This moment of connection, stillness to keep the same face, and perseverance should also be sought in *Co-Individuality*.

Last, *Portals*, created by Lithuanian artist Benediktas Gylys, are interactive installations designed to foster a sense of global unity by visually connecting people from different cities through large circular screens. These installations allow participants to engage in real-time, overseas interactions, emphasizing shared humanity and countering divisive narratives. In



Figure 6. Benediktas Gylys, *Portal between Vilnius and Lublin*, 2021, <https://www.fastcompany.com/90647761/this-magical-portal-connects-people-across-two-cities>.

Figure 6, we see one *Portal* connected with a person in another *Portal* somewhere in the globe. The project began in 2016, aiming to bridge physical and cultural divides by creating a space where individuals can connect across borders in a shared experience of presence and understanding (Gylys, 2016).

Although all three projects enable this connection between two individuals, either in different locations or at various times, all of them achieve communication without having to work for it. All of the images above are too sharp, too perfect. In difficult times, communication must not be taken for granted; hence, including intimate interactions and performativity is necessary for *Co-Individuality* to work and have some visual interplay.

Aesthetics are a keystone of any artistic project. I worked with different visual styles to get a combined image that fulfilled my expectations. Through my graphics exploration, I came across the slit-scan technique. The slit-scan technique is a photographic process that captures time and motion in a single image by using a moving slit to expose the film or sensor progressively. This method distorts the subject, emphasizing its movement and transformation over time (Davidhazy, 2006). Digitally, one can mimic the slit-scan effect to achieve some kind of distortion in an amorphous way. The visual exploration also helped me better understand how to treat the data to merge both inputs when developing the telematics experience.

To feel my desired aesthetics, find my visual referents below: Andrew Davidhazy and William Larson. Whereas Davidhazy distorts a still image into an impossible bodily figure (Figure 7), Larson's works translate movement into a still in a way that tells multiple stories and includes many points of view in one place (Figure 8). I aimed to achieve both in *Co-Individuality*, having an impossible image while freezing the movement or lack of it in the resulting still image that frames the collaborative portrait.

From my practice as a creative technologist, I evaluated different possibilities for a technological framework suitable for developing the expected



Figure 7. Andrew Davidhazy, *Helene-model-4093am.jpg*, date unknown. School of Photographic Arts and Sciences Rochester Institute of Technology, <http://www.davidhazy.org/andpph/>.



Figure 8. William Larson, *Figure in Motion*, 1966-1968, USA, https://www.gittermangallery.com/artist/William_Larson/works/3188.

slit-scan telepresence experience. After some low-fidelity prototyping, I will describe the system from both an aesthetic and technical standpoint, including the hardware and custom software created for it in addition to a description of how it works from the user's standpoint.

Implementing *Co-Individuality*

The *Co-Individuality* system is built using openFrameworks and is networked through two different computers (or tablets or smartphones) with cameras that send bytes of the image to each other to get a blended and distorted output. openFrameworks, created by Zach Lieberman and collaborators, is an open-source C++ toolkit designed for creative coding, particularly in the fields of interactive art, design, and digital media. It supports artists and developers in building interactive applications involving graphics, sound, and video by streamlining complex programming tasks, making creative technology more accessible (openframeworks.cc, 2025).

The slit-scan technique implemented in openFrameworks requires the use of a computer camera, plus coding a program that stores the information



Figure 9. Carla Molins-Pitarch, self-portrait exploration of the slit-scan technique using openFrameworks, 2017.

of the pixel values of one horizontal line of the image per frame and appends it to the other previously stored lines. The result can be seen in Figure 9, where the blurred horizontal lines suggest that there was movement from side to side in between the pictures taken from frame to frame.

Two camera-equipped devices are needed to achieve the *Co-Individuality* collaborative portrait. Both cameras get real-time images from each location and use a slit-scan technique to decompose each line's pixel information, sending it to the other end. After the line is sent and received, it is blended with the local image. The final image is a combination of both end images — people or individuals that change frame by frame as the slit-scan updates the image one line at a time.

A glimpse into *Co-Individuality's* technical development

The complete set of the first version of the experience consisted of two different computers mirroring the image on an external camera and webcam that will be used as a support and a visual clue for the user.

My technical prototyping was another keystone of the project, as I encountered numerous challenges in getting the data and processing it as expected. My main issue was to sync both slit-scan systems (two different cameras with different frame rates), as seen in Figure 11, upper-left image. Progressively, I got a better resolution for both slit-scan images and their overlapping result, as seen in the additional screenshots in Figure 11.

The next step was to create the network using the *ofxNetwork* add-on and the TCP protocol, allowing two different devices to connect to an internet network and send data packages from one image to another and vice versa. As a starting point, I would create a system that worked locally on my

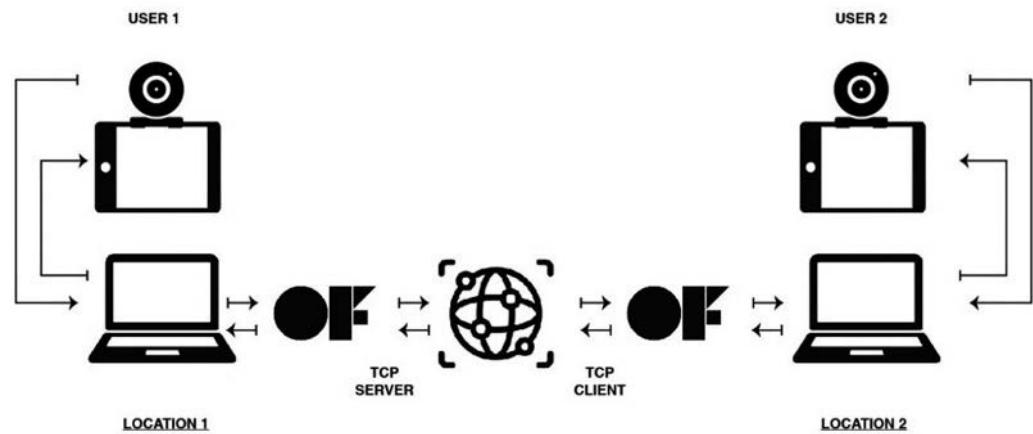


Figure 10. Carla Molins-Pitarch, *Co-Individuality* diagram showing the first version of the system, 2018.

computer and progressively moved to an external connection. Connecting TCP instances together was not the most difficult part. What became challenging was sending a massive amount of data and receiving that as ordered packets in order to construct the image again from the data received. Initially, I would send live video, meaning a massive stream of data packages. Still, as I wanted to use slit-scan on the other end, I sent all pixel information line by line, which I already used to create the slit-scan effect. Finally, it ended up working, writing two different complementary programs, TCP Server and TCP Client (Figure 12), sending small data packages, and calculating the overlapping resulting image live.



Figure 11. Carla Molins-Pitarch, Four still images showing the progress in developing the openFrameworks slit-scan overlapping system fed by two cameras, 2018.

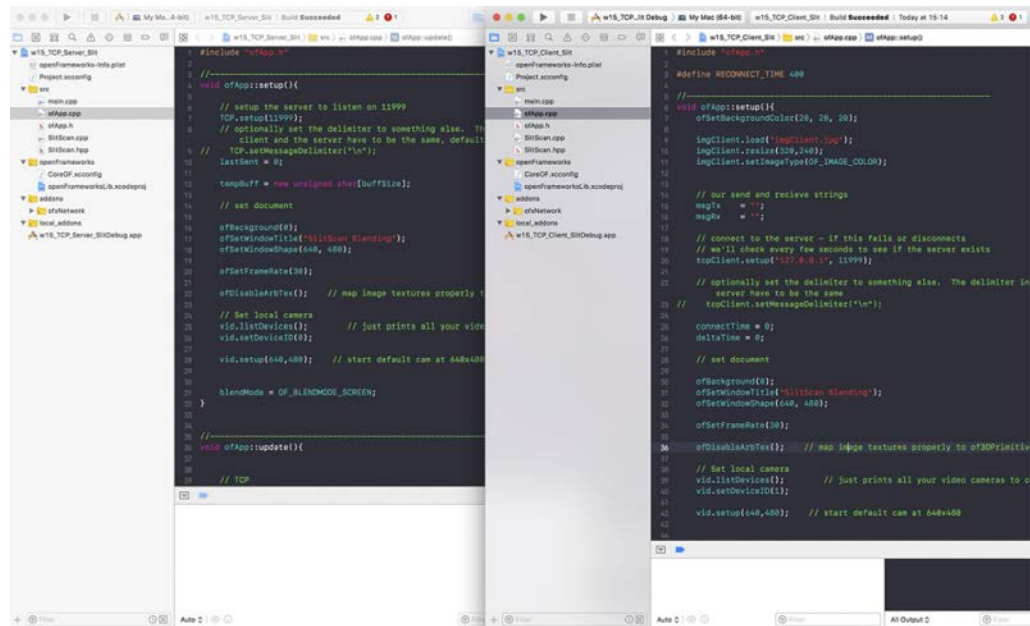


Figure 12. Carla Molins-Pitarch, openFrameworks Co-Individuality slit-scan TCP Server-Client Programs, 2018.

Co-individuality experience from the audience's lens

The primary audience is meant to be two different individuals across the globe who are “connected” simultaneously. My first liminal space takes place somewhere and nowhere between Barcelona and New York. It is not a random choice in my case; it is both where I was and where I would like to be,

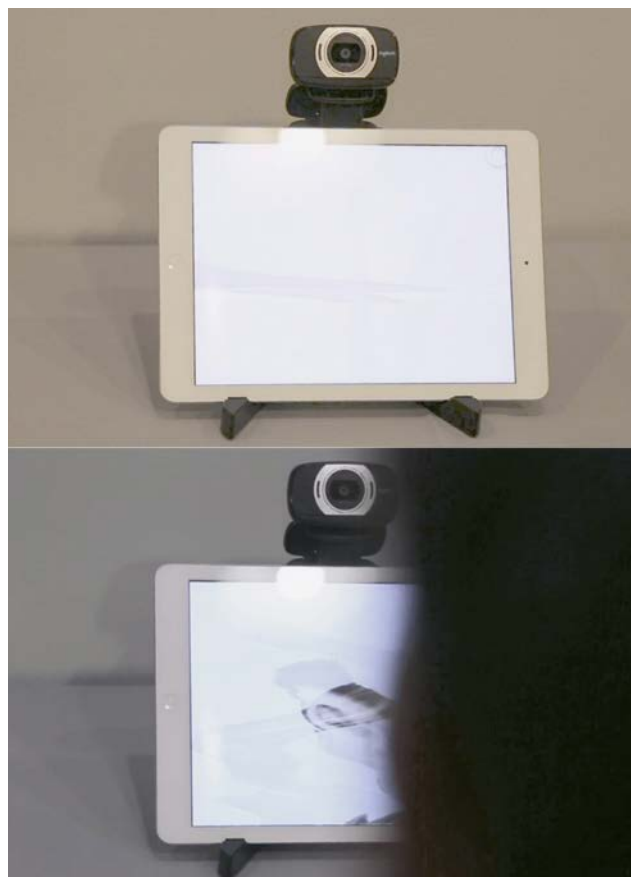


Figure 13. Carla Molins-Pitarch, top: ‘Co-Individuality’ Individual A before interaction; bottom: Individual B after interaction, 2018.



Figure 14. Carla Molins-Pitarch, top: 'Co-Individuality' live collaborative portrait while both individuals are moving; bottom: 'Co-Individuality' live collaborative portrait while both individuals stand still and wait for the shared portrait. Original artwork, 2018; revamped iOS version 2024.

which I cannot be. However, it could be elsewhere; there are just two points that need to be connected at some point. I imagined it as a neutral, intimate space where a short connection could happen without any external threat.

Individual A in New York approaches the communication device shaped as a tablet and a web camera supported by a small stand. This device will be one end connected to another end in a different physical space (Barcelona). As there is no one on the other side at first, Individual A figures out the line-by-line building of the portrait and the visual motion created frame by frame. Individual B (Barcelona) sees what is happening and decides to join this communication.

At first, the communication is limited, as Individual A is already familiar with both options: either standing still to see their face fully or moving to create a dynamic portrait. After some interaction, the merging of both identities occurs as a frame-to-frame dialogue. It is up to each individual to determine how distorted they want the image to be, depending on their own movement. The individual decision will determine the collective portrait one line at a time.

Notably, the result is the reward one may find some comfort in, but the process to achieve that is what provides meaning to the experience. The hardships, misunderstandings, and technological barriers that both individuals endure are part of the representation of their identities, as they are an inherent part of the trial-and-error learning process. Moreover, time will support the ultimate act of collaborative portrayal of the experience, until one or both individuals decide to leave, and their channel of communication will be erased, leaving a starting white canvas for the next *Co-Individuality*.



Figure 15. Carla Molins-Pitarch, co-Individuality's liminal space. Original artwork 2018 – revamped iOS version 2024.

A fragile, ephemeral, and intimate instance only available when two people happen to be there sharing this liminal space. What if there is no one on the other side? Time is the key; one has to wait, and this waiting is a reminder that communication cannot be taken for granted.

But if that shared identity happens in the liminal space, can we access it? There is an opportunity when touching the screen, as one may discover the hidden *Co-Individuality* liminal space layer. Almost like an Easter egg, it requires exploration and looking beyond what is given. It represents the liminal space where both entities exist separately, being constructed line by line, as shown in Figure 15. Each of the distinguished colored elements represents one of the digital entities at each end of the communication. They both construct and exist separately in this space, and it is not until displayed in telematics mode that they overlap and create the resulting collaborative portrait. Therefore, there is a place and a time where both entities exist separately and together, depending on how you look at it. Is finding the liminal space a must to experience *Co-Individuality* fully? Despite being the most literal depiction of liminality, it offers an additional layer that may not be discovered by everyone, only by those who dare to approach it in a more exploratory way.

Co-Individuality's audience finds connectedness and a shared identity achieved through intimate interaction, performativity, and perseverance in this networked liminal space, where visual communication is slow but constant, with a need for non-verbal dialogue and agreements.

Conclusions and future liminal spaces

After presenting *Co-Individuality* in a variety of exhibition spaces and to diverse audiences, I return to several foundational principles that have guided the project since its inception in 2017.

The telematic experience at the heart of *Co-Individuality* offers a dynamic and fluid space where identity is not predefined but emerges through

relational interaction, engaging participants in a performative encounter that highlights identity as fluid, situated, and in a state of tension. Rather than confining participants to rigid categories, the work fosters identity as a continuous negotiation shaped in the liminal space between self and other, mediated by technology. This experience is both embodied and ephemeral, allowing participants to shape and reshape who they are in response to the presence of someone else. The project invites participants to inhabit identity as a set of gestures, expressions, and co-produced actions shaped through mediated presence. These interactions open a temporary space where identity can be rehearsed, reframed, and perceived through the lens of relationality rather than individuality.

Co-Individuality creates a framework for intimate, performative encounters across geographical, cultural, or political boundaries. By engaging strangers in a moment of co-presence through real-time portraiture, the work echoes projects like Paul Sermon's *Telematic Dreaming*, which, since the 90s, offer rich examples in affective telepresence and identity simulation. Schwartzman emphasizes that technology should extend beyond mere utility, serving instead as a tool to expand and reshape the human experience. These influences reinforce the understanding of *Co-Individuality* not just as a technological experiment, but as a platform for participatory performance where the act of encountering the other becomes a co-creative process that can foster empathy and shared understanding.

Creating a space that invites participants to connect across boundaries, whether real or fictional, offers a tool for fostering empathy. This project began as a way to confront the uncertainties and anxieties associated with contemporary political conflicts, aiming to help individuals relate to one another on a more human level. The emphasis shifts to the performative mechanics of interaction: the gaze, the mirrored movement, the silent dialogue that unfolds between two participants. These embodied gestures form the foundation of the work's political and social potential. They do not require traditional linguistic communication to achieve meaning; instead, they enact a form of intimacy that reveals shared vulnerability and humanity. Its impact, though, is currently still marginal and limited to the lived experiences of who participates.

As the world faces increasing political fragmentation, telematics experience offers an experimental tool to raise awareness on open conversations which might be a space for collective action that is not constrained by physical borders. *Co-Individuality*, through telematics, allows participants to engage in a form of political action or at least political critical thinking that is not limited to traditional political mechanisms. Instead, the project provides a platform for individuals to engage in meaningful non-verbal dynamic dialogue, create shared identities, and explore new ways of thinking about citizenship, belonging, and political agency. This experimental form of interaction could be a step toward a more inclusive and decentralized approach to political engagement. *Co-Individuality* proposes a rethinking of the idea of belonging through performative, sensory, and relational engagement.

In sum, *Co-Individuality* as a telematics experience is not merely a technological artifact, but a political and artistic gesture with the aim to explore new forms of interaction, identity, and collective presence in an increasingly divided world. It offers a space for individuals to connect across borders, engage in transformative dialogue, and reimagine their roles within a shifting political landscape. Beyond alleviating temporary feelings of alienation, this work invites critical reflection on how we relate to others, how shared identity might emerge without erasing difference, and how digital intimacy can offer relief, or resistance amid fragmentation. As we move into increasingly uncertain social and political futures, creating such experimental modes of connection becomes an approach not only to extend our understanding of who we are and who we might become, but to acknowledge and respond to experiences that many are forced to endure, and those in a position of privilege are allowed to look away.



Bibliographical references

- ASCOTT, Roy. *Telematic Embrace: Visionary Theories of Art, Technology, and Consciousness*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003.
- BEANOTHERLAB. "The Machine to Be Another" [online], 2012. <<https://beanotherlab.org/home/work/tmtba/>> [Last accessed: 15 July 2025].
- DAVIDHAZY, Andrew, "Slit-scan photography" [online], 2006. <<https://repository.rit.edu/article/214>> [Last accessed: 2 January 2025].
- DIXON, Steve. *Digital Performance: A History of New Media in Theater, Dance, Performance Art, and Installation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007.
- FÓTI, Klára. "Social Impact of Migration: Addressing the Challenges of Receiving and Integrating Ukrainian Refugees" [online] (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union), 2024. <<https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2024-03/ef2303oen.pdf>> [Last accessed: 11 November 2025].
- GYLYS, Benediktas. "Portals" [online], 2016. <<https://www.portals.org/portals>> [Last accessed: 2 January 2025].
- HULZENG, Marina. "Liminal Space / Awasitipahaskan" [online] <<https://marinahulzenga.com/personal>> [Last accessed: 2 January 2025].
- KLEINFELD, Rachel. "Polarization, Democracy, and Political Violence in the United States: What the Research Says" [online]. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 5 September 2023. <<https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/09/05/polarization-democracy-and-political-violence-in-united-states-what-research-says-pub-90457>> [Last accessed: 11 November 2025].
- MCDONALD, Kyle (2013). "Sharing Faces" [online] <<https://theowatson.com/work/portrait-machine>> [Last accessed: 1 January 2025].
- MOSKAL, Marta; SIME, Daniela. "Young Europeans in Brexit Britain: Unsettling Identities" [online]. *Global Networks*, 22, no. 2, pp. 183-196. <<https://doi.org/10.1111/glob.12338>> [Last accessed: 11 November 2025].

- DE OLIVEIRA, Elen Collaço; BERTRAND, Philippe; LESUR, Marte Ernesto Roel; PALOMO, Priscila; DEMARZO, Marcelo; CEBOLLA, Ausias, BANOS, Rosa; TORI, Romero. "Virtual Body Swap: A New Feasible Tool to Be Explored in Health and Education" [online] <<https://doi.org/10.1109/SVR.2016.23>>. [*Proceedings – 18th Symposium on Virtual and Augmented Reality, SVR 2016*, 2016, pp. 81-89. [Last accessed: 11 November 2025].
- OPENFRAMEWORKS. "About openframeworks" [online] <<https://openframeworks.cc/about/>> [Last accessed: 2 January 2025].
- PARZEN, Kristina. "The Space In-Between Cultures: Site-Specific Meeting Places of Indigenous and European Knowledges" [online] <<https://open.library.ubc.ca/soa/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/24/items/1.0394795>>. Master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 2019 [Last accessed: 11 November 2011].
- SALTER, Chris. *Entangled: Technology and the Transformation of Performance*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010.
- SERMON, Paul. "Telematic Dreaming" [online], 1992. <<https://www.paulsermon.org/dream/dream.html>> [Last accessed: 15 July 2025].
- SCHECHNER, Richard. *Between Theater and Anthropology*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985.
- SCHWARTZMAN, Madeline. *See Yourself Sensing: Redefining Human Perception*. London: Black Dog Press, 2011.
- TURNER, Victor: "Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, and Ritual: An Essay in Comparative Symbolology" [online] (1974). *Rice University Studies*, vol. 60, no. 3, pp. 53-92. <<https://hdl.handle.net/1911/63159>>.
- TURNER, Victor. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1969.
- UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES. "Ukraine Refugee Situation" [online]. UNHCR Operational Data Portal. <<https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>> [Last accessed: 2 January 2025].
- WATSON, Theodore; McDONALD, Kyle. "Portrait Machine" [online] <<https://theowatson.com/work/portrait-machine>>. [Last accessed: 2 January 2025].