

# **The Impact of Digital Mediation and Hybridisation on the Form of Comics.**

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fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of DDes.

For Alan and Scott, the reasons for this thesis.  
For my wife Karol, the reason for everything.

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## **Abstract**

The form of comics is undergoing a transition as digital display becomes an increasingly popular mode of consumption. This thesis examines the impact of digital mediation and hybridisation on the form of comics. Through an analysis of the work of theorists (e.g. Cohn; Groensteen; Hatfield; Miodrag) and practitioner-theorists (e.g. Eisner; McCloud), a model of comics is developed based on seven key characteristics of the form: space as time; simultaneous juxtaposition of images; closure between images; spatial networks; reader control of pacing; tabloid images; word and image blending.

A cross-disciplinary, practice-based methodology is used to examine the impact of digital mediation on these seven characteristics. The operation of a range of different formats of digital comic (webcomic; infinite canvas; malleable page; guided view; motion comic; hypercomic; game comic; audible comic) is analysed. Similarities between digital and architecturally mediated formats are considered. A series of prototype game comics is created to investigate the hybridisation of comics with the ludic qualities of videogames. A further game comic prototype is constructed to examine the integration of audible, time-based soundtracks.

The thesis concludes that different digital comic formats place greater or lesser emphasis on the seven identified characteristics of the form. Gallery-based hypercomics are shown to draw on approaches originally established within digital formats to meet the challenges of architectural mediality. Game comics are identified as hypercomics that exhibit some of the characteristics of games and use some of the key characteristics of the form of comics as the basis for their gameplay. The spatial nature of the form of comics is established as providing potential for synthesis with the spatial nature of videogames. Responsive soundtracks are demonstrated to support rather than conflict with the identified characteristics of the form.