

Digital Revolution

An immersive exhibition of art, design, film, music and videogames

3 Jul-14 Sep 2014. Barbican, London. Reviewed by Rebecca Skeels

Barbican Centre, Digital Revolution. Chris Milk, *The Treachery of Sanctuary*, 2012 *The Creators Project*, a partnership with Intel and VICE. Photo: Rebecca Skeels

Just before the entrance of the show, but already inside the Barbican, were some large plastic worm things hanging from the ceiling that interacted with the movements and dancing of the people nearby. (*'Minimaforms, Petting Zoo'*, 2013 Theodore & Stephen Spyropoulos). This was a good start for me: I feel that this is what digital revolution is about, computers that learn from the interaction from others and react to those movements, sounds and colours.

The first few rooms of the exhibition were dark and loud, full of computers past and computer games that someone my age remembers well – from the green dots and lines of Pong to Donkey Kong and Pac-man, as well as the ZX spectrum and Amstrad computers. This led to interactive exhibits, still in the dark however, such as crows made from old mobile phones that squawked and moved when you phoned them. The interactive exhibits were broken up with a large exhibit of how some films are now being made; this is an extremely informative piece, showing how the technology is used to develop images down to the tiniest detail to create reality and feeling.

The rooms that followed were great fun with more interaction such as creating wishes and blowing them away and making shadows that developed wings that moved with each wave of my arms. I think the only real disappointment so far was that it was hard to read any of the information plaques. Not only was it a little dark to read them, but they were all on a shiny surfaces so you had to move around so that the light could catch it in a way so that it could be read and each one was rather long to be moving it around to get the right angle.



The final part of this section was the wearable technology (don't be mistaken jewellers out there; there was no jewellery to be found I am afraid). The wearables were based on textiles, with clothes that lit up, blew bubbles and changed colour, fascinating and informative, and in a better lit area too. This is where you get a bit of a break and we needed it, having managed to take our time and be in the first section for quite a while. The next section was a little confusing and was full of kids on computers, so we were drawn to the shop nearby which was full of Arduinos (an open-source electronics platform), toys and books.

The final section was set in the basement, again a dark area, full of theatre smoke and light. I got the feeling that it wasn't quite working as well as it should. I had the opportunity to push lights around just by waving my hands, making them swing, grow and shrink. This effect however was quickly destroyed by a running child waving his arms about making the light you think you have just got control of switch off or swing off into the abyss.

Overall, a great day out for all ages and we had a super time. However, I did feel that it was missing something: to me the digital revolution is more than this. The exhibition was very focussed on play, which is never a bad thing, but what about the amazing digital advancements in medicine, science, creating and making? And of course I would have loved to have seen some jewellery.

<http://www.barbican.org.uk/digital-revolution/>