

Biography

Tamiko Thiel is a media artist developing the dramatic and poetic capabilities of various forms of virtual and augmented reality as a medium for exploring social and cultural issues. She received her B.S. in 1979 from Stanford University in Product Design Engineering with a focus on human factors design, and her M.S. in Mechanical Engineering in 1983 from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), with a focus on human-machine design at the Biomechanics Lab and computer graphics at the precursors to the MIT Media Lab. She then earned a Diploma in Applied Graphics in 1991 from the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich, Germany, specializing in video installation art. She exhibits internationally in venues such as the Istanbul Biennial, the International Center for Photography in New York, the Institute of Contemporary Art in London and in Boston, the ZKM in Karlsruhe, the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, and at festivals such as Siggraph, ISEA and Ars Electronica. In 1998 Thiel won WIRED Magazine's prize for media art, and was nominated for the 2001 Rockefeller Foundation New Media Arts Fellowship and for the 2009 World Technology Award. In 2003 she was a Japan Foundation Fellow and in 2004 a Fellow at the MIT Center for Advanced Visual Studies in Cambridge, MA.

She was creative director and producer of *Starbright World* (1996), an award-winning multi-user 3D online virtual playspace for seriously ill children in collaboration with then Starbright Foundation chairman Steven Spielberg. Her interactive 3D installation *Beyond Manzanar* (2000), reflecting on scapegoating of minorities in times of crisis, is in the permanent collection of the San Jose Museum of Art in Silicon Valley, California, USA. It is discussed in Whitney Museum media art curator Christiane Paul's reference book [Digital Art](#) (Thames and Hudson World of Art series), and Boston University Professor Matthew Smith's book [The Total Work of Art: From Bayreuth to Cyberspace](#). Professor Smith also published a monograph on Thiel's work, "Liquid Walls: The Digital Art of Tamiko Thiel," in the [Performing Arts Journal \(PAJ\)](#).

Her interactive 3D installation *The Travels of Mariko Horo* (2006) draws on Dante, Byzantine and Buddhist imagery to create a reverse Marco Polo fantasy of the exotic West seen from a Buddhist viewpoint. It premiered in 2006 at the first 01SJ Biennial in San Jose, Silicon Valley, USA (curator Steve Dietz), and has since been shown in venues such as Siggraph, the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi in Florence, Italy and the Fondazione Querini Stampalia in Venice, Italy. This work is discussed by Marcela Quiroz Luna, Curatorial Director of Art San Diego, in the article "Orientalism, Occidentalism and other myths of origin" in the [Fahrenheit Contemporary Art Magazine](#). In 2006 Thiel received a prize from the City of Munich, curated by Bettina Wagner-Bergelt (vice director, Bavarian State Ballet) and Dr. Stefan Urbaschek (curator, Sammlung Goetz), to commission a dance piece using *The Travels of Mariko Horo* as a realtime stage set: "In the Land of Babari-an" premiered at the Dance2006 Festival in Munich.

In 2007 she was awarded a major grant from the Hauptstadtkulturfonds (Berlin Capital City Cultural Funds) to create an interactive 3D installation on the Berlin Wall, *Virtuelle Mauer/ReConstructing the Wall*. This artwork won the IBM Innovation Award for Artistic Creation in Art and Technology at the 2009 Boston Cyberarts Festival. It was shown extensively in 2009 for the 20th anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall in Europe, including the Berlin City Museum in Germany and LABoral Centro de Arte in Spain (curators Steve Dietz and Christiane Paul). It was sent on tour by the Goethe-Institut in the USA and India; the US tour included a special event at the Harvard University Kennedy School of Government, and an opening speech by German Ambassador Dr. Klaus Scharioth (solo show, American University Museum, Washington D.C.).

A founding member of the cyberartist group Manifest.AR, she participated in the pathbreaking augmented reality exhibit "We AR in MoMA," an uninvited guerilla takeover of MoMA New York. Videos of Thiel's "Art Critic Face Matrix" were featured in articles in the [New York Times](#) and on [WNYC](#) (National Public Radio). In 2011 she led the Manifest.AR Venice Biennial AR Intervention, placing her works in the Venice Giardini and in the German National Pavilion, which won the Golden Lion Award for best national pavilion. This led to an invitation to participate in the ISEA UNCONTAINABLE official parallel program to the 2011 Istanbul Biennial.

Thiel has taught and lectured internationally at institutions such as Carnegie Mellon University, the MIT Media Lab, the Bauhaus-University in Weimar, Germany, University of California/San Diego, the University of Southern California School of Cinema-Television and the School of Film and Television in Babelsberg, Germany. Her essay on the dramatic techniques she uses to create her large-scale interactive narratives was published by MIT Press as part of the book [Third Person](#) (ed: Pat Harrigan and Noah Wardrip-Fruin). In winter 2011/2012 she is Visiting Professor for Technologies of Non-linear Dramaturgies at the UdK Berlin (Berlin University of the Arts.)