

shinkansen

Reports

VIRTUAL PHYSICAL BODIES//THE FUTURE SYNTHESIS WORKSHOP & SYMPOSIUM"

Held at ResCen Middlesex University & The South Bank London
14th to 18th September 1999

A shinkansen/ResCen/Random Dance Company Project

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Dance and New Technologies

Researching and debating the developing exploration of the synthesis of the virtual and physical body.

Moderated by Ghislaine Boddington (shinkansen and Research Associate ResCen) and Professor Christopher Bannerman Head of ResCen)

Tutors and Speakers - Ghislaine Boddington, Wayne McGregor (Random Dance Company), Huw Jones (CEA Middlesex University), Thecla Schiphorst, Yacov Sharir and Scott deLahunta.

Summary discussions was held on the final day of this event with small groups debating issues raised in the previous day's process of excavating key points. These related to the speakers inputs and, prior to the Symposium, the four day practical workshop.

Each round table sub-group was required to produce three summary observations and three points of action, the following summary points were shared within the entire group. Moderation by the Symposium speakers.

Participating and Spectating in New Media Arts

moderated by Scott deLahunta

Observations

- Interactivity as a mode of engagement with the work (the new breed of participant-spectator-performer)
- The search for a critical language (and the need to look back as well as forward for context/ideas)
- The implications of global real-time participatory events and their contribution to a new culture to run alongside existing cultures

Practical Points

- There needs to be a centralisation of organisational structures in order to support a variety of projects and provide new strategies for uniting different types of artists
 - Networks should be formed to widen access - local to global linkage
 - A general profile for this kind of work needs to be built to raise awareness with promoters and audiences
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Consciousness

moderated by Yacov Sharir

Observations

- * Unconsciously we are all using our consciousness all the time
- * All things are connected - machines and bodies form a common consciousness and a greater whole
- * The vegetable and/or the virtual - rave culture analogies with digital media offer the potential to redefine consciousness - transcendence
- * The way we see ourselves is changing, which affects the way we represent ourselves
- * The mind/body split in metaphors of the computer as brain - downloading consciousness as an ongoing debate

Practical Points

- * A recommendation to attend the Consciousness Reframed conference at CAIA, Newport, Wales in 2000
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Telematics/Presence

moderated by Thecla Schiphorst

Observations

- The importance of corporeal based explorations which engage with

technology

- The need to create the language of the "unspeakable-nonverbal-invisible"
- The presence of the spectator and her relationship with the performer

Practical Points

- Emphasise the space other than proscenium stage - chatrooms, bedrooms, cafes, the net
 - The need to question alternative markets - consumer, domestic, MUDs etc
 - The need to rethink and restructure training systems - education, community, outreach - and enable access
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Methodologies of Making

moderated by Wayne McGregor and Chris Bannerman

Observations

- The need to dialogue the means of production involving the negotiation of technology use, shared ideas, space, time and failure
- Aesthetic decision making questioning the difference between process and outcome
- Primacy of artistic communication over the seduction of the medium

Practical Points

- The complexity of these new production methodologies needs ongoing research opportunities
 - The issue of production in experiencing non-verbal processes i.e. group work developments
 - The need to give time to form a group to explore these points
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Co-Authorship/ Multi-skilling

moderated by Ghislaine Boddington

Observations

- Multi-skilling - issues of talent versus skill, often forced by economic pressures and can lead to lower quality outcomes. Positive results are individual awareness and respect through knowledge.
- The need to demystify technology and therefore democratise the processes of access and collaboration. Important however to develop ways to judge and perceive quality.
- Exposure is not the same as immersion in new skills. Exposure is good for increasing awareness of others skills, immersion allows specialist development.
- Hierarchies of profile exist within groups and these perceptions need to be

broken down. Need to learn from new group work models used in other sectors in order to build effective teams and foster openness, respect and trust.

Practical Points

- The funding system needs to be more flexible in order to respond to evolving collaborative processes and must allow space for the development of new group work and production methodologies.
 - There is a need to develop joint training processes to develop an appreciation of specialist skills and to prepare for collaboration
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Seminar Summary

From these shared ideas a wider discussion formalised the summary points of the seminar:-

- The interconnection of ideas discussed referred as much to art and life as art and technology
 - The generic humanity of the artistic investigations into technology - body/mind/machine
 - The need for training and research time
 - The need for new models of production and distribution
 - The vast range of new language and theory emerging in this field
 - The commitment, experience and engagement of practitioners in this field
 - The need for feedback to build confidence and communication networks
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For further information

- shinkansen - www.shinkansen.co.uk
- ResCen - www.adpa.mdx.ac.uk/rescen
- Random - www.cyberiacafe.net/random

Final summary transcribed and written up from the group input by Sophie Hansen and Ghislaine Boddington (shinkansen and ResCen Middlesex University, London)

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