stillness

responsive video installation

Tina Gonsalves
Tom Donaldson

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Overview

Stillness explores how our perceptions are effected by different emotional states.S*tillness* is a responsive video installation that reacts to the audience's involuntary gestures. At times the audience appear centre-stage in the video, while at others they fade into invisibility. As they become physically still, the installation discards their surroundings and shows them a world that becomes richer and more dreamlike. But this dreamworld remains fragile, and any movement destroys the moment.

The installation takes place in a well lit private gallery room. A camera monitors the audience and a projector displays the generated video on one wall of the gallery.

Tina Gonsalves is an internationally awarded film and video artist. Tom Donaldson is an inventor and engineer. Stillness forms the first in a series of responsive video works that Tina and Tom will be developing during a co-production at the Banff New Media Institute throughout 2003.

Concept

Stillness explores three key concepts woven into a single experience: the changing relations between audience and author; the tension between self-awareness and awareness of the wider world; and how everyday bustle can choke our inner harmonies.

Stillnessrequires that all members of the audience be completely still. While they continue to move, they see mostly a strong reflection of themselves placed into a cold background. The more they move, the faster and more frantic the video plays. As they become still, and the longer they remain still for, the more the reflection of their own presence fade away. Initially the cold background is replaced with simple but rich scenes that remind the audience of moments of peace. As they retain their stillness, these simple scenes give way to more abstract vistas, with more absorbing colours, textures and narrative. If the audience retains their stillness even longer, the vistas fade away into a dreamlike narrative and they journey through a myriad of images, stories and experiences. But at any moment, any movement by any audience member can shatter the illusion and bring reality and self-reflection rushing back into focus.

Stillnessuses multiple levels of imagery, and monitors the dynamics of the audience on multiple levels. By interactively blending their reflection into a changing background,Stillness tempts the audience to interact and play, and yet only properly rewards them when the entire group gives up their playfulness and gives in to stillness. It creates a complex relationship between the audience and the authors, and creates sharing and tension between different audience members. To really experience the full depth of the installation, the audience must abandon their desire to play, quieten their fidgeting and bring themselves, as a group, into an almost meditative state. By doing so, they are rewarded with a richer external world and a deeper internal experience.

Technical Requirements

Stillness requires a private room, approximately 10-15 foot square. It should be dimly lit, bright enough to make out faces but dark enough for the video project.

Technical equipment required includes:

- Data projector capable of filling one wall to a high brightness suitable for a dimly lit room;
- Stereo speakers and amplifier with attachments to PC sound card;
- A DV PAL video camera with IEEE1394 (firewire) interface and driver software for Microsoft Windows XP. Alternatively a high-quality web-cam with a USB interface and Microsoft Windows XP driver software.

PC meeting the following minimum specifications (can be supplied by the artists if necessary):

- 3.0GHz Intel Hyperthreaded Pentium 4 processor running on a 800MHz front-side bus (AMD or non-hyperthreaded processors or slower front-side buses will not be sufficient);
- Serial ATA-150 hard drive array of at least two hard drives in a RAID-0 configuration to a minimum of 50GB;
- 500MB of dual-channel 400FSB DDRAM;
- A 128 MB AGP8x graphics card using the nVidia 5200 chipset or better and including complete support for Microsoft DirectX 9.0;
- Firewire and USB interfaces;
- High quality stereo soundcard;
- DVD player;
- Microsoft Windows XP Professional (Home edition is not sufficient) with Microsoft DirectX 9.0 runtime installed.

The artwork will be supplied on a DVD with full installation instructions.
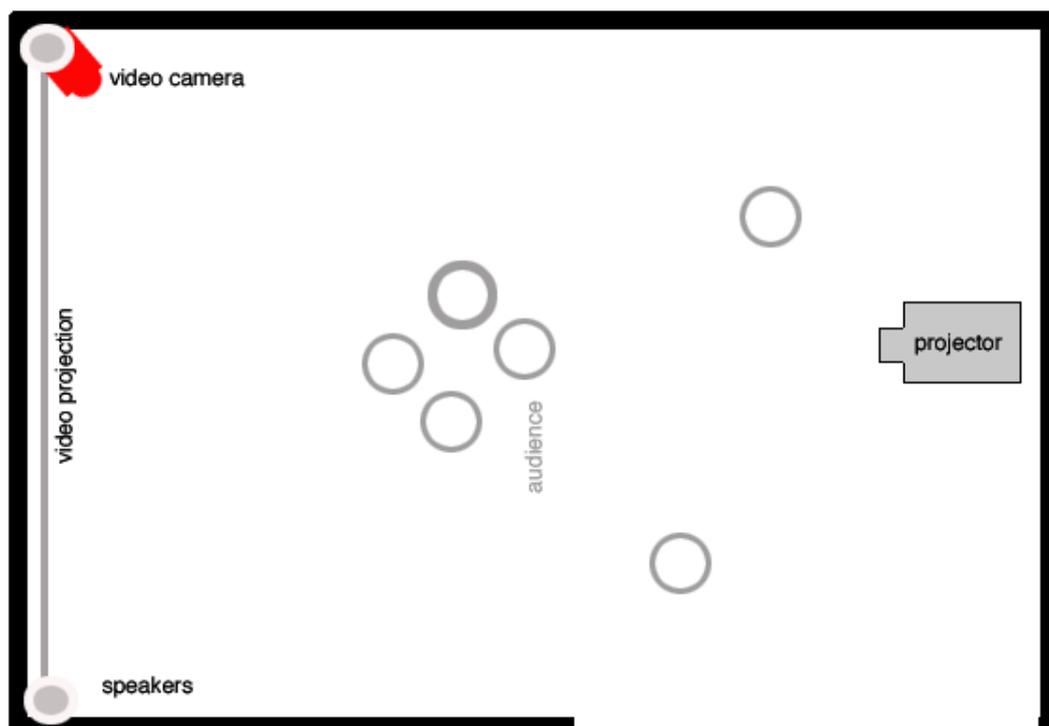
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the audience finds themselves self-reflected into projected video scene of seascape.

any slight audience fidgeting triggers a video and audio sequence of a dark landscape that amplifies their restlessness. The saturation of their reflection is also intensified.

The more hectic the audience' activity, the more frantic and turbulent the imagery and sound becomes, amplifying their restlessness. Their agitation increases the speed of the projected video, and intenisifies the audio.

As the audience calms, they fade into the background. The audience desaturates, and the background becomes more dreamlike moving into an underwater landscpe. The sound becomes gentle, reflecting their quietness

If calm enough, the audience is plunged into a rich dreamlike underwater journey. Their quietness starts to slow down the speed of the video and lowers the levels of the audio. The audience reflection eventually disappears altogether.

But any slight movement destroys the moment and ransports them right back to the frantic imagery and edgy audio track that reflects their restlessness.

To view sample video and audio tracks of *Stillness* please visit
http://www.tinagonsalves.com/still01.html
(using quicktime plug in)

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The Artists

Tina Gonsalves artist *Australia*
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Tina's media exploration has focused on exploring the human condition, from internal/external and emotional landscapes, through to studies on movement, perceptions, and personal space. Over this time she has created 40 experimental digital films that have been screened, awarded, and televised inter/nationally, as well as large format digital prints, paintings and various forms of mixed media.

Currently her short films have/will be involved with the European Media Arts Festival in Germany, Digital Beidermeier 'reproducing the private' in Vienna, MAAP festival in Beijing, Recent Australian digital video at the Art Institute of Chicago, The First International Video Art Biennial in Tel Aviv, Women on Women film Festival and inter/national tour, Experimenta Film Festival, Kasseler Dokumetarfilm-und videofest in Germany,the Back_up festival in Germany, Fine Art Forums Inter/national Media Arts Festival and Tour, St Kilda Film Festival and Pompidou Centre in Paris. In 2002/03 Tina's installation work was exhibited in Prague, New York City . Munich, Houston and Mexico. Most recently her work was televised in Czech Republic, New York, Germany and Australia.

Over the last two years Tina has concentrated on creating new artwork while taking part in Artist in Residence programs at The Banff Center in Canada, the Centre for Contemporary Art in Prague and Asialink's residency program at Chulalongkorn University in Thailand. Tina was recently awarded a new work grant from the Australia Arts Council to develop and produce her next work "PLASMA", which explores biometric wearable jewellery. This project is a co-production with the Banff Centre in Canada, and a collaboration with Tom Danaldson.

Over the last eight years, Tina has developed her company which specialises in directing and producing experimental music video clips and imagery for the music industry. Her clients BMG, EMI, Festival Records, and MTV New York.

Tom Donaldson programmer/inventor *United Kingdom*
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After graduating from Cambridge University with a Bachelors and Masters of Engineering, specialising in electronics and information theory, Tom worked as an inventor of new product technologies for major blue chip corporations including Rollerblade, Nike, Speedo, Procter and Gamble, and Johnson and Johnson. He created a wide range of new technologies in areas such as smart fabrics, biometrc sensors and advanced materials.

After his stint there, Tom felt it was time to explore the more experimental realms of technology innovation. He moved to New York where he set to work as an inventor/artist. He privately explored a number of new areas of technology, including object-based video compression, magneto-encephalography, and deep personalisation in music selection. He developed a subsconsciously-interactive film system using eye-monitoring of the viewer to guide video sequence generation. He designed an enhanced-reality gaming system, incorporating computer-vision elements into a head-up display; and he worked on haptic systems for virtual sculpture. Tom was commissioned by ARCH, an Austrian cultural heritage foundation, to design a mobile museum for interactive, distributed artworks. The design incorporated a wide range of interactive and multimedia technologies into a framework able to express the beauty and importance of cultural heritage through a range of new media artworks.

Moving back to London, Tom founded Escape Velocity. Tom created ground-breaking artificial intelligence technology, recognised as a leader in highly personalised services. Tom established the company, drew significant investment from 3i and grew the team to nearly 20 people over 3 years. The company (and Tom himself) received recognition from Business Week, the Financial Times, CNBC and many other investment monitors. Escape Velocity also launched the Sessami mobile internet entertainment channel - a channel that Tom not only concieved, branded and managed, but also wrote the first software for. Sessami was nominated for a WAP award for best consumer application. Through Escape Velocity and Sessami, Tom became a noted speaker in the mobile Internet and personalisation industries.

Tom has been in a (short) residence at the Banff New Media Institute, and performed in an interactive work at the DEAF03 Festival.

Currently, Tom is working privately in the technical field in areas of artificial intelligence and complexity, and in the creative arena in a number of technology-based artworks.