

About the *Interventions: Engaging the Body Politic* Exhibition

The *Interventions* exhibition features works that engage with contemporary cultural discourse and political reality, challenging audiences to consider digital artifacts and practices that reflect and intervene in matters of the environment, social justice, and our relation to the habitus. The program also includes a presentation of works originally made for 3D CAVEs adapted for the Oculus Rift, and in Cinemateket a performance of a “code opera” and screenings of a film about the field of electronic literature.

Cavewriting Classics on the Oculus Rift

Damon Baker (Independent, USA)

Interventions: Engaging the Body Politic

Friday, August 7 • 17:30 - 18:30 (Visningsrommet USF)

There are many immersive e-lit works that require more than the affordances provided by a screen and a keyboard to experience. These get displayed rarely and even when they do get shown, they are often shown poorly, either due to a lack of facilities (CAVES are rare and expensive), lack of curation and context (a series of random technology demos does not an exhibition make), limited audience (4 at a time in a CAVE or one at a time with an HMD means that the number of people who can experience the piece is limited), rushed experience (when cramming 8 demos into a 4 hour slot with 5 pieces each most people spend more time waiting around in the dark while someone furiously clatters away at a command line trying to get the piece to launch than actually experiencing them).

There are many works in this category (Rettberg/Coover's recent works at EVL's CAVE 2, years of output from Brown University's CaveWriting program, various spin off projects from that which happened at University of Louisiana Lafayette/LITE 3D, some of the output of Manifest, AR members such as Patrick Lichty, Jeremy Hight, myself, etc.) I wish to show them at ELO in Bergen, as many of these works have been rarely seen in person at all, much less outside the USA, and they don't translate well to traditional documentation techniques. (Holding a camera over someone's shoulder while they wave their hands at blurry double images and then writing a paper that says "No really, it's awesome in person. Trust me" seems to still be the state of the art.)

The End: Death in Seven Colours

David Clark (NSCAD University, Canada)

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The End: Death in Seven Colours is a non-linear Internet artwork made in the interactive authoring environment Korsakow. Seven deaths (corresponding to seven colours of the rainbow) are examined through the prism of popular culture and film in a vast, encyclopedic mash-up. The work presents an “exploded view” diagram of our culture’s relationship to death and narrative closure. Like a chose-your-own-adventure conspiracy theory, *The End* weaves together a paranoid meta-text organized around themes of the unknown, concealment, secrecy, and the shifting boundary between animal, man and computer in the post-human era.

The deaths of Alan Turing, Sigmund Freud, Princess Diana, Jim Morrison, Judy Garland, Walter Benjamin, and Marcel Duchamp become the touchstones for many impractical segues and short circuits peppered with recurring motifs such as *4 a.m.*, *His Master’s Voice*, *Snow White*, *The Rainbow*, *Chess*, *The Man Behind the Curtain*, and an array of famous surrealist artworks that find new meaning in their entanglements with these stories.

A preview of the work can be seen here: http://www.chemicalpictures.net/THE_ENDindex.html



Inside the Distance

Sharon Daniel (University of California, Santa Cruz, USA)

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In boxing “the distance” refers to the scheduled length of a fight, 9 rounds or 12. For the boxer, as for all of us, the goal is to stay standing, inside the distance.

Inside the Distance—a web documentary and an installation with video and a touch-screen interactive interface—documents victim/offender mediation practices in Belgium, where Restorative Justice is institutionalized within the criminal justice system. The project examines how mediation poses a potential cultural alternative to dominant modes and theories of retributive justice and punishment. The interactive interface, which includes interviews with Mediators, Criminologists, Victims and Offenders conducted in Leuven and Brussels, focuses on the subject positions of victim, offender and mediator and the notion that those subject positions are fluid.

The content of the project is organized into three parts:

- “The Accounts” – presents the narratives of mediation cases as described in interviews with Mediators.
- “The Positions” – addresses the instability of subject positions – as articulated by Victims, offenders and mediators
- “The Spaces” – takes up the ethical, theoretical, and discursive space of justice and punishment in statements made by mediators, psychologists and criminologists.

The mediators interviewed for this project described how mediations almost always begin with a focus on the detail—victims and offenders wanting to confirm each others’ understanding of what happened—who was hurt and how—followed by attempts to find some way to understand why. *Inside the Distance* stages reenactments of this encounter as described by victims, offenders and mediators. It explores the subject position of each party—and the many ways in which those positions are fluid. Within the project, the space of mediation, the mediation table, is represented as a boundary object—a place of cooperation without consensus. Criminal acts are rents in the fabric of the social order—expressions of something that doesn’t fit. At some level, at some moment, we are all victims—we are all offenders.

Inside the Distance is a co-production by LINC-KU Leuven, STUK Arts Centre, Courisane, University of California Santa Cruz, European Forum for Restorative Justice, Sugonomè – Flemish Mediation Service, and funded by OPAK (Belgium/EU).

Documentation of the project installation can be found at <http://www.sharon-daniel.net/#inside-the-distance>

The online version of the project can be found at <http://insidethedistance.net>



Front

Donna Leishman (Dundee University, UK)

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Human relationships are rich and they're messy and they're demanding. And we clean them up with technology. Texting, email, posting, all of these things let us present the self, as we want to be. We get to edit, and that means we get to delete, and that means we get to retouch, the face, the voice, the flesh, the body—not too little, not too much, just right.

(Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*, 2011)

Originally commissioned by New Media Scotland as part of their Alt-W Cycle 9, Leishman's latest work *Front* is a pre-programmed Facebook parody that addresses the major issues of social media—privacy and voyeurism. *Front's* interface whilst mimicking the immersive, interaction rich promise of social media, instead reminds us of where the power structures lie, and what is often freely given up by the user/viewer.

A contemporary retelling of the Apollo and Daphne myth, Daphne, our protagonist shares her predilections, thoughts and meticulously crafted “selfies”—she has excellent taste (her *Front* friends tell her so), but all is not as it seems. The narrative moves towards a climax that presents the perils of misrepresentation with the darker side of self-presentation.



Front contains a faux

IM chat facility that intrudes on the viewer's passive reading of the interaction dead “timeline”, upsetting the expected sense of presence and time within the project. Set up as a cautionary tale, the project further re-mixes familiar social media practices via a linked Twitter feed that extends the mediation of Daphne's character whilst infusing the project with another level of “real” contexts (in the form of supportive specialist web links, and project documentation).

The Wandering: An Interactive Poetry Robot!

Jason Nelson (Griffith University, Australia)

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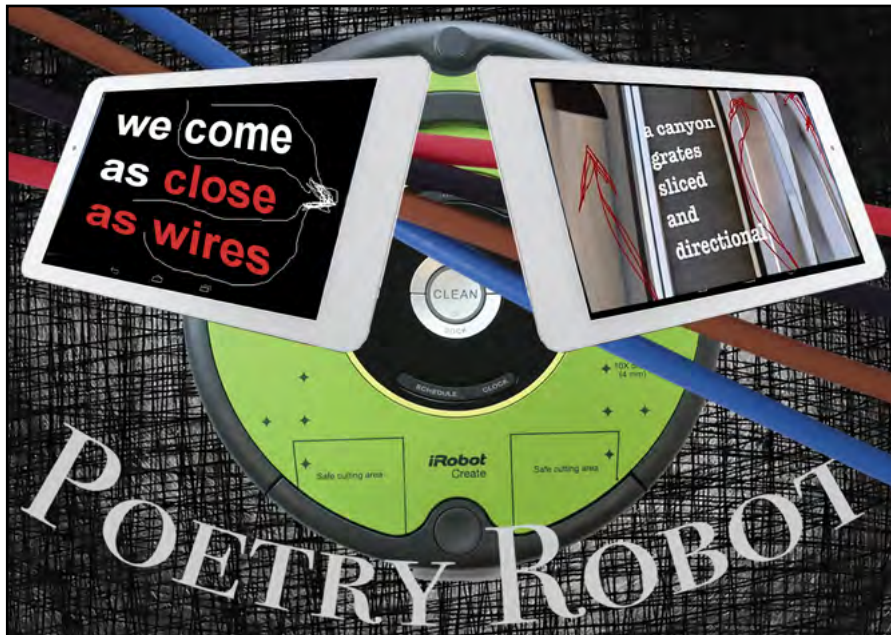
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In brief: An interactive self-guiding, self-charging poetry projecting robot!

This work represents a giant leap for digital poetry and writing. In collaboration with Griffith University's engineering workshop, I am developing an interactive poetry projecting robot. The robotic work would wheel around the room, navigating around obstacles and people, projecting poetic text on to the walls. An alternative version for low-light environments will include two LCD screens instead of projectors. The texts will change depending on the color and spacing of surfaces around it. The text will also change based sound in the room or a series of select commands.

Description of Poetic Text being projected by the Wandering Poetry Robot:

All of the text will be animated, and a combination of hand-drawn elements and poetry. The poetry will be largely emotive, reflecting the same frustrations and wonders one might encounter if they adventure into unknown lands. As the sensors approach dark colors the text will transform into darker themes, or express poetic frustrations as it gets closer to objects, or exude curiosity and intrigue as it moves further away. The poetry robot will be a lost adventurer, expressing fear and desire through projected and auditory poetic texts.



Death of an Alchemist

Chris Rodley (University of Sydney, Australia) and
Andrew Burrell (Independent, Australia)

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Death Of An Alchemist is a multimedia novel written by Big Data—a detective story generated in real-time from live online content.

The installation consists of an 8m wall displaying 128 pages of projected text, symbols and charts. This content is generated by scraping Twitter, Google and social platforms for today’s headlines, social media conversations, memes and more.

The text flickers and updates as new data is received, yet still creates a coherent narrative that can be read from beginning to end. This is thanks to a bespoke technique we have termed the “poetics of search”: using a combination of search operators and algorithms to mine data, then string manipulation to fit it cohesively into a new plot.

In the story, readers investigate the death of 16th century alchemist Trithemius. He has left behind a supposedly magical book, *Steganographia*, said to reveal the “clavis magna”: the idea from which all knowledge flows. Readers must decode the book to find the clues to Trithemius’ murder. But this is no ordinary leather-bound volume...

The work is an extended allegory for coercive uses of Big Data by technology companies such as Google and Facebook, which aim to create their own “clavis magna”.

Death of an Alchemist is an official selection of the 2015 International Symposium on Electronic Art, to be held in Vancouver, Canada. It is also being made available as a free iOS/Android app.



Faceless Patrons

Andreas Zingerle (University of Art and Industrial Design, Linz, Austria) and Linda Kronman (Danube University Krems, Austria)

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Faceless is an installation that documents stories used by internet scammers in so-called “overpayment scams”. Scammers use scripted stories to reach their victims, yet when correspondence continues story worlds start to evolve. We created a virtual character to interact with scammers who posed to be art buyers. The installation presents five of these interactive narratives in form of a series of photos each coupled with a forged cheque. By using smartphones or a tablet an Augmented Reality layer can be accessed to expose further story elements.



To be able to dive into the scammer’s narratives we created a fictional character: an artist called “Anna Masquer”. She represents an average contemporary artist that has a virtual identity and presents herself and her artwork on a Wordpress blog and a Flickr channel. Her photo series *Faceless* is offered to the scammers that pose as gallerists or wealthy art buyers. The series is a collection of faded and worn down images from abandoned graves—another kind of faceless: past away and forgotten, yet an identity that you can use and abuse.

Scammers also develop their character. Their posed identity is often based on either identity theft or a confusing mix of several existing individuals, giving them the opportunity to remain “faceless” and anonym. Their goal is to quickly agree on the price and send the overpayment cheque.

The gathered cheques are a physical evidence of fraudsters tricking the artist into money laundering. The scammers demand a fast reaction of the seller to cash the cheque and immediately send the artwork and the rest of the money to the “shipper”.