Outside / Inside

22nd – 23rd April 2008

An trans-disciplinary masters workshop
in GPS and Ultrasound

Introduction

Touch is our bridge with architecture and the world. All of our senses are extensions of touch, since ears, nose, mouth and eyes are specializations of the skin, the most sensitive of our organs. As Pallasmaa's put's it, "touch is the unconscious of vision, and this hidden tactile experience determines the sensuous quality of the perceived object, and mediates messages of invitation or rejection, courtesy, or hostility.". Digital technologies are allowing us to 'touch' different spaces that are both inside us and outside us, and close to us and far away from us.

This two day workshop will encourage students to consider the design space that is found between the GPS satellites that orbit the Earth at a height of 12,600 miles, and the 20cm sensing depth of Ultrasound that can reveal the organs beneath our skin.

The first day will involve a day trip into the wide open spaces of Dartmoor National Park to explore the idiosyncrasies of recording movement, form and location through the correlation of data gathered from the satellites and space vehicles that are circling the Earth. In contrast the second day involves a short workshop at The Peninsula Radiology Academy where students will have to opportunity to use ultrasound technology to scan the insides of a live human body.

Punctuated by a dinner on the evening of the first day, students will work toward creative design propositions for exhibition at the Bartlett School of Architecture later in the year.

Context

The sense of touch obviously plays a unique and important role in human interaction. Touching is not only closely linked to sexual activity and to notions of closeness and intimacy, but, as evidenced in our language, is often used as a metaphor for emotional impact (i.e., "I was really touched by her story"). Furthermore, as evidenced in the research on social touch, touching plays a role, albeit sometimes subliminal, in a much wider variety of social transactions than is ordinarily appreciated. In general, it seems clear that the inclusion of touching in shared virtual environments will strongly increase the sense of togetherness.
Durlach, N. & Slater, M. (1998). Presence in shared virtual environments and virtual togetherness. Cambridge: MIT Press

When technologies facilitate communication, they are in a sense amplifying our natural senses and perception. It is as if our eyes, ears, and mouths were extended beyond their normal reach and capability. But technologies extend our perceptions asymmetrically. Phones improve our hearing but do little for our vision. Email is used for conversation, but of a kind that lacks the tone and expressiveness of the voice. Thus it makes sense to ask how a technology extends or amplifies the sense, in what mode, and with what kind of results. (2003)
Chan, A., (2003) Materiality and amplification: design, functions, features, and the interface to the human face. Web ref

Touch is the sensory mode that integrates our experience of the world with that of ourselves. Even visual perceptions are fused and integrated into the haptic continuum of the self; my body remembers who I am and where I am located in the world. My body is truly the navel of my world, not in the sense of the viewing point of the central perspective, but as the very locus of reference,memory,imagination and integration.
Pallasmaa, J. (2005) The Eyes of the Skin – Touching the World. Chichester : Wiley

Schedule

22nd April
09.30   Meet in UoP car park outside Smeaton building & drive to location on Dartmoor
10.30   Brief introduction to core themes and using GPS equipment
11.30   Identify location to work within and use available technology to document aspects of
         environmental, social and cultural context using GPS, photography, measuring tools etc.
14.30   Review early ideas in progress
16.00   Leave moor to return to Plymouth

Evening meal

23rd April
09.30   Meet in UoP car park outside Smeaton building drive to Peninsula Radiology Academy
10.00   Brief introduction to Ultra-Sound technology
10.30   Students take it turns to select sections to scan of human subjects body using scanner and
         images saved to disc.
         Selections should be informed by previous days analysis of the landscape of the moor.
13.00   Session ends – return to Plymouth for review of images and preparation for presentation
15.00   Presentation of ideas, outcomes and future trajectories
17.00   close

Project Team

Tutors: Shaun Murray & Chris Speed

Students
Bartlett MA Arch
University of Plymouth MA Digital Art & Technology
University of Plymouth MA Spatial Design