

PRESS RELEASE

Making a Difference at the University of Plymouth

A project for i-DAT by **Lucy Kimbell**

11th – 22nd October 2004

Portland Square
University of Plymouth
UK

<http://www.i-dat.org/makingadifference>

Please join us with the Vice-Chancellor of the University for a breakfast preview at 10am, on Monday 11th October 2004.

Making a Difference at the University of Plymouth is a project for i-DAT by Lucy Kimbell. It uses Arch-OS, an innovative digital system embedded in the architecture of the Portland Square building, enabling passers-by to express the corporate mantra of our times. On pressing a special button, the phrase is broadcast over the entire building, beginning with the first clear iteration of sound but increasingly becoming layered and invasive. The wish to make a difference is also automatically sent as an email to the Vice-Chancellor of the University to register this fact. Data is collected and made public but to questionable effect.

Higher education has changed rapidly over recent years, reflecting the general tendency of increased corporatisation of culture at large. Management cultures insist on personal responsibility where the individual employee is supposed to align themselves with the organisation's brand values. The phrase, 'I want to make a difference', reveals something of the tendency towards increased individualisation and a break with previous collective ways of engendering change. Does this demonstrate the view that large corporate and hierarchical institutions are ineffectual, that local and more complex models are at work in the forces of change? Who holds responsibility in seeking positive improvement in the workplace and in terms of the service on offer? Will the number of people pressing the 'I want to make a difference' button reveal a true willingness or an empty gesture towards change? The shift from the individual sound to a chorus by the end of the project presents itself as an allegory in this respect.

Lucy Kimbell is AHRB Creative and Performing Arts Fellow at the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art, University of Oxford.

Making a Difference at the University of Plymouth is a project by Lucy Kimbell, with special thanks to George Grinsted for software development.

For more information on the project:
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