

Mindplay Conference - Presentations (by strand)

KEYNOTE SPEECH

How Do You Play ? - Identity Technology and Ludic Cultures

Jon Dovey

In this presentation I want to focus on the 'rediscovery' of play theory produced through the relationship between digital media technologies, consumer cultures and networked identities. The agonistic subject, training, working, and playing by the rules, has been displaced by the aleatory subject experiencing life as part of a complex system. As a topic play has been considered under many and various disciplinary signs. The contemporary convergence of digital technologies with the rise of co creative media activities has produced yet another reconsideration of the importance of play. In Computer Game studies the development of ludology has prompted a wide ranging return to play theory which in turn echoes the rediscovery of play as a way of understanding reader/text/fan relationships. I will argue these playful modalities, far from representing the death of seriousness, can be understood as an expression of the psychoanalytic work of DW Winnicott for whom play was a key to psychic health.

PLAYTIME

Photo Sonic Synthesis: Hearing Colour /Seeing Sound

Brigitta Hosea

Photo Sonic is a practice based research project examining a process of 'photo sonic synthesis' in which synthetic digital colours derived from the spectrum of light are played to create artificial sounds [...]. A computer user creates colour through the use of algorithms and / or a matrix of pixels enabling an average desktop computer to potentially create approximately seventeen million distinct digital colours. In this environment both colour and sound information are ultimately stored in the same way - as a series of digits. [...] In the digital environment, the possibilities for interchange between colour and sound are vastly increased. Using audio to generate colour or form can be done through consumer software such as Itunes or Windows Media. This research - Photo Sonic - aims for the opposite, however, to create abstract colour animation, which generates its soundtrack from the colours used to produce synthetic synaesthesia in which sound can be seen and colour heard.

Collaborative Clubland: Performing Ubiquity

Alice Bayliss and Jennifer G Sheridan

This presentation will give an overview of our current interactive performance piece, the iPoi, which has been created specifically for the underground club space. Capitalising on the club environment as a playful arena which offers fertile ground for innovation, experimentation and interdisciplinarity we create participatory performances using the latest wireless protocol and embedded devices which can both transmit data as well as receive instructions in real time. This technology augments traditional sets of poi which clubbers often dance with and invites the users to play with the system in a process of communal and intimate engagement. Our performative interventions have playfulness as their central tenet and seek to challenge traditional binaries of performer/audience, human/machine, creator/collaborator.

Off Your Face

Anita Fitton

In recent times there has been an increasing move to produce interactive installations that hide the interface from the viewer. This research focuses on using New Media to produce an installation that allows, encourages and intrigues the audience to become both participant and audience through play and will demonstrate how a collaboration/ partnership between the artist, technology and the end user/audience, is possible and successful with the development of these ideas and processes.

Automation in playing live electronics

Javier Alejandro Garavaglia

The aim of this paper/demonstration is to present a personal way of dealing with live electronics for live instruments programmed on MAXMSP for composers (like my own case) who play their own pieces. The method explained here deals principally with a certain amount of automation on the electronics, which leaves the performer the necessary freedom to perform music without paying too much attention to the technical problems involved in the performance (at least no more than those involving any other case of music performance). The method is also useful with pieces where the composer is not present during the performance. The advantages and disadvantages of this method will be explained throughout, as I am conscious as a composer, that this system implies certain restrictions to some well established ways of dealing with live-electronics. The Method will be shown through some pieces of my own, showing some musical examples and the way the electronics work on MAXMSP.

VINST - Tickling your senses

Emmanuelle Waeckerle, Sebastian Lexer

The aim of this ongoing research project is to liberate the voice from the constraint of language and the thinking mind - in an attempt to offer alternative modes of human communication. VINST is an interactive installation and performance enabling real-time control of both sonic and visual representation of the voice - thus creating an extraordinary fusion of human body sound and video. VINST is a highly sensitive vocal instrument consisting of my body image displaying points of sonic sensitivity that can be triggered and played by the viewer. The sounds are pre- or non-linguistic, and are (usually) somewhat anatomically appropriate. The vocabulary is in evolution, as is its accompanying system of annotation. (See www.ewaeckerle.com/vinst) Users will find that VINST is truly interactive as it responds to touch but also to mood and sensibility and is capable of reacting quite unexpectedly. Applying (wacom pen) pressure and movement over the VINST body triggers a variety of sonic responses as well as real-time granular synthesis and image manipulation. Playing VINST can be an intimate moving cathartic playful or sensual experience. Watching/listening to VINST being played is always fascinating as the instrument responds so differently from individual to individual.

Learning to Play the Instrument - How to encourage improvisation in interactive environments

Michaela Reiser

The paper focuses on the development and interim evaluation of an ongoing research project in relation to 'Playtime'. In April 2005, a series of action research workshops were held at London Metropolitan University that introduced selected participants to a new interface ('Touch'). The aim of the project was not to increase the efficiency of the interface, but to explore what would make play and interaction with it more meaningful to participants. This involved learning about participants' approaches to the interface, their assumptions and expectations. The paper examines participants' ways of learning the interface and playing with it, and how obstacles to improvisation had been overcome.

'Touch' is an interface that turns participants' body data into sound. Biofeedback sensors measure participants' arousal level and heart beat and communicate this to a computer where the data passes through sound generation software and is played back into the space in real time. Mental influences as well as interaction between participants affect the sound. The communal soundscape becomes a space where rules of play and interaction can be explored and transgressed.

Mass Production

Russell Richards, Julian Konczak

Mass Production is an installation that combines video projection with web cam technology. As the viewers/users move around the physical space of the installation, a projected video triptych of crowd scenes responds to their activity. The video montage of bustling international crowds changes in its intensity by the speed of editing and audio levels as the web cam analyses the movement of people in the installation. *Mass Production* is as a means of exploring the notion of locative media as a performance. The representation of the crowd in an installation space interconnects the social geography of the viewers/users in the space with the humanity presented on screen. The symbiotic relationship between the two components provides opportunities for the conversion of installation space into an installation place (*a la* Michel de Certeau). In addition to notions of space and place, the relationship between 'the digital' and performance is being examined by a variety of groupings, for example PARIP (Practice as Research in Performance); the *Capture* initiative supported by the Arts Council; Threshold Studios recent *Critical Mass* DVD, featuring performance with/through digital components, or the *e-Performance and Plug-ins Conference* at New South Wales University in December 2005. [...]

Ere be Dragons: Heartfelt Gaming

Stephen Boyd Davis

The paper will discuss a pervasive digital artwork which harnesses live heart-rate data and GPS to create a novel form of gameplay through a Pocket PC, constructing a responsive visual and auditory environment overlaid on the real world.

Many projects have created pervasive alternative worlds through headsets or handheld displays, some of them as games or artworks, and sensors have often been used as inputs to artistic works, but we believe this is the first working example to integrate heart-rate data into a pervasive game. [...]. As the player walks, an on-screen landscape builds up and responds throughout the game. Excessively low heart rate causes the world to fade to nothing; too high, the world darkens and becomes full of shadows. Fluctuations in the heart rate create shadows, strange beasts and other light, colour and object changes in the landscape. The landscape from each session is a unique representation of the actual journey taken. 'Ere Be Dragons' [...] is an interdisciplinary collaboration between digital artists, an electronic arts centre, health scientists, and the UK research laboratory of an IT company (Hewlett Packard) and is being completed now (Oct 05). It has been accepted for the ACM Multimedia Art show in Singapore in November.

LET US PLAY

Layering Community Media in Place

Constance Fleuriot and Clodagh Miskelly

In this paper, we address community-based uses of location-sensitive media technology for local communication and representation and present an ongoing case study in a local community. We draw on our observations regarding: the relationships between personal and community experience and place; the interplay of personal and public histories; participation and ownership of community-based location-sensitive media projects; the potential of this technology for community uses and rich and diverse representations, as well as the kind of context that might enable ongoing community based use.

ReActivities©: Autism and Play

Wendy Keay-Bright

ReActivities© are dynamical digital play sequences which encourage the integration of social, emotional and cognitive development in children on the autistic spectrum. Funding from the NESTA Learning Programme has enabled a collaborative approach to the development of the ReActivities© software. As a result of working directly with children on the autistic spectrum and those who support them, an organic design process has emerged which embraces their distinct needs and characteristics. Discovering how autistic children play has been revelatory. Something which normally developing children experience so naturally is often profoundly missing in autistic children for whom high levels of anxiety can inhibit playful experiences and increase the rigid, stereotypical and challenging behaviours which have a negative effect in social situations. Interaction with objects that offer repetition, pattern and similarity combined with colour and rhythm are regularly used by autistic children as methods to reduce anxiety, however little has been done to interpret these sensations in digital environments. [...]

Old issues, new environment: identity play on the Net . Findings from a qualitative study about the virtual community "Italianialondra.com"

Francesca Romana Seganti

This paper will expose part of the findings from my PhD thesis, a qualitative study about the dynamics of interaction within Italianialondra.com, a Website open exclusively to Italians who live in London. I would ask the audience to reflect on the usage of virtual devices, particularly chatlines, as laboratories to experiment self-multiplicity through the spontaneous manifestations of the play instinct (Caillois: 1961, in Danet, Rosenbaum and Wright:1997). The presentation will investigate how synchronous online communication provides new possibilities to experiment self-multiplicity, reflect on their personalities and/or give vent to repressed aspect of the self. My aim is to open a debate about the Net as an alternative place (new environment) that confirms that the individual has never existed as a close universe, as an univocal, homogeneous, and always identical entity (old issue).

Playfulness, Emotions and the Arts

Pat Power

This theoretical paper outlines the nature of playfulness as affectively entrained cognition and examines it in relationship to the creation of and engagement with arts and media environments. Synthesising ideas and findings from interdisciplinary research in areas such as cognitive science, neuroscience, psychology, sociology, complexity and evolution theory and the arts, it propounds a view of mind that is embrained, embodied, and environmentally interactive, that is biologically, culturally and technologically influenced, and is intrinsically dynamic. The central hypothesis is that activation at various levels of our limbic play circuits and their neural correlates is a likely precursor of phenomena as diverse as playfulness as a state of mind, a propensity to play games, creative arts practice and aspects of engagement with arts and media. This phenomenon is also suggested as a possible resolution to the affective paradox of fiction. Essential qualities of playful states of mind are proposed to enable an awareness of playfulness as a qualitative aspect of human experience, and a concept of playful aesthetic rhetoric is examined to facilitate a better understanding of how arts practitioners might effect resonant interaction and response resulting in meaningful aesthetic experience.

Building Magical Realms: Responses to Pervasive and Locative Media Technology

Stuart Nolan

Young people often feel that they have little say in how the future is made and are often unaware that there are jobs, techniques, and tools for imagining the future that are used in the mysterious adult world. When young people are exposed to these techniques it is as targets for a technology or service proposed by business. This paper reports on the responses of young people to workshops involving pervasive and locative technology that aimed to expose them to scenario planning techniques in a context unhampered by the needs of commercial business or artistic practice.

Exploring Interactivity: the potential of user power through visual interpretation

Pai-Ling Chang

This design research project focuses on two primary areas of enquiry—the phenomenon of interactivity in digital media design and how ideas from outside the field of interaction design can expand the understanding and application of interactivity. Interactivity is generally seen as the user's ability to easily access information. For certain writers and practitioners, however, the idea of interactivity extends to user's capacity to shape content and meaning to extend the range of experience in digital media contexts. Using a combination of theoretical discussion and design experimentation, the research explores the second perspective, proposing a model of interactivity that accepts user's capacities for reflexivity and intervention.

THE SMART PLAYER

All Games Are Memory Games: Memory and Affect in Interactive Characters

Colin Harvey

Memory plays a crucial role in enabling the communication of meanings within video games. Textual analysis alone cannot hope to tell us all we need to know about the operation of memory in relation to video games. Instead we need to explore the body of relations, of which the physical body is a crucial aspect, and we need to begin understanding the role of affect in terms of memory and meanings. This paper explores these themes by reflecting on my own practical experience designing the storyline and dialogue for interactive characters for a forthcoming commercially available video game.

Discursively Constructing The Art of *Silent Hill*

Ewan Kirkland

This paper explores strategies constructing Konami's *Silent Hill* series as adult gaming, primarily through aligning the franchise with formations of 'art'. Adopting a discursive approach to notions of 'art' and 'artistry', I explore these strategies across three sites. First, I examine the *Silent Hill* game-texts as emulating aspects of art cinema, such as realism, ambiguity, psychological complexity and the foregrounding of textual devices. Next the games' advertising is considered as emphasising these qualities, entailing the privileging of narratological over ludological gaming aspects, and the mobilisation of avant-garde visual strategies differentiating the *Silent Hill* series from mainstream gaming. Finally the games' construction in the documentary 'The Making of *Silent Hill 2*' is explored as aligning the series with artistic notions of authorship.

Smell Me

Mei-Kei Lai, Ruba Haddad

'Smell Me' is a game which combines olfactory experience with more conventional forms of media. Rather than simply adding smell as an additional output to augment graphics and sound, this game uses smell as a substantive part of the gameplay. 'Smell Me' investigates new areas of gaming and interaction which have been little explored. Important questions are raised by this game. Can odours be designed to carry substantive information or only affective qualities? Do players become more, or less, sensitive during a gameplay session? What technologies will be available? What is the future for the olfactory channel in games?

Fruit Salad: A Mixture of Virtual and Tangible Interfaces for Social and Accessible Pervasive Gaming

Wendy Ann Mansilla, Soenke Dohrn, Alma Salim

Creating new experiences in a funny, challenging and rich way is a major focus of gaming. Nowadays, new media methods and tools enable the enhancement of these experiences by combining natural physical and social interaction methods of humans with the capabilities of pervasive gaming technologies using tangible user interfaces (TUIs). These technologies could pose a solution for gaming to overcome constraints of hardware and graphical user interfaces (GUIs). This is especially the case for physically impaired gamers experiencing some social digression when playing computer games. However, many publishers in the gaming market prefer to stay mainstream resulting in a limited variety of gaming experiences available to physically impaired gamers. The challenge set is to provide these players with both freedom from conventional computer gaming restrictions and enjoyment from traditional board games; thereby also proposing new ideas to the gaming industry. [...]

Work in a Gaming Economy: Dark Age of Camelot and Professional Gaming

Tim Jordan

This paper explores the professionalisation of aspects of gaming in the emergence of entrepreneurs selling virtual items, created within games, for real cash. This phenomena has been explored by the likes of Castranova and Dibbell but remains relatively under-researched. This paper will present two main findings. First, a set of empirical findings will be presented related to the selling of gold and other services in the game Dark Age of Camelot, Euro, for one server. This material establishes exchange rates with real world currencies and traces changes over time, examining the effects of competition from the emergence of sellers in-game and the effect of the emergence of competing games. Second, a theorisation of this 'work' and its meaning for all players is explored. In the first case, the notion of value is explored from a Marxist viewpoint, leading to the definition of time as the determining factor in value-production. This analysis is extended with reference to Heidegger's concept of the 'standing-reserve' and leads to reflections on the nature of work and leisure in games based on persistent worlds.

'It's a funny old game': Defining and designing gaming interactions for learning

Andrew Ravenscroft

Currently there is considerable enthusiasm, and arguably a lot of 'hype', about the potential role of digital games for learning. This paper will argue that we can improve debate, design and developments in this field through clarifying, deconstructing and exemplifying the various definitions of a 'game'. Through reviewing and considering the definitional status of 'gaming' we will show how different genres within this field can be better understood and articulated for educational purposes. The remainder of this talk will then compare the video game genre with a dialogue game genre to emerge relevant issues, contrasts and commonalities associated with designing digital educational games.

Designing for the Smart Player. Usability design and user-centred design in game-based learning.

Elena Moschini

The presentation aims to initiate a discussion on the need to establish innovative, user-centred practice in game design to address the needs of new audiences. The paper will investigate issues on user-led game design in the new area of game-based learning for an adult audience. User-led design is an established practice in product design and in digital media but it is not always a common practice in game design. The paper will examine issues in relation to usability in game-based learning design, gender inclusive game design and the relationship between learners/gamers, designers and the wider game community. It will argue in favour of user-centred design practice in this area and it will present work in progress for a game for higher education - "The Secrets of Biblioland".

New Markets? Old values: a gender analysis of the Official Playstation 2 magazine

Vanda Corrigan

This presentation provides a detailed example of the practices that sustain a masculine gaming culture by focussing on the 'Official PlayStation2' (OPS2) magazine. Analysis of the magazine's content, reveals how OPS2 presents itself in the style of a 'lad's' magazine, addressing a male gaming audience with assumed shared values and experiences. This 'common knowledge' includes both general and gaming-related, gender stereotypes, which are constantly reinforced and reconstructed. These conservative practices seem designed to resist any 'feminisation' of either 'the gamer' or gaming culture - contradicting the industry's stated desire for more female involvement as both producers and consumers of games.

Framing the User Experience for a Narrative with Digitally Enhanced Paper

Axel Vogelsang

Digitally enhanced paper is a technology that uses an electronic pen to mediate between paper and computer: Thus any actions of the pen on the paper can be captured and manipulated by a computer as well as we can map digitally controlled events onto paper. [...] Together with my partners from the GlobIS-Lab at ETH Zurich I have developed a concept for using this technology as a basis for a collaborative interactive narrative. The story in this narrative environment reveals itself partially through written text and images on the paper surface just as any other printed story. However, additional information in form of digitally controlled outputs such as sound, light and projections can be accessed through interaction with pen and paper. But the paper is not only used as an interface for controlling computer outputs. The audience – one person at a time – is writing via the paper into the database thereby providing the objects for further outputs in different contexts. Even though we are talking about a narrative environment, a one-off art piece with no commercial intentions, this paper will point out some of the connections between narrative and gaming relevant to interactive paper technologies. [...]

RECORD-STOP-PLAY

Playing with responsiveness in movies

Geska Helena Andersson and Robert Brecevic

Movies are no longer fixed in conjunction to one-way-viewing on the big screen or the television. Moving imagery is also open to viewer interception; movies can be manipulated while played according to the model of stop-play-overlay. With this palette in hand we address moviemaking that does not deal with experimental narratives but rather with the direct impact of the depiction of scenes combined with viewer involvement and spatial issues. This paper describes the artist-based work of the authors and associates in exploring possible new grammars and syntaxes for playable movies; tangible to the viewer through different metaphors of usage or placement in physical space.

The modality of camera position and viewer interception - presentation of *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* (work in progress)

Geska Helena Andersson and Robert Brecevic

Responsiveness in film is used as the means for going 'back to basics' with the montage of moving imagery. Directed towards human expressiveness through body language and posture, we work with issues of proximity as well as dissociation of spatial awareness. In our work, film is treated as a game table, presenting the disseminated cinematic room divided into separate fields of view. The characters are the connecting links between different perspectives - physically separated while displayed on different screens. We will demonstrate cinematic works using a custom-made video player allowing separate video streams to play and be manipulated side by side.

Three figures

Geska Helena Andersson and Robert Brecevic

A live visual performance piece (and installation) based on three figures/themes previously presented as interactive video installations. The VJ/DJ-ing piece combines performative elements with ultrasonic range sensors and video as well as controllers for game-like video projected on big screens. Based on video work by Robert Brecevic.

Re-Possessed

Chris Lane, Tony Cryer, Nick Haeffner, Che Guevara John, Souli SpiroPoulou

Three interactive artworks are presented from the forthcoming exhibition Re-Possessed, which is centred on Alfred Hitchcock's classic film *Vertigo*. 'Re-Mixed' is a low-tech DVD jukebox, Nuclear industry-style gauntlets secure a collection of DVDs against theft, but also allow the audience to write accompanying text for the DVD without ripping it. 'Re-Played' involves audience members in a console style video game based on *Grand Theft Auto - San Andreas*. The work compares the approach to 'point of view' taken in computer games such and that taken in *Vertigo* by interrupting the conventional treatment of first person and third person viewpoints. Here the first person view is seen along-side shots where the camera looks back at the audience member as they drive in a way that is more reminiscent of film. 'Re-Routed' uses a car-racing toy and allows the audience to recreate sections *Vertigo* on their mobile phones.

POSTER PRESENTATIONS / ACTIVITIES

Trust and the Mobilisation: communities of practice growing and shaping innovative interfaces for play

Will Pearson

The presentation will examine how you migrate a community of committed users from a simple level of online interaction to a more complex and involved level. It will examine how early design processes, passion and drive of community tool holders can forge success when an online portal and play tool set launch. Two NESTA projects, Sodaplay and Reactive Colours, cast programming and interface design as play, but with different potential audiences. The way in which user centred design has been effectively deployed will also be detailed, and where support for new media play within NESTA Learning may be headed. It will therefore draw on the wider NESTA Learning Programme project base.

Gender and Cultural Differences on Video Game Interactions

Christina Gaitanou, Simon Moore, Nigel Marlow

The present research investigated gender and cultural interactions of video games of 605 people (players and non players) between the ages of 10 to 25 years. Participants who volunteered to take part in the study were asked about what video games they play most, how often they play them and what are their favourite genre and why. Data was gathered from Greece and the UK. Analysis took place investigating gender and cultural differences on video games playing activity. [...] It is interesting to find out that overall people from UK play more than people from Greece. In addition, UK females are playing video games as much as Greek males. This finding contradicts previous research that suggests that playing video games is a 'boys' activity. This research also highlights the need for research into this field to be extended beyond American samples in order to achieve a more accurate understanding on video game play and interaction. [...]

International Mobile Festival Of Creativity

Paulo Hartmann

This project aims the launching of MOBILEFEST, the 1st Brazilian Festival of Mobile Art, based on the sociological implications that mobile phones and mobile technologies have been promoting in our culture. With an agenda composed by two days of cultural and technical activities, MOBILEFEST will include an international symposium, workshops and recognition awarding of the best works and mobile applications developed by Brazilians. Different from other national and international festivals, MOBILEFEST has been designed for the mobile era, that's why it's the first festival in the world that only takes submissions of texts, photographs and videos sent via SMS and MMS.

CLOSING SPEECH

Charles Kriel