A Proposal for the Provost's Awards for Graduate Research

Omniuum

[Spatiotemporal Visualization Installation]

Project Duration: August 1st, 2005 – March 1st, 2006

Proposed by Hyeyun Park

Graduate Candidate in Electronic Visualization
School of Art and Design, University of Illinois at Chicago

Abstract

Human beings, regardless of historical time and space, are destined to be creatures of circumstance, where interactions with one another and the rest of the world are essential. In this project, relationships among human beings living in mutuality will be visualized by blurring the boundaries of time and space to represent the nature of a space-time continuum.

Context

The idea of Omniuum[i] originated from Jacques Derrida's[ii] concept of "*la difference*", based on the theory of deconstruction, and portrays a linear process "past-present" in the past, "future-present" in the future. Derrida criticized the philosophy of "practical reason" that had been supported over the past by introduction of "deconstruction" as a new method of literary criticism.

---

[i] Omniuum is a compound word of "omnibus" and "continuum".
[ii] Derrida, Jacques (1930- 2004), French philosopher, whose work originated the school of deconstruction, a strategy of analysis that has been applied to literature, linguistics, philosophy, law and architecture.

The concept of Omniuum is also related to a line of T.S. Eliot's [iii] poem, The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.[iv]

"*In the room women come and go, talking of Michelangelo.*"

This sentence is broken into several fragments from Derrida's point of view. The time and space in this line are described without clear boundaries by means of confused expression. The woman, who talks in the "time" of present in the "space" of her room, speaks of the historical artistic predicament where the individual meaning behind each word should be separately interpreted without linkage to others, later suggested by the "Deconstruction" of Derrida.

Introduction and Concept

Omniuum is an interactive installation for visualizing spatiotemporal narratives.
It includes an artificial space - or "living unit" – where a viewer gets in and sees relative images of his/her own front and back projected on the wall. These images represent the past and the future of the viewer, with the intention of destroying the boundaries of time. The viewer perceives the erasure of self-image by watching the disappearing montages of him/her self while wandering through the space. The activity of deconstruction via the erasing the images offers the completion of the wish to progress. It signifies the effect of bringing "time" into "space" by reminding the viewer of a moment that has gone and by imagining a moment that will come up at the present in the space of the living unit.

From another perspective, Omniuum is intended to express the relationship between a human-being and the rest of the world where interaction between the world and the individual are indispensable to one another. It is also a contradiction to Derrida's theory of "Deconstruction" which may separately conceptualize, without recognizing human interaction, each human's context within the world at large.

While a viewer in the living unit experiences the confusion of time and pace, the audience observes imagery of the viewer reflected on the wall of the living unit.

[iii] T.S. Eliot (1888-1965), American-British poet and critic, b. St. Louis, Mo. One of the most distinguished literary figures of the 20th cent., T. S. Eliot won the 1948 Nobel Prize in Literature.
[iv] In 1915 the verse magazine *Poetry* published Eliot's first notable piece, 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'.

Deconstructed images of the viewer in the living unit are neutralized by the construction of new images by audience. The images constructed and created by audience are also shown on the wall, which the viewer cannot manipulate. These interactions represent the relationship between self (viewer) and non-self (audience). This implies that the human-being is destined to be a creature who, purposefully or not, exists within an endless visual/conceptual interplay.

Contemporary technology makes it possible to bring the past into the present by experiencing the past and the future through digital record. The significance of individual existence and of self-identity are emphasized by erasing the images over time, leaving the viewer alone in the space. This is an attempt to demonstrate the existence of selfhood by deconstructing its structure via Derrida's "Writing Under Erasure."

Deconstruction as explored in Omniuum conflicts with Derrida's theory and with its familiar interpretations. Whereas Derrida's deconstruction is more like a destruction of assumed perfection, Omniuum's deconstruction is an attempt to get closer to a hypothetical social perfection by means of the continuous, if unstable, interaction of self and non-self.

Realization

The space where viewer will experience Omniuum, so called "living unit", will be designed to be a cubic of 6 x 6 and 8ft high constructed with light weight materials. The installation will employ a ground surface with interactive sensors to track the viewer's position and will utilize four screen panels as walls, where viewer's interactive montages will be projected and visualized. These screens will be driven by two desk side computers with enhanced graphic capabilities to visualize transformed images streamed from an HD digital camcorder on a real-time basis. The imagery on the screens as well as viewer's shadow is repeatedly erased and re-inscribed back and forth, overlapping over time as triggered by the viewer's motion.

Sketch of Installation
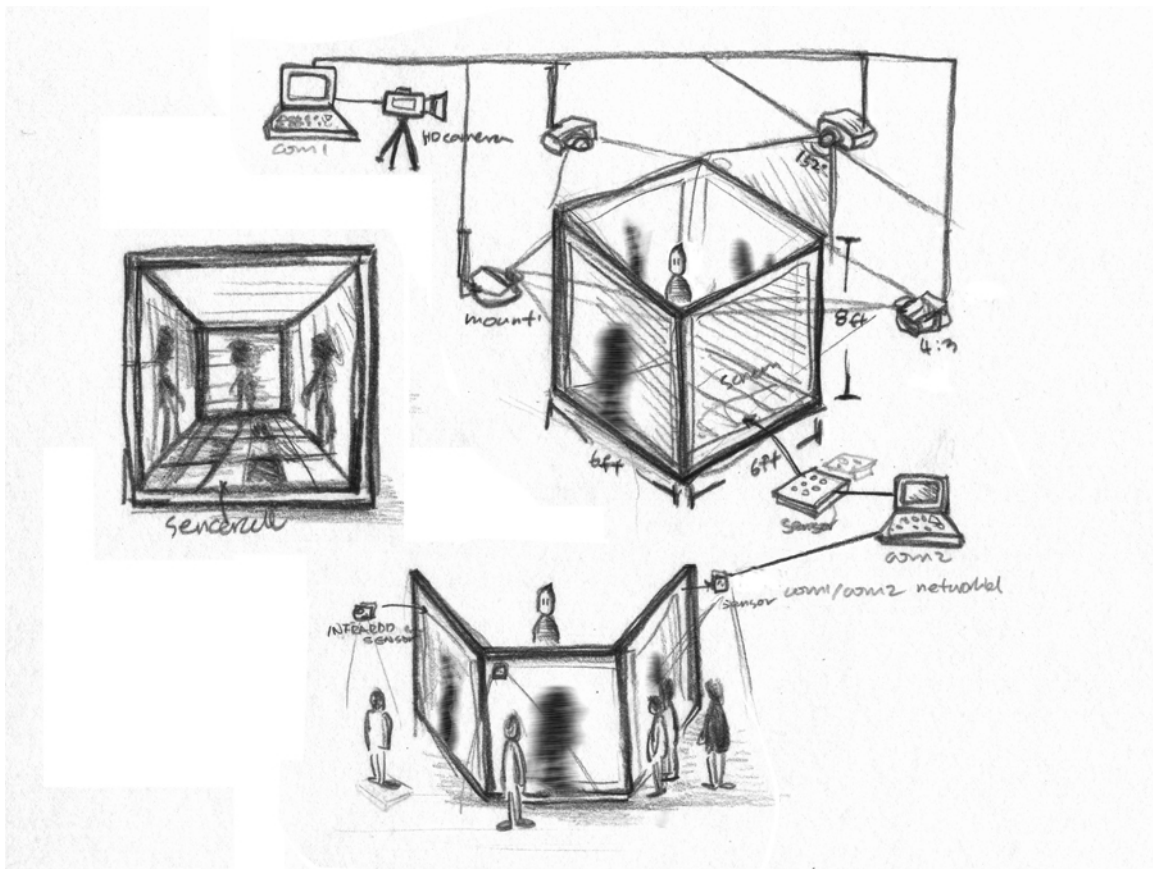
above: Installation view of Omniuum

Estimated Budget

Item	Number	Cost
Hardware		
Projector	4	*
HD Digital Camcorder	1	*
Linux Computer	2	*
Stereo Sound System	1	*
Firewire Cables & Repeater	1	*
Sensor Master Module	1	194
Sensor Module	10	1269
Materials		
Screen Frame (6ft x 6ft x 8ft)	4	320
Floor Material (6ft x 6ft x 8ft)	1	83
Fiber Screen (6ft x 6ft x 8ft)	5	280
White LED	120	85
LED Switch Cable	2	56
Coated Cable (100ft)	1	42
Frame Corner	8	98
Cable Extension	3	40
Total		$ 2467

* items will be sponsored by Electronic Visualization Laboratory at University of Illinois at Chicago

Bibliography

1. Julian Wolfreys (1998) *Deconstruction – Derrida (Transitions)*, Palgrave Macmillan Press

2. Paul Crowther (1989) *Beyond Art and Philosophy – Doconsruction and the Post-Modern Sublime included in PARADAKIS,* London Academy Editions

3. T.S. Eliot (1976) *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock : And Other Poems,* Amereon Limited Press

4. Martin Heidegger (1962) *Being and Time,* Harper SanFrancisco

5. Rudolf Arnheim (1954) *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye,* University of California Press

6. Hayles, N. Katherine (1999) *The Condition of Virtuality, in The Digital Dialectic: New Essays in New Media*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

7. Ferdinand Saussure (1986) *Course in General Linguistics*. Chicago: Open Court.