

# UMBRALES – THRESHOLDS - SEUILS

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[http://reverso.org/Umbrales\\_3.htm](http://reverso.org/Umbrales_3.htm)

"What must remain unspeakable for contemporary regimes of discourse to exercise their power?... A subject that speaks at the border of the speakable assumes the risk of redrawing the line between what is and is not speakable, of being cast into the realm of the unspeakable." Judith Butler, Excitable Speech.

Sub\_liminal Body is the new installation-performance of the series UMBRALES. Sub\_liminal Body is a twilight space: space of transformation-space in transformation. Sub\_liminal Body is a metaphor of the Total Screen of Media Culture, and a space of emergence of the liminal. In the artificial and seducing images of standardized media culture the interacting body opens up a gap into the subliminal readings, into the reverse of normative discourse, and opens up to the multiple thresholds and frontiers of representation and the self.

Sub\_liminal Body confronts the participant with the ambivalent character of media-culture: global capitalism is inducing an unprecedented standardisation of bodies and territories, where the Total Screen (Baudrillard), generates a hiperreal fiction of the global at the expense of difference and through the concealment of violence and dissidence.

We, as spectators and actors of media culture stand mostly unaware of the different mechanisms that sustain and maintain the Total Screen, seduced by its commodification of values and comfortable concealment of the uncertain or dreadful. Reality lies permanently hidden behind this impenetrable fiction, although at times we find ourselves immersed in the reality, only to find that, if it has not had its place in the total screen, it doesn't count for real, whereas the "realities" of the total screen are mostly lies and fictions, simulations of an already reduced and partial representation of the world.

The threshold of the total screen is the threshold of representation: certain kinds of technical images, as related to the use of the camera, since the XV century with the camera obscura, have acquired the status of objectivity within our existing technopositivist culture. How can we cross this threshold? What is there to the other side?

Perhaps we are crossing it all the time without knowing, and yet our bodies are also subject to standardisation: embedded in the language of effect of media culture, in prostheses that are increasingly formalising the body and life into logocentric and reductionist paradigms, the immeasurable reality of our being is permanently struggling with the effects of standardisation, yet its mechanisms are cunning and hidden, operating mostly through contamination/dissemination of non verbal elements of communication: indeed we, as bodies, are fields of communicating forces, and operate through embodied mirroring (mirror neurons), but each time we embody what we see, it becomes a new configuration in our body.

The reality of the body, of life and being is in fact immeasurable: we only produce discreet representations of the continuum. How does the body materialize within culture and discourse, How do new forms and norms emerge? How is difference in permanent conflict with sedimented forms and norms? How does this process of emergence happen, how can we make it happen in certain ways? Which is the threshold between the normative body and the emergent body, how many thresholds and layers (plateaus) of existence are we dislocated in?

Some of these questions are posed within *Sub\_liminal Body*, which attempts to visualize what happens when the threshold of representation of the Total Screen fails, becomes transparent, when we may cross it. It attempts to visualise the obverses and reverses of the body, the conflict between the normative and its constitutive outside: the unnamable landscapes of difference, of the emergence and morphogenesis of the body and the self in its open mutiplicity of communicating forms and forces, that is permanently subjugated to a double fight: the uncertainty of becoming itself, and the struggle with the given forms of the normative.

Differences in gender, and sexual orientation, racial and class differences, difference in body aspect, differences and specificities of the territories and the environment; the different forms of violence the system mostly conceals, to assimilate difference, silence it or erase it, and the unnamable difference of a body that is always in process of emergence.

*Sub\_liminal Body* will be a space in which to play around the metaphor of the Total Screen, but also a place in which to open up the lines of emergence of the body, of language and representation, a space of transition of the self, far away from commodity shows, though compelling and absorbing in its setting. It will seek to deeply involve, challenge, affect and move the participant, both emotionally and conceptually, not through loudness and visual effects, but through gentle confrontation and careful listening.

*UMBRALES / THRESHOLDS* is an interactive dance installation in which the public generates complex visual and sound compositions/environments through full body motion. The movement of the interactors is captured through a video camera and analysed in real time for the production of video, electroacoustics and 3D image.

*Thresholds* explores the frontiers of language and representation, of corporeality and the self. In the abstract, embodied and multiuser environment, the body, the subject, materialises and dematerialises in an uncertain process, in the frontier of intelligibility, in an open horizon of non verbal communication.

*Thresholds* challenges the perception of the body (proprioception) and proposes ways to redefine embodiment as a process of emergence of new language. The dark space induces an immersive experience in the threshold of both perception and understanding, in a twilight of the senses where the architecture of the subject opens up.

*Thresholds* investigates also the nature of the interface: here the body is a threshold of light, as it is captured by the camera and analysed by the computer. This ephemere interface, apparently disembodied, is the ground for the embodiment of space, which

becomes like a living instrument. This has to do with the interaction design, based in concepts of dance, as opposed to the formalised, disembodied interfaces of our everyday computers, that are based in formal, logocentric language models (mouse, keyboard, etc.).

The spatialised sound merges with the holographic like appearance of the image projected onto several layers of four to twelve transparent screens. The transparent screen symbolises the threshold of representation, that gives way: it is no longer the impenetrable surface of the total screen.

The environment is thus like a projection of the body, a liquid space of the body, a presence that exceeds the body itself.

In the installation, the life image and voice of the interactors is captured, analysed and transformed in real time through the parameters of their own movement, thus becoming a complex visual and sound composition.

The public is interactor and performer, but also the raw material of the image and the sound he transforms. There are different levels of interactivity. The system will detect the presence of the interactors. There will be no sound and no new images will be produced without their presence. The system also analyses 14 different parameters of the movement of the interactors, such as position in the x and y axes, speed, direction, distance between bodies or stretching of one body, aspect relationship, size and others. These are mapped in a variety of different ways to the parameters of the evolving visual and sound composition, consisting of 70 different visual and sound trails that generate only through the interaction, as well as generative 3D structures (virtual architecture) that transform through body interaction, like a virtual extension of the bodies. An interplay is thus generated between representation of the “real” body and those of a “virtual” body, whereby the distinctions are put into question.

The voice of the interactors is captured through a wireless microphone and processed. The granulation and delay and sampling of the voice generates an everchanging sound trail, a fragmented chorus of dissolving voices that are sometimes recognizable and sometime not, as it moves interactively in the quadraphonic space.

Thresholds is part of a larger project, Frontier Bodies, that explores the possibility to redefine communication, technology and language through multidimensional non determinist models that open up to an indeterminate number of levels of non verbal communication. The project explores how the redefinition of corporeality occurs thorough technology and reviews in particular the current status of technology in neoliberal society as instrument of implicit control that, according to Foucault's account of productive power, reproduces identity categories. In a time in which we are becoming more and more embedded in technology, control becomes ever more implicit and is displayed through processes of standardisation. Frontier Bodies researches the representation and language models that are at the base of such mechanisms of control and seeks to propose open models that are not subjected to logocentric frameworks.