

DISORIENTATIONS – Abstract telematics, amorphous presence and proximity without identity

by **Jaime del Val**

Installation-Performance Environment by REVERSO

ETP European Teleplateaus_Final Presentations_June 2010

In Madrid, Telc, Dresden, Norrköping

25, 26 y 27 June, 15'00 to 21'00

- **Installation** from 15'00 to 19'00
- **Dance Performances** at 20'00

Dancers: Muriel Romero & Jorge Tieffenberg

Coordination: Jaime del Val_REVERSO and ETP Group-Madrid: Francesca Mereu, Montfrague Fernandez, Carmela Saro and CIANT (Praga)

Visual Programming: Frieder Weiss, Matthias Haertig, Stephane Kyles.

Sound Programming: REVERSO

DISORIENTATIONS – *Abstract telematics, amorphous presence and proximity without identity* is an environment for installation and performance that develops a sense of abstract, amorphous telematic presence, of intimacy and proximity without identity, working on the limits of the legible or recognisable: illegible bodies that generate chains of data without meaning, a datamining of the absurd. A system of body de-visualisation, a machine for the disorientation of desire, produced by ETP Group-Madrid, and Jaime del Val_REVERSO, in collaboration with the group Common Body, from the laboratory of Social Commons in Medialab Prado.

ETP_Madrid Development Process

ETP_madrid group and workshop

For the development of the ETP_Madrid telematic environment an open call of participation for local artists was done in a workshop in June 2009 in one of the main cultural venues of the city: **Matadero-Madrid**. 40 local and international artists from all disciplines (music, media arts, visual arts, dance, theatre) participated in the workshop, out of which 20 remained attached to the project.

Subsequently, monthly meetings were held in **Medialab Prado**, in Madrid, for the development of the concept for the environments. The meetings were related to a permanent group coordinated by Jaime del Val_REVERSO in Medialab, called *Common Body*, thus establishing a direct link between the project ETP and Medialab Madrid. The group, as part of the Laboratory of Social Commons, deals critically with notions of corporeality as Social Commons that is being increasingly appropriated by numerous industries of late capitalism, and subjected to new technologies of standardisation and control.

The presentations of the ETP_Dresden and ETP_Norrköping environments served as tests for the development of the Madrid concept. The first was presented in December

2009 in one of the main cultural venues of the city, the **Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía**, and the second in **MediaLab Prado** in May 2010.

From may to end of June 2010 rehearsals were held in the REVERSO studio with the participants of ETP_Madrid Group. The final presentations were done at another of the main cultural venues of the city: **CaixaForum Madrid**, together with the presentations of the ETP_Prague environment, in whose development REVERSO also participated.

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT:

In the meetings discussions were held about the philosophical background of the project raising some of the following basic concepts:

AMORPHOUS PRESENCE: The project was to play with the notion of presence at the edge of the intelligible, abstract or nearly abstract accounts of presence without identity, that should challenge standardised forms of culturally intelligible presence understood as identity in information society.

Instead of the Cartesian Humanist subject that pervades information society at the expense of the erasure of the body we propose to experiment with new notions of embodied presence that do not rely upon the identity of a defined subject, but put into motion new forms of posthuman relationality and affect. Amorphous presence with no recognisable gender or even species, in the frontier of the intelligible.

DISORIENTATION: Following the reading of the book by Sarah Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, we proposed a discussion on the phenomenological approach to spatial orientation as key to the formation of the subject in aspects ranging from sexual, to cultural and political orientation. If orientation is to be understood as the alignment with existing histories of the bodies, normative histories, how can we produce a productive account of disorientation, a politics of disorientation, that challenges normative accounts of implicit control of bodies and desires?

We thus aimed to produce a *Machine for Sexual-Cultural-Political Disorientation*, for the disorientations of desire, through specific strategies of spacial disorientation. This is approached through the modalities of interaction and relation to remote agents through the parameter of proximity.

DEVISUALISATION: Visualisation as a key strategy of control in information society is to be challenged by strategies of de-visualisation: How to make the visible invisible or unintelligible so that it may escape the mechanisms of mapping and control?

POSTHUMAN BODIES: Humanist accounts of the subject understood as an abstract mind, following the Cartesian account of the mind-body split, are challenged by numerous critical theorists of the posthuman, such as Donna Haraway and Katherine Hayles, that question the special status of the human as autonomous, rational entity and radically rethink it as a heterogeneity embedded in technologies that are constitutive of subjectivity at all levels: this embeddedness accounts for the posthuman condition in which we currently live, where identity is no longer a fixed or universal reference.

POST-ANATOMICAL BODIES – METASEX: A body without anatomy is a body without sex or gender, without any references that allow for its categorisation. How to produce such a body? If anatomy, as a mapping of the body, relies upon certain ways of looking at it from the outside as an intelligible form, what happens when the form of the body is no longer intelligible? Eventually we face an amorphous body of movement that proliferates in infinite potential sexes, as Deleuze and Guattari suggest, a Metasexual body. This is to be understood not as a utopia, but as an exercise of deterritorialisation in the present.

SURVEILLANCE AND CONTROL: Since we live in a surveillance society, where the value of the life of people problematically ranks according to how much they are subjected to surveillance, we propose to challenge and invert surveillance strategies: in the project we use a typical surveillance mechanism: an infrared camera looking down from the ceiling. How can we disorient the surveillance system? The visual processing strategies in the software kalypso render the images unintelligible, the movements have no meaning, the surveillance system is potentially subverted.

We thus aim to generate a **FREE OF SURVEILLANCE ZONE** in which the connective participation of bodies-subjects doesn't rely upon the surveillance and control mechanisms of information society. This also raises questions about what it means to politically participate in the European Union, where citizen's participation is often subjected to or mediated by implicit technologies of control as in Web 2.0.

PROXEMICS: The proximity between local and remote bodies on the floor projection redefines the notion of proxemics such as it is understood in both local daily interactions and in usual telematics. Proxemics analyses the significance of distance to other bodies in interpersonal communication. Here, the mapping strategies for interaction that relate to proximity transforms the kinds of proxemic relations that are established between the bodies that interact locally and remotely.

IMPLEMENTATION:

For this we chose to use the parameter of proximity between the local participants and the contours of the remote participants as the main interaction parameter that affects both the sound and the processing of the contours themselves, so that with greater proximity the contours and the sounds associated to each image are less intelligible and with more distance they are more recognisable.

Three different kinds of sounds are used, according to three degrees of intelligibility: sounds in the four languages of the four cities involved, body sounds (laughter, kisses, etc.) and abstract processed instrumental sounds.

The visual contours projected on the floor surrounding the remote participants dissolve the closer they are to the local participants generating different kinds of trails., subdivided in 4 main scenes and subsequent subscenes. Each city has assigned a fixed colour in all scenes that allows to recognise with which city one is interacting at each moment: Green=Dresden, Blue=Prague, Red=Norrköping, Yellow=Madrid.

The movement and contour analysis, as well as the visual processing was developed with the software Kalypso, by Frieder Weiss and Matthias Haertig, with artistic direction of Jaime del Val, while the sound was developed in Max-MSP by REVERSO.

BODIES-CITIES: Google images of the city and pictures of the skin are used as textures in the background and inside the projected contours of local and remote participants thus counterposing the globalised satellite images of google, that appertain to a control and surveillance society, and the specificity of the skin photographed from very close: standard bodies of cities photographed from the sky, and amorphous skin images of bodies photographed from very near.

Starting with skin textures in the contours and google images textures in the background (the specificity of bodies vs. the images of surveillance and control) this relation is later inverted and the process ends with skin textures on a black background, pursuing an increasing dissolution and abstraction of the visual processes, a disintegration of the global and an increase in the intensity of the specific and amorphous.