

JEUX

Multi-user physical space exploring interaction through playfulness and collaboration.

It is known to be difficult to deal with multi-users as a group interacting in a same space; Jeux tries to define criteria for this type of installations. Using an artistic installation as a support, I analyse how the playfulness associated with physical interactive interfaces induces the creation of a social environment within a group of users (about 10 persons) and furthermore how propositions of collaboration create a dynamic social link in the multi-user structure.

The participants to Jeux are included as much physically than mentally in a polymorph installation; he gets to use 3 sculptural interfaces referring to different corporal states (organicity physicality and mens), by playing with the sensitive sculptures (with sensors embedded) he loads and controls a video environment integrated to each interface. Jeux takes advantage of interactivity's potential to create an intuitive content addressing the user's body rather than his mind; this is specifically what induces playfulness.

As an artist I have been developing this concept of physical interfaces loaded with content for the past 5 years (intra, le garde robe, take off your legs...). Several years of practice and shows in art centers and festivals internationally and the study of electronic arts have led to modulate those interfaces towards intuitive supports, so that interaction can fully deliver its content. However, Jeux by addressing a group of users creates other problematics.

Playfulness is a privileged tool of relational discovery that adult consciently reserves to intimacy. Although as sociologist Anne Galloway analyses: even if we rarely admit it socialising is often guided by playfulness; did we really suddenly stopped playing by growing adults? She says. It was evident in the first presentation of Jeux (as you can see on the video) interactivity led to playful relationship between users, it ruled the group's relations within the interactive structure. However as I also noted, because the context created by an installation is fictive, it is important to contextualise social interaction to instigate a dynamic relation between the participants. This thought led me to propose interfaces that by their conformation lead collaboration. This aspect of the research tends to find archetypes that engage several individuals to set up collaborative strategies For example Camille Utterback created an interface that was an actual seesaw. Jeux proposes images that unveil totally only when several participants collaborate or physical structures only usable by 2 persons In it's last version Jeux has abandoned the large screen for video integrated to the interfaces (see schematic) to enhance the local interaction and a global interaction takes place in the sonic environment.

There are few structures proposing collaboration between participants in the same physical space, we find several examples of distant collaboration (rendez-vous sur les bancs publics, Luc Courchesne et Monique Savoie 1999) or physical space where interaction is not structured (T garden, Xa Shin Wei, Georgia tech)

Whereas T Garden for example engages to co creation Jeux proposes collaboration around a predetermined content It focuses on the public's attitude and the social link.

Jeux was developed in Canadian art centers, the programmed was at first developed at Avatar(Québec) then, a first version of jeux was presented at Vasistas festival (Montréal feb 2003). At this point we defined modalities for group interaction and precised our problematic, the collaborative aspects and the integration of the screen to each interface are currently being developed at the Western Front (Vancouver) this spring an other presentation is scheduled at the end of May, an other presentation is scheduled at the ECM of Poitiers (France) .