

Freequent Traveller: Interaction Versus Contemplation

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ABSTRACT

Freequent Traveller is a live interactive installation by the artist Susanne Schuricht. The interface consists of a hammock, whose movement is tracked by a custom-made hardware interface. While relaxing in a hammock one animates text on a projection-sail synchronised with ones motion. The dynamics of these visuals depend on the motion of the hammock. These texts are short essays and excerpts about *mobility*, *home* and *identity*.

Author Keywords

Interactive installation, mobility, home, identity, embodied, communication, digitalization, travel, contemplation

ACM Classification Keywords

[Information Systems, Arts and Humanities]: H.5.3 Group and Organization Interfaces, *Synchronous Interaction*, *Theory and models* J.5 Arts and humanities – Fine Arts.

INTRODUCTION

Freequent Traveller was originally produced as playful research element for a questionnaire concerning the topics *mobility*, *home* and *identity*. How much technology do we need? What's home for you? What do we really need? Actually we need not much! Freequent Traveller brings the subject in a state of moving and being moved, at the same time it's an catalyst for interaction between people and for rethinking our needs and actual living situation. In creating the Freequent Traveller installation, Inspirations were the HIBYE nomadic work of Martí Guixé [1] and The Viridian Neologue Contest, invented by Bruce Sterling and Natalie Jeremijenko [2].

CONCEPT

In describing Freequent Traveller, I want to quote John Thackara: "Beeing embodied is our nature as earth-born creatures. the danger in our infatuation with digital communication is that we feel compelled to reduce all human knowledge and experience that we have by virtue of having bodies. when we persist in trying to substitute virtual experiences for embodied ones we end up with the

worst of both worlds. Digitalization speeds the flow of data but impoverishes our lived experience.

Modern mobility is unsustainable. As a system, mobility is locked into a mode of perpetual growth in a world whose carrying capacity is limited. modern movements has also transformed the ways we experience "here" and "now" and "there" and "next" [3].

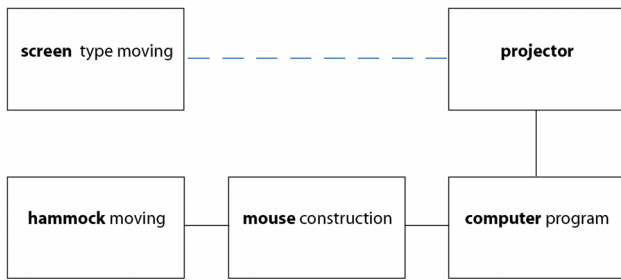
Travel is the unification of impulse and action, movement and excitement, impression and expression - Travel is first and foremost self-movement, desire, and change. Travelling in space includes the travel inside oneself, at the same time. Experiencing Freequent Traveller the user doesn't cover a real distance, he moves at the very same spot, he moves in his thoughts while his body is transformed into the function of a computer mouse. You enter a hammock and, synchronized to your swinging motions, you start dragging sentences across the projection screen. The motion of the hammock animates the characters, very *flow*, hypnotic and meditative. Analogous to the pendulum like movements of the hammock itself, the animations are based on sinewaves. The user is being immersed in the stimulating synchronised loop of own physical motion and perceived visual dynamics.

The content consists of statements from people from all over the world about *mobility*, *home* and *identity* and raise global awareness to a certain extent. The animated text is prewritten, not dynamically generated nor pulled from the web neither pushed from a content-provider. The text-passages are contemplations by the artist and excerpts from collected interviews and conversations with the audience of this travelling installation. Thus the content is permanently updated.

The hammock has been chosen purposeful as it creates a situation of peace and contemplation, though one is passive and active at the same time. The hardware components are simple. No bitmap-tracking, just plain mechanics. The visibility of this simplicity is part of the aesthetics of the installation.

Freequent Traveller is explorative, sensuous and playful. Its use is intuitive. Interactions are continuous and not in discreet steps; it is unencumbered, poetic, involving, engaging, has cognitive (visual/texty) as well as sensuous (feely) qualities.

In PDC-06 Proceedings of the Participatory Design Conference, Vol II, Trento, Italy, August 1-5, 2006, under a Creative Commons License. CPSR, P.O. Box 717, Palo Alto, CA 94302. <http://www.cpsr.org> ISBN 0-9667818-4-8



F R E E Q U E N T T R A V E L L E R

EXPANDING BOUNDARIES

As artist and designer I'm looking for processes to see the well-known with new eyes and thus *re-perceive* oneself as well. I develop and jointly construct objects to use them as catalyst to find out more about our and others culture and society, to better understand the present. I see my role to inspire people to become creative themselves through participatory elements of my work. Frequent Traveller explores the boundaries of media art and design.

“Art is about framing things in such a way that we see or experience them differently. Design is about reorganising the world in more concrete ways. I'm optimistic that the two activities will intermingle in the future!” [4]

Textpassages (a selection)

What technologies or tools - official - nomadic - domestic - objects - stories - to interact in person, face-to-face, stories instead of objects – meet somebody like you “[Yui]

Senior Project Manager: “After spending a week in the woods on a corporate Outward Bound trip, with almost nothing - My trip changed my whole way of thinking as far as what "being connected" means. I no longer need the "stuff" I thought kept me connected to home, and office. Today's technology keeps me as connected as I choose to be.” [2]

“How much technology do we need? Unfortunately "need" and "have to live with" are irretrievably mixed up. The world is so full of technology and inter-mingled systems that we can't just throw them away. But I'm confident we are moving away from the idea that tech is a good thing by itself. Most of us feel far from in control. We're filling up the world with amazing devices and systems-on top of the natural and human ones that were already here-only to discover that these complex systems seem to be out of control: too complex to understand, let alone to shape, or redirect. But things may seem out of control-but they are not out of our hands.” [John Thackara]

“For me, much interesting about the dream - I sometimes think that kind of the dreams, is it same for people who are living in different area - Japanese, German, British, African, whoever? Because, I've always slept as Japanese, so I never know. Do you know what I mean?” [Masa]

CONCLUSION

Freequent Traveller [5] is a catalyst for starting to re-think our way of life in today's times. Besides it brings strangers playfully together – it's a tool, which creates a special relaxed and social atmosphere to make people feel comfortable talking about personal issues. The experience of the swaying movement of your body helps to set your mind into a moving state.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Freequent Traveller was developed in collaboration with Tobias Schmidt as programmer, <http://t081.de>

Many thanks to Ralph Schoenfeld and Reinhard Ludwig.

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