COLLABORATIONS

DESTABILISING

COLLAB ORA TIONS

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'It opened up research terrains, and confronted me with art practices I had never even thought of' said a university student when asked what she had gained from the course *Research & Development/New Media Art Practices*. In this master course, art students and university students collaborate on the formulation of research proposals containing artistic and scholarly components. Working together in the field of Art and New Media, on subjects such as wearables, mixed reality or mobile media, students become acquainted with each other's practices, concepts and research methods. In this introduction, we will describe the content, goals and methods used in the course.

NEW MEDIA ART PRACTICES: DESTABILISING COLLABORATIONS

Participants

Research & Development/New Media Art Practices is part of the masters programme at the Frank Mohr Institute of Minerva Art Academy (Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Groningen), as well as of Arts, Culture and Media (KCM), and Art History(K&A), both of which are programmes of the Arts and Culture master at the University of Groningen. Participating in the first edition of the course (2012/2013) were twelve university students and seven second-year students at the FMI, from the departments Interactive Media and Environments (IME) and Scenography.

Method

The structure of the course is roughly divided into three (parallel) parts. *Part I. Studying examples* - In this section, attention is paid to artists who work in the field of new media and are intertwined in lengthy collaborations with technology developers (usually within LABS) and scientists. These collaborations often result in output of an artistic, technological and scientific nature. University students mapped the terrain of some of these existing collaborative organisations, such as *CREW* and *Blast Theory*.

Part II. – In conversation with – In this part, conversations [and co-operations] with participants in collaborative projects, as described above, took place: for instance, a workshop at gallery SIGN, conducted by the Belgian theatre group *CREW;* a meeting with Matt Adams, one of the artistic leaders of *Blast Theory;* a conversation with theatre scholar Kurt Vanhoutte, who shared insights stemming from his long-standing collaboration with *CREW*.

Part III – Formulating research - Through 'pitches' and 'matching', work groups were formed consisting of FMI and university students. Art students and university students entered into a discursive and visual relationship with each other: through dialogue, exchange and teamwork they explored a theme that both parties are involved with, yet is usually examined individually. Together, each group set up a collaborative research proposal where artistic, scholarly and technological components were given a place.

In preparing the research proposal, the groups received feedback from the tutors Ruud Akse (theory teacher FMI, IME), Linda Nijenhof (Contemporary Art and New Media teacher, University of Groningen) and Margo Slomp (theory teacher FMI, Painting). Furthermore, experts from various disciplines were involved in the feedback sessions, such as Anne Nigten (Lector Popular Culture, Sustainability & Innovation, Hanze University) and Matt Adams (artistic leader, *Blast Theory*).

Collaboration

The course focuses on the formulation of research proposals where new media, art and science meet. The aim of the first two parts of the course is to gain insight into the different types of research within the arts; the nature and diversity of existing longstanding collaborations between artist and scientist; and the artistic, scientific and technological output thereof. Furthermore, the premise of the collaboration between the arts and university students is to get to know, study and fertilise each other's concepts, frameworks and research methods.

Proposals

The students' working process required thorough re-evaluation of existing concepts of work, research and collaboration, and proved to be simultaneously challenging, inspiring, destabilising and enriching. Students of the Frank Mohr Institute and the university were both able to continue with or use elements of the conducted research in subsequent projects; be it a graduation project, master thesis or otherwise, as described by Marijke van der Laan, one of the participating university students. For this publication Marijke also wrote the summaries of the seven research proposals that were developed. A more lengthy description is given of the proposals *Wearables*, *Being in or Looking at* and *Touch*, along with brief summaries of the proposals *Ghost City*, *Sound and the Immersive Art Experience*, *Mapping the City* and *MEME*.

In an afterword, Anne Nigten offers a concise reflection on the strengths and challenges she experienced during the first edition of the course. By now, in 2013/14, the second edition will have already taken place and we will start preparing the next very soon, as we want to give the course a firm place in the programmes of our institutes.

Workshop with CREW at Frank Mohr Institute

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT: A STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

MARIJKE VAN DER LAAN

When word came that there was going to be a MA-course on art and new media, which involved students from Arts, Culture and Media, Art History as well as Fine Arts programmes, the Art History students panicked slightly. What do art historians know about new media? How can art history be of any value in a new media (art) discourse? How can art historians contribute, we asked ourselves. This course has taught us that there is no need for art historians to be afraid of new media. In fact, I can state that this course has been the reason why I am currently writing my Master thesis on 'time' as an overarching concept for the moving image in (new) media art.

Although working in an interdisciplinary manner proved to be challenging for some groups, our group had little trouble doing so. This may have had something to do with the fact that Floris de Jonge and I share a background in art practice. We didn't experience any frustration or had difficulty in recognising the different strategies that academics and artists use in exploring and analysing a subject. The academic process is very much a linear one, with pre-set goals and formulated research questions. Once this framework has been set up, very few revisions need to be made. The artistic process on the other hand can be described as a circular one, with each new insight feeding into the next and pushing the research forth. Changing the direction of the research is not uncommon. To allow for both strategies to be present in our research, we decided to formulate three individual research areas, based on Kleopatra Nikolau's artistic practice, that are connected by the same subject. To ensure the connection, a common theoretical framework was created in which definitions were offered. We also partly drew on the same case studies.

By using *Travelling through time* by Kleopatra as a case study, I could offer art historical analytical tools and insights to Kleopatra's artistic practice, yet at the same time I was able to learn from the way she connects different sources of information as well as from Floris' specific knowledge concerning new media art.

As a group, we had the opportunity to meet with Matt Adams, one of the artistic leaders of *Blast Theory* (an interdisciplinary and experimental performance/game/new media group from the United Kingdom), who was invited as a guest to reflect on some proposals. He offered valuable advice on the practical side of our proposal, specifically on the experiments we proposed and how to best conduct them. The meeting also set us on a path towards creating a diagram for different types of travel as an output of our research and made me rethink my research question. We attended an evening organised by the *Forummediaclub* at the Groninger Forum about 'me and my smartphone', where four speakers stemming from art and science backgrounds talked about our relationship with the internet and its influence on everyday life. The evening proved to be resourceful, for it demonstrated how the things we put on paper can take form in real artistic and scientific practice. During our collaboration it became apparent that working in an interdisciplinary group is very much a two-way street. It can bring spontaneity and creativity into academic research, provide artistic practice with a theoretical framework and point it to different directions. The place where theory and practice meet elevates research to a whole new level.

(see page 18 for summary of proposal *Mapping the City*)

ADRIANA GARCÍA GAITÁN (FMI IME)
NIKKI DE BEER (RuG KCM)
DAWN TROMPERT (RuG K&A)

Wearables

The research proposal *Wearables* focuses on the concept of wearable technologies in contemporary art practice. A wearable constitutes the application of technology onto a garment. The V2 Institute for Unstable Media in Rotterdam defines a wearable as "something designed to fit the body and to stay there when you are not actively holding it (as opposed to 'portables')." [1] As such, the body of the person wearing it is as much a part of the artwork as the technology and the garment. Wearables can be seen as artworks, fashion objects or scientific projects, which can make it difficult to categorise them. The proposal focuses on this aspect of hybridity. As wearables have only recently been introduced in the visual arts, much of the focus has been on the innovation and development of technological aspects. In contrast, this research proposal aims to provide insight into the distribution and presentation of wearable technologies in artistic practices.

Taking inspiration from the project *How to make a sound presence for my loved ones* by Adriana, this proposal seeks to combine three very different areas of interest: the making of wearable art, the changing role of art and the artist within society, and the relationship between art and the public. Adriana's work focuses on the creation of personalised sound atmospheres through wearables. In *How to make a sound presence for my loved ones*, she prepared garments for people who have been asked about gestures and sounds that remind them of a loved one. Adriana inserted buttons into the garment on specific areas of the body that are in contact with one another whilst the loving gesture is being performed. When pressing these buttons the person wearing the garment will trigger a sound that reminds them of their loved one. The other person will then hear the sound broadcasted through the Internet at exactly the same time. The wearable will establish an emotional connection by means of a shared memory. For this

1   http://v2.nl/lab/blog/performative-wearables
2   Van Winkel, C., Gielen, P., Zwaan, K., *De Hybride Kunstenaar. De organisatie van de artistieke praktijk in het postindustiele tijdperk*, Breda/Den Bosch: Expertisecentrum Kunst en Vormgeving, AKV|St.Joost (Avans Hogeschool), 2012.

proposal, Adriana wants to develop individualised garments based on data gathered from the specific user. For this purpose, each user will gather information by using a so-called stimuli kit, whilst Adriana gathers other traces, such as pictures, sound files, questionnaire data and videos. The information from this research process can be documented in mind maps, which will be presented in a gallery.

From an art historical point of view, Dawn is interested in researching the artistic practice of the hybrid artist. For her proposal, Dawn draws on research carried out by Camiel van Winkel and Pascal Gielen, who differentiate between various types of artists and suggest conditions for artistic hybridity.[2] An important characteristic of the hybrid artist is that there is no clear distinction between autonomous work, commissions and applied arts. Dawn states that wearables can simultaneously be seen as applied and autonomous art objects; leading her to conclude that they are the product of a hybridisation of art. Advancing on the analysis of Van Winkel and Gielen, Dawn wants to incorporate the artistic point of view into their theoretical framework through the analysis of case studies. She also draws attention to the important role that research 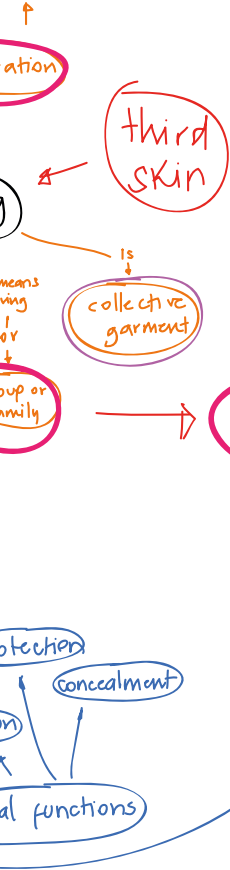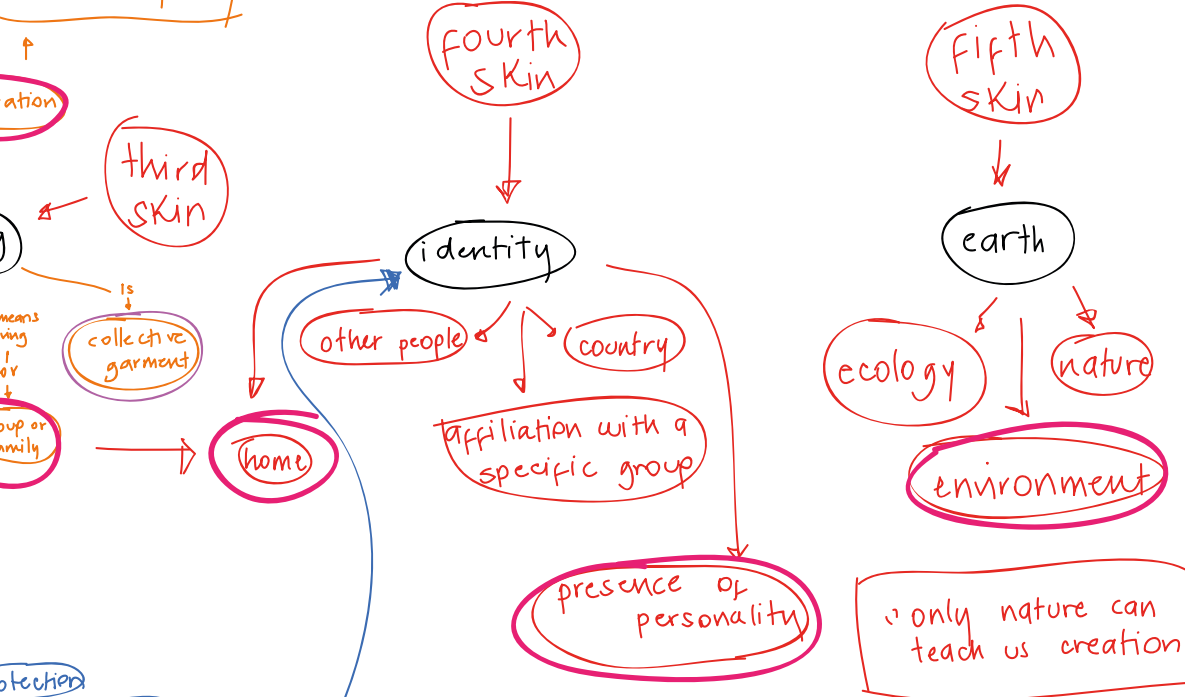has come to play for the hybrid artist in the contemporary art world. Within the constraints of this research proposal, Nikki wants to establish how the presentation of wearables affects the way in which the audience experiences the artwork. The experience of the wearable is subject to curatorial decisions, artistic choices, the setting and the type of audience. Identifying these values will therefore help the artist and art institution to understand how they may achieve their goals. On account of its hybrid nature, wearable art can be presented in - as well as outside - the white cube gallery space, and two types of audiences can be identified: onlookers and users. Nikki proposes to look at customer and personal values that are attributed to wearables in order to understand how the functioning of these artworks within various settings is influenced by their context. She proposes to research the perceived values of onlookers and to compare these with the found perceived values of users.

my work

personalized clothing

creative clothing

no ready-to-wear

no uniformity

misconception of our typified society

are

symmetrical cloths

no anonymous clothing

people of visual culture

Second Skin

media of communic

are both

have declared for stress on

First Skin

epidermis

clothing

housing

harmony

original truth

touch

participation

sculptural values

extention of our skin

collective of achie

this

beauty

involvement

mimics the properties of

helps to

a gr fo

store and channel energy can be

means of defining a self socially

heat-control mechanism

"clothes make the man"

Functions

pr

do not be affraid to "show yourselves as you really are"

social

psycological

attractio

physi

cultural functions

Social or economic status

communication

political or religious affiliation

individualistic expression

→ allows for → new modes of self-expression

"Today, fashionable wearables are mediators of information and amplifiers of fantasy"

"they change and rearrange patterns of human association and community"

...ation

third skin

FOURTH SKIN

Fifth skin

is

collective garment

identity

earth

other people

country

ecology

nature

home

affiliation with a specific group

environment

presence of personality

"only nature can teach us creation"

protection

concealment

...on

...al functions

key

= 5 skins
epidermis - clothing - housing - identity - environment
— Hundertwasser - 5 skins
— McLuhan, Marshal - Understanding Media
= Seymour, Sabine - fashionable technology
= What is relevant to my work

9

VINNY JONES (FMI SCENOGRAPHY)
MALOU TE WIERIK (RuG KCM)
KYRA TER VEER (RuG K&A)

Being in or looking at: the audience experience

Strongly influenced by post-dramatic theatre, the research proposal *Being in or looking at* focuses on the differences between looking at or being in a space as experienced by the viewers of an art installation. The proposal serves to underpin the work of theatre light designer Vinny, who is interested in how the inclusion of the audience in the same lighting conditions as the stage is able to change the way the performance is experienced. To understand how the experience of a space is affected by the use of different lighting conditions, Vinny, Malou and Kyra experimented with a light installation at the *Kunstvlaai* (23 November – 2 December 2013) in Amsterdam and interviewed visitors. The results led to a proposal for a series of experiments with an extensive research installation. The theory of perception from a phenomenological point of view and the analysis of artworks by James Turrell and Bruce Nauman form the theoretical framework of the proposal.

Vinny states that there are some specific, unspoken conventions in the practice of theatre light design. Following the general concept of the fourth wall, where the audience is present but not acknowledged in the world created on stage, these conventions have mainly to do with what is supposed to be lit and what should remain untouched by light. In contrast to traditional theatre, post-dramatic theatre sees the text, the body, the image, the sound and the light that are part of a performance as equal elements. As such, light is not used merely to create visibility for an actor, but serves a scenographic, a dramaturgical and even a narrative purpose. In this research proposal, light is understood to be a sensory medium and the audience an active participant in

1   Sauter, W., *The Theatrical Event: dynamics of performance and perception*, Iowa City: University of Iowa Press 2000.
2   Reid, F., 'How did the lighting look? Interpreting the evidence', In: Leclercq, N. [ed], *Capturing the essence of performance: the challenges of intangible heritage*, Berlin/New York: Peter Lang, 2010.

the theatre experience. This relates to the theory of phenomenology, in which a sensory, bodily perception is formulated.

Drawing on research done by Willmar Sauter, Vinny, Kyra and Malou state that theatre can be seen as a form of communication.[1] This communication occurs at three different levels: the sensory level, the artistic level and the symbolic level. Each level of communication demands a different response or experience from the audience. The first level describes the immediate impression an observer gets from the object. The second deals with the observer's notion that the object is created by someone; recognising it as a cultural artefact. At the third level, the observer is emotionally and intellectually engaged, as the meaning of the object cannot immediately be grasped. These levels imply that the experience of colour is constructed and highly individual. Scientific research shows that the experience of the colour of an object is often constant, despite significant changes in light, meaning that an object looks the same to us even though its surface colour may change considerably when it is carried from one light setting into another.[2] To investigate this, an experimental setting is proposed to compare participants' responses to looking at a light installation when being placed in a light situation that is either the same or different to the one they were looking at.

The installation consists of a circular centre space that is surrounded by seven connecting corridors. One corridor will lead to the centre space in which a Ganzfeld (German for 'entire field') light installation will be created. The Ganzfeld effect derives from a light installation in which a unified visual field is created, giving the eye nothing to focus on. As there is nothing to focus on, the eye stops being able to see the depth or details of the space, but can only see the light. The remaining six corridors will lead to individual viewing areas where the centre space can be seen but not accessed. In each space a pre-programmed light setting is created, amounting to a total of four different light situations in the overall installation. The states of 'being in' and 'looking at' are evoked, simultaneously or separately. Data of - and insights into - the experience of the audience will be collected through a questionnaire. Vinny, Malou and Kyra expect that their research may have implications for the way in which theatre light design is used to affect the relationship between audience and performance.

CINTHYA OYERVIDES (FMI SCENOGRAPHY)
ESTHER DE RIDDER (RuG KCM)
FLOOR OOSTRA (RuG K&A)
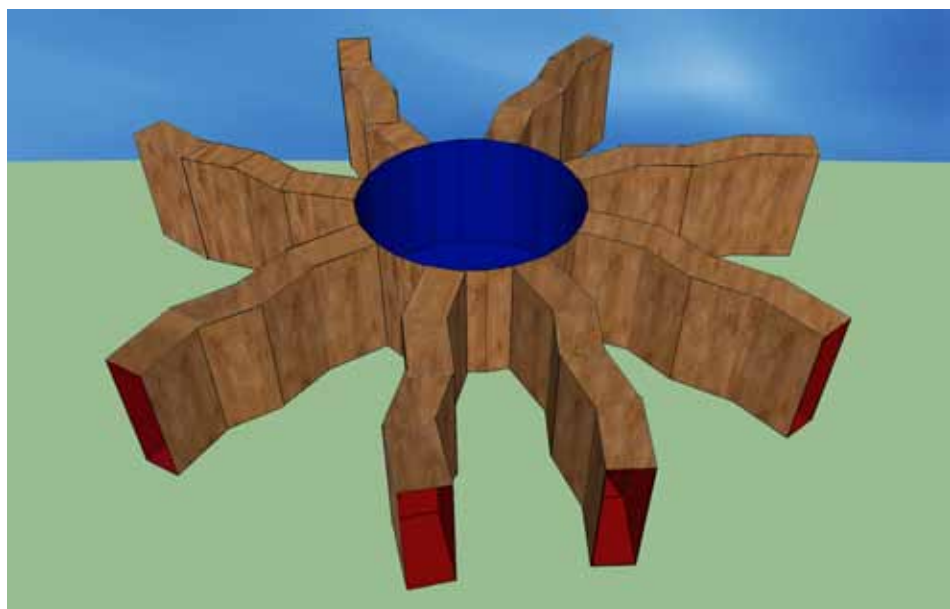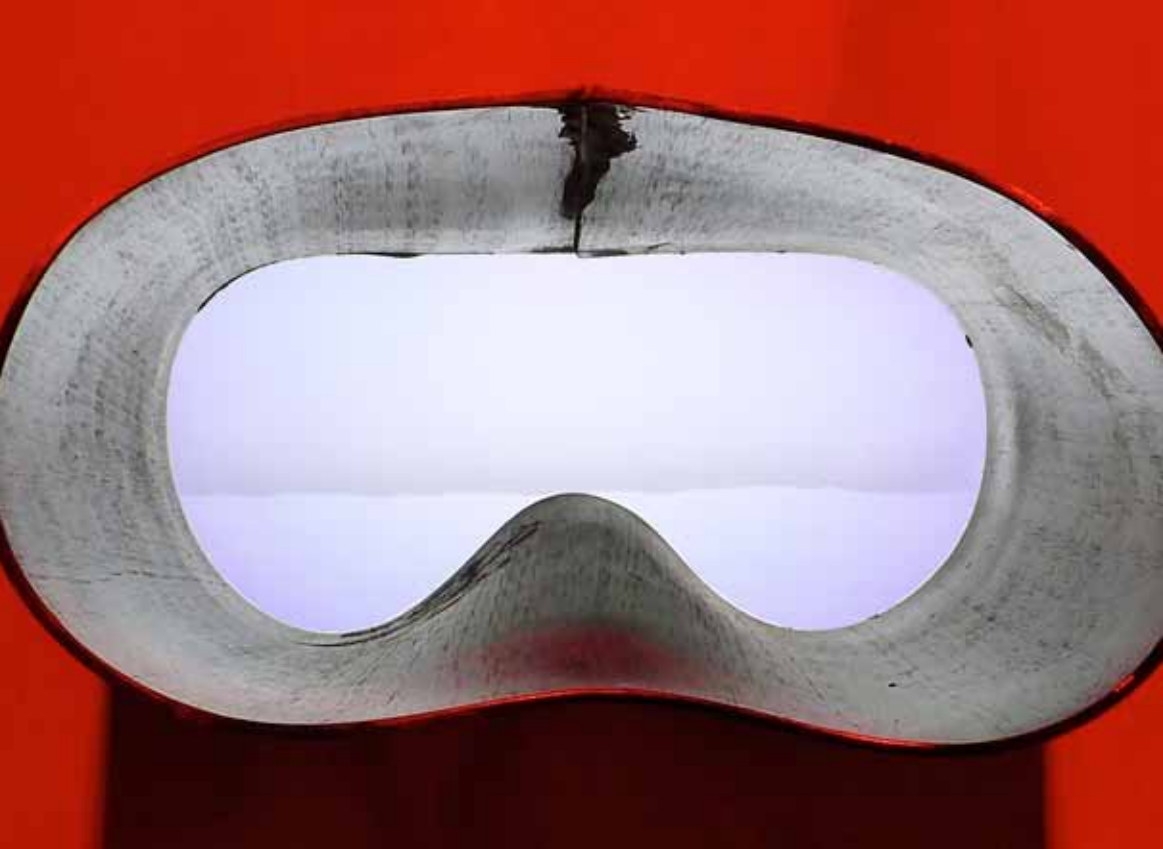
Touch in New Media Art

Questioning the continuous evolvement of media and technologies in contemporary life, the research proposal *Touch in New Media Art* focuses on new tendencies in terms of touch or bodily presence in media art. Starting from the point of view that nothing can be better than actual physical interaction, Cinthya, Esther and Floor question why new media artists use technology to create tactile and kinaesthetic experiences. They state, rather paradoxically, that using new media technology as an interface can result in touch becoming a medium for communication in works of art. Combining the disciplines of art practice with art education and art history, this proposal sets forth an analysis of touch in new media art practice, and ultimately leads to the proposal for the development of an app called *Keep in touch*. This app aims to provoke situations in which touch functions as a way of communicating; it will be used as an experiment for secondary school pupils and also functions as an autonomous artwork in itself.

The group establishes a common theoretical framework, partly drawing on the same artworks as case studies in order to connect the members' different interests and backgrounds. Drawing on post-phenomenological theories concerning embodied perception, touch is defined as being at the heart of our experience of the world. Following the French philosopher Michel Serres, Cinthya, Esther and Floor state that the traditional division between the senses, such as sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch is artificial. Serres argues that the senses are mingled in the body, which implies that the skin mediates between the body and the world. This means that touch is a sensory experience that requires both action and sensory change to obtain information about our surroundings.[1] As such, this proposal has some similarities to the *Wearables* research proposal.[2] Both projects aim towards a different kind of perception in which the body is as much a part of the work as the technology and the artistic concept.

The app *Keep in touch*, which emanate from the research, is based on the artistic practice of Cinthya, a choreographer and performer who is interested in looking for ways to communicate with an audience through action rather than passive observation. The app, which participants will use during a period of three weeks,

functions as a collector of data and as an interface. Every week a new stage begins, subsequently replacing the words 'hello' and 'goodbye' with touching hands and/or shoulders, whilst varying the duration of the touch. In the last stage participants are permitted to hug each other. After downloading and installing the app on a mobile device, participants will be able to create a profile. A menu will display the other participants of the project as well as who is willing to touch or be touched. A journal will also provide space to record information, such as the duration of the touch, the heart rate before and after or the mood of the participant.

boundaries of our bodies. From an art educational perspective, Esther is concerned with the effects of new media technologies on youngsters, who are learning to communicate without being physically present. Following Emiel Heijnen, senior lecturer and researcher at the Amsterdam School of Arts, Esther proposes to teach media related courses in secondary schools in order to encourage pupils to think critically about their mediated environments.[3] Esther wants to investigate how new media art can play a meaningful role in art education by carrying out experiments with interactive artworks, which activate multiple senses and require participation.

2. After the student has created his or her profile, the first page will look like this:

4. The participant can select the button 'Members' to see which students take part in the project.

The art historical input consists of analysing the aesthetics of touch in recent art practice and developing a theoretical framework on embodied perception in order to investigate the extent to which technology is able to activate or simulate bodily touch in new media art. Through the analysis of new media projects such as *Hug Shirt* (2007) by CuteCircuit or *Touchy* (2012) by Eric Siu, Floor examines how new media technologies are able to question the

Incorporating the diverse disciplines in this research proposal proved to be challenging. However, Cinthya, Esther and Floor conclude that the collaboration was interesting and that the project took them to places they would never have ventured to by themselves, simultaneously demonstrating the difficulty and the value of an interdisciplinary project such as this.

1   Serres, M., *The Five Senses: a philosophy of mingled bodies (I)*, Londen: Bloomsbury Academic, 2008.
2   See page 6 of this booklet.
3   Heijnen, E., 'Media-educatie als verrijking van beeldend onderwijs', in: Burn, A (et.al.), *Media + Kunst + Educatie: internationale ontwikkelingen in media- en kunsteducatie*, Utrecht: Cultuurnetwerk Nederland, 2009.

Ghost City

Ghost City is the research proposal for a performance to take place in the streets of Groningen. Drawing on a shared interest in the experience of everyday spaces, Soye and Sybrith combine transitional urban sites with experimental forms of theatre. Introducing a mode of playfulness, Soye and Sybrith wish to activate participants thereby making them complicit in the outcome of the project. In Ghost City participants will arrive at a car park at midnight and will be given an audio tour, consisting of stories of people interviewed in the streets. The participants are asked to chase the ghosts of these people by retracing their steps in the city. In doing so, Soye and Sybrith hope to establish in the participants a changed view of the city: no longer merely buildings and roads, but a network of personal stories.

Soye was adamant that the performance should be subtle rather than disruptive, while Sybrith wanted to integrate the act of playing, which is generally considered to be an interruption of daily life.

How does the fact that people are actively constructing their identity online, influence offline identity construction? Are people more comfortable in constructing and performing their identity in a physical environment?

Research into on- and offline games demonstrates that when a game is shifted into the public space, an opportunity arises for outside factors to influence the game, making everyday events part of it.[1] Other ways of incorporating the act of playing involve inviting participants to create an online character for themselves or to fill in a slightly alienating travel form when applying to be part of the performance. These strategies should awaken a sense of whimsicality and create a place where taking risks and experimenting with identity is of little consequence. Data drawn from the participants by means of voice-recorders, photography cameras, phones and surveys, will be able to show the extent to which identity is performable and constructed according to the environment people find themselves in.

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1   See Jenkins, H., *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture:*
    Media Education for the 21st Century. Cambridge/Londen: MIT Press, 2006.

SIMONE EGGEN (FMI SCENOGRAPHY)
IRENE BROUWER (RuG K&A)

Sound and the immersive art experience

The research proposal *Sound and the immersive art experience* focuses on the ways in which a sound installation artwork can be perceived as immersive. The artistic perspective is an investigation into the strategies that can be employed by artists to transport participants to another reality through the use of sound. The scientific research focuses on the indistinctness of the notion of immersion in recent art historical and new media publications. As such, *Sound and the immersive art experience* contains three different sections. Firstly, it provides a literary study into the discourse on the meaning of immersion in new media art. Secondly, it offers case studies of new media artworks that focus on sound. Thirdly, it presents an artistic concept based on the results of scientific research and informed by existing artworks.

Inspired by sound installations such as *Surround me* (2011) by Susan Philipsz, *Forest (for a thousand years...)* (2012) by Janet Cardiff and George Miller, and *Raw Materials* (2004) by Bruce Nauman, Irene and Simone propose to set up a sound installation in an alley in the city of Groningen. Hidden speakers are placed at different levels and intervals, and are set at different volumes. Whilst making their way through the alley towards a small courtyard, participants will be confronted by sounds such as music, the sound of children playing or a voice telling a story. Activated by sensors, some sounds will only be heard once participants start to move through the alley. This will result in participants exploring the space, searching for the sound fragments; although to what extent the installation offers a real exploratory, interactive or immersive experience remains something to be experimented with.

KLEOPATRA NIKOLAOU (FMI IME)
FLORIS DE JONGE (RuG KCM)
MARIJKE VAN DER LAAN (RuG K&A)

Mapping the city

Mapping the city is a research proposal in which a shared interest in travelling forms the basis of three different approaches, each of which shows a different side to 'the journey' in the city. A journey, for this purpose, has been defined as both physical and mental, either in the real world or virtual. The different approaches with their strong connection to the subject of the journey will come together by means of cross-referencing and using the same data and insights from experiments. At an early stage, Kleopatra, Floris and Marijke conducted several experiments on a predetermined route, gathering photos, GPS information and accumulating data in order to fine-tune their proposal. A diagram will be drawn up featuring different modes of travel and their characteristics in the hope of formulating new insights into the relationship between new media art practices and the journey.

Floris will focus on virtual travel interfaces designed by artists. Central to his research are the kinds of interfaces artists offer to experience another place or time, which theoretical notions can be used to articulate the characteristics of these interfaces, and the evaluation of the kinds of experiences established. Marijke is interested in how the notions of drifting (Guy Debord) and the flañeur (Charles Baudelaire) can be used as perspectives for analysing new media art projects which deal with mapping, documenting or visualising journeys through the city.[1] She aims to update these notions to ultimately include cyberspace. Kleopatra is interested in how people can experience a place in a different way. The notion of time travel is central to her approach. For this proposal, she has written an essay that will also form part of her artistic research and feed into her project *Timetravel* The essay includes references to science fiction, art projects, her own experiments and popular culture, such as the film *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (2005).

1   See Debord, G., 'Theory of dérivé', in: *Les Lèvres Nues* #9, Paris, 1956, and Benjamin, W.,
     The Writer of Modern Life: essays on Charles Baudelaire, Cambridge: Harvard University Press,, 2006.

JANINE VAN VEEN (FMI IME)
ANNELIEN ALONS (RuG K&A)
MARE KIERS (RuG KCM)

MEME

This research proposal started out as an investigation into myth and myth-making in the art world. However, the subject proved to be too challenging and the group's objective switched towards the direction of the meme, which has myth-making properties of its own. Drawing on research carried out by Richard Dawkins in the seventies explaining the way in which cultural information spreads, a meme is defined as 'conveying the idea of a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of imitation'.[1] The research focuses on the characteristics of a meme that secure its survival value: the accuracy of copying, the high number of copies and the longevity of the copied material. Vito Campanelli updated these qualities for our contemporary culture of mass communication by adding reproductive fitness, the aspect of repetition and memetic contagion to the definition.[2]

Although theoretical research into memes has provided definitions and characteristics, it remains unclear how processes of selection and transmission occur. Recognising this, Janine, Annelien and Mare, set out to investigate the origin of contemporary memes in artistic practice. They propose to research contemporary artistic meme projects through in-depth interviews with the persons involved in order to analyse how the creation of a meme functions. An example of this is how the artist Ai Weiwei altered the music video clip of 'Gangnam Style' by Psy, which in turn was used by artist Anish Kapoor, which was then copied by Tinkebell. At the end of their research they hope to be able to formulate how an artistic meme differs from a 'normal' meme and whether an artistic meme faces different demands. The proposal resulted in their personal attempt to create an artistic meme. If you've heard about it, it means they succeeded. If you didn't, well...

1   Dawkins, R., *The Selfish Gene*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1976.
2   Campanelli, V., *Web Aesthetics: how digital media affect culture and society*, Rotterdam: NAi Uitgevers 2010.

DR. ANNE NIGTEN

PROFESSOR AND RESEARCH LEADER
RESEARCH GROUP P.S.I.
CENTRE OF APPLIED RESEARCH & INNOVATION
ART & SOCIETY

EPILOGUE

First of all, I would like to congratulate the organisers of this shared Master course module for students of the Frank Mohr Institute and the University of Groningen. In this brief reflection I would like to share my observations and points for improvement for future work based on the essays, the students' work, my colleagues' input and my personal experiences as a guest tutor. However, let me start with some of the most pressing paradigm shifts that substantiate the relevance of this course.

What distinguishes contemporary media art or unstable media is that it is a collaborative practice, where the contributions of the collaborators AND the participants are just as important as those of the artists. Regarding media art's creation process, we have to acknowledge that the collaborators often come from a range of backgrounds, such as art, design, various scientific branches, the humanities, technology and so forth. This often presents a lack of knowledge among the collaborators about each other's research methodologies.[1] Therefore, in this course there was a strong emphasis on the team members' communication and articulation skills to inform each other in detail about their research (and development) methodologies as a means of helping the team members to acquire a shared understanding. As we can read in this pamphlet, once some common ground has been established among the collaborators, it provides fertile ground for generating *new* knowledge that is linked to the academic research as well as to the artistic research and creation process. However, the creation process of media art doesn't stop after the artistic and technical development phase, it also embodies the shift from a final piece of art to the interactive process where the participants become co-creators of the experience or in Brian Eno's words: 'Interactive' anything is the wrong word... The right word is 'unfinished'.[2]

1. Nigten, A., Processpatching, Defining New Methods in aRt&D, *Leonardo, the journal of the International Society for the Arts, Sciences and Technology*, October 2009, Vol. 42, No. 5: 478–479.
2. Kelly, K., Gossip is Philosophy. Interview Brian Eno, *Wired*, May 1995, The Condé Nast Publications http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/3.05/eno—pr.html (accessed January 12, 2014)

As one can imagine this *unfinished* business has major implications for the academic researcher, as the object of study has been transformed into a process, a co-creation process, to phrase it precisely. The academic discourse dealing with the making of media art is only just in its infancy today. This is an issue for academic researchers whose research practice will be more and more positioned in a so-called hyper reality 3 where the interactive experience plays a crucial role. Neither should we overlook the importance of a suitable discourse for the contemporary artist who plans to work with interactive experiences; in particular those who intend to collaborate with other disciplines in the research and development process. The artistic research and experiments, as briefly mentioned in this pamphlet, could pave the way to getting a grip on the abovementioned never-ending making process, as this type of research is grounded in the creation process. Based on the outcomes of this course, it proved to be of crucial importance to be more explicit about its artistic research value for building a knowledge base that is grounded in practice. The context as outlined above emphasises the value of the research proposals of those student groups that plunged themselves into new experiments. Especially in new artistic experiments one discovers that the classic boundaries between the objective observer and the participant are starting to blur. Here the student teams dared to rethink their methods, learn from each other and investigate other research fields for relevant methodologies. This applies as much to the participating artist as to their academic teammates. In this collaborative setting the theoretical references were always linked to practice. So we can speak of collaborative 'integrated research where reflection informs practice and practice generates theory'.

I would like to conclude this epilogue with some recommendations for readers who are interested in this course. The students who approached the project with an open mind and without fear of the unknown probably benefited most from this course, as they immersed themselves in new knowledge and new areas of experience. This open attitude also refers to learning with and from each other; the balanced teams with mutual respect for each other uncovered common grounds and common interests. Naturally, this course also brought forward points for improvement and good intentions for the future. Within the scope of this shared module I would like to emphasise the importance of being more outspoken about artistic research and experiments as valuable assets, which should be treasured by all.

3. Eco, U., Travels in Hyperreality, *The Fortresses of Solitude*, 1990.
http://public.callutheran.edu/|brint/American/Eco.pdf (accessed January 12, 2014)

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