

The Breathing City, Ice – Traffic Installation

Arts and Science Research Residency and work-in-progress

Holger Zschenderlein (School of Arts & Media), Christopher Rose and Patrick Letschka (School of Architecture & Design) and Dr. Janet Barlow (University of Reading, Meteorology Department) were recently invited to stage a two-week research residency concluding with a work-in-progress exhibition of *The Breathing City*. This cross-disciplinary collaborative project featured the most recent experimental development phase of their *Ice – Traffic Installation* leading towards further installations in 2010/11.

The aim of the project is to create a shared basis for experiential understanding, and engagement in a creative process through cross-disciplinary dialogue. The exploration of multi-sensory modes of representation aims, through sound, space, moving image, elemental/ephemeral material (ice) to develop an evocative and symbolic form of communication that can relate to non-experts and experts alike, leading to a wide and inclusive debate. The installation is a projection of time-lapsed images of urban movement and traffic on to a mass of ice and its melt water, combined with a multi-channel soundscape composition consisting of processed live urban location recordings with sounds of breathing and water.

The work has involved experimentation and essential testing of ideas; into how recorded data of complex dynamic systems can be physically represented and understood. With the project evolving over three years, it became necessary to experiment both physically and intellectually with our association of concepts in a gallery setting. We are adjusting both scale and time-based processes by producing scaled prototypes of ice masses of up to about 350 kilogram (over ¼ tonne). The installation was initially calculated on a dynamic temperature model but will be ultimately determined by the actual duration of melting ice. This unknowable element is integral to the project, contributing to indeterminacy and fascination for its audience.

The evocative combination of ice with fast moving image projections ('image bombardment') of traffic, and the illusion of traffic melting ice, brings together geographically dispersed elements within a new contextual setting. The displacement of the ice mass, a symbolically 'charged' elemental object, can provoke and evoke strong reactions from our deep-rooted experiential, archetypal relationship and knowledge. "Objects (or words) taken out of their everyday context may acquire a potency that is not ordinarily evident – yet in their new context they acquire a new, charged meaning" (Dissanayake, 1988: 84). We had considered a variety of different materials and forms of evidence (sound, temperature, etc.) and our current focus is upon ice as an ideal medium with which to develop our ideas for the interaction space. We found it full of associative and poetic potential, embodying metaphorically a symbolic dynamic climate model, central to our discussions and experimental practice.



Work in progress of *Ice Traffic*

During the residency and work-in-progress exhibition at Lighthouse the project generated interest by the Arts Council England and Royal Society and received comments through discussions and written feedback by visitors of varying ages (including adults and children) and backgrounds (academic, non-academic, artists, students, 'lay-persons') responding to the installation.

The residency exhibition received support in kind from Lighthouse, Ken Woodward, Senior Lecturer at the School of Service Management (specialist advice for the production and handling of ¼ tonne ice block models), the School of Arts and Media, School of Architecture and Design, Media Unit of the Faculty of Arts.

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