

# HELLO PROJECT: 2011 Performance

## Large Screens and the Transnational Public Sphere

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## Public Screens and the Transformation of Public Space

## The Spatial Impact of Digital Technology on Contemporary Art and New Art Institutions

## HELLO 2011

Watch video documentation of our 2011 event here! (Video courtesy Art Center Nabi)



[Watch video \(272.79Mb\)](#)  
*hello\_p3\_NEW*

On October 7, 2011, Large Screens and the Transnational Public Sphere and Art Center Nabi staged the first presentation of HELLO 여보세요, a public participation dance event by [Rebecca Hilton](#) and [Soonho Park](#) that linked the large screens at Fed Square, Melbourne and Arko Art Theatre in Seoul. During the one and a half hour free public event, over 400 participants of all ages attended. Taking the form of a collaborative, fun and easy to learn dance game, HELLO negotiated linguistic, technological and cultural differences to test the possible creation of a transnational public sphere. You can read our report on the 2011 Hello project below.

### Research and Development for The HELLO Project

In the early research and development phase of HELLO, five key imperatives guided the curatorial process:

- A commitment to facilitating real-time transnational interaction
- The linking of publics through the use of large-screen technologies
- The development of a curatorial process that encouraged cross-cultural collaboration
- The use readily available technologies
- The development of communication models that did not rely on written or spoken language

The last of these concerns emerged out of our prior experiences in telecasting text-based interactive works between large screens in Melbourne and Seoul (including works *SMS\_Origins* by Cmielewski, Starrs and Hinshaw, and *Value*, by Seung Joon Choi). The absence of a common language between transnational participants demands creative solutions at the level of both form and content. By prioritising aspects of physicality and intimacy in the development of a participatory interface, we hoped to foreground corporeal connections between participants separated in time and space. We were interested in fostering active connections between remote participants so as to test the possible emergence of a transnational public sphere. We sought to measure and capture audience responses through detailed fieldwork research and data collection on site in each country.

The value of the 'encounter' within this framework was not forgotten. Although the encounter is a key aspect of public art engagements, its charge is often elided in the production of telematic digital exchanges. The development of interactive digital technologies may be fuelled by a strong desire for connection and identification, but the role of 'presence' in the digital realm remains radically different from that of co-locative exchanges. Keeping these factors in mind, LSTPS proposed to incorporate the medium of dance into our existing framework for telematic exchange. Renowned Australian

choreographer Rebecca Hilton was commissioned as a key collaborator on the project. As Hilton notes, “working with human beings in real time – creating art that is abstract and representational and something else altogether, collapsing and freely traversing as it does, the spaces between visceral, visual, intellectual and emotional information – I think dance is the premiere art form for elaborating on the human condition. There are many languages in the world but we all share the human form” (2011).

Since Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz' pioneering [Hole in Space](#) project of 1980, advances in broadcast technologies, smart networks and high-speed connections have radically enhanced the potential for transnational linkages between remote sites (see [Ascott, 2003](#)). Artists, IT designers, choreographers, curators and dancers from around the globe have also in recent years become attuned to the visceral potential of dance to link distant users in creative and collaborative ways. Performance projects that utilise video-conferencing tools to build networked environments highlight the potential of corporeality to revitalise digital exchanges (Brooks, 2011). The incorporation of digital communication technologies into a performance context impacts not only upon choreographic style but also upon relationships between performers, audiences, and sites. Lisa Naugle (2002:56) reports that these projects consistently involve “a synchronous approach to communication ...The basic technology system consists of a computer, monitor, video camera, projection surface(s), microphones and speakers at each site.” Moreover, as networked performances are often streamed and archived to the web, relations between public and private space take on new dimensions within these digitised performance frames (check out the New Zealand online community dance project [Backyard Dances](#) or the work of the international [Association for Dance and Performance Telematics](#)).

Hilton's initial proposal was to create a 'transnational folk dance' between Korea and Australia that would be choreographed from specific movement gestures collected from members of the public in both sites. Unlike many telematic dance projects, this event would not necessitate the deployment of expensive custom-made motion-capture or movement sensory hardware and software but would be designed to work with readily available telecommunication platforms.

The project was seen as a social experiment that responded to and challenged LSTPS key aims. As Hilton noted, “There are several primary intentions in the conceptualizing of this project. One intention is to use the large screen technology in a public space as a vehicle for a simple, straightforward connection and communication between cultures. Dance is the natural partner for this technology as information is translatable and transmittable without a heavy dependence on language. Also, the idea of generating a new international or transnational folk dance is very appealing to me as a response to the way nationalism is so often used as a way to divide us.” She called the project 'HELLO'. Korean choreographer Soonho Park was introduced as the collaborating artist in Seoul. One of Korea's most respected young choreographers, Park's work is widely celebrated for its integration of 'everyday' movements into complex group choreographies. Playing upon elements of street culture and of traditional Korean storytelling, Park (like Hilton) also has a keen interest in working with community groups in the realization of his projects. The choreographers' shared willingness to involve non-dancers in the creation of their public events was also a significant driver for the project's development, and tied in with our aim to experiment with 'open' and readily accessible public communication platforms.

### **Stages of Project Development**

Between February and July 2011, HELLO progressed over three separate but inter-related stages. Firstly, we asked specific groups of people from Seoul and Melbourne to 'donate' movements to the project in response to a series of verbal questions. The questions were designed to elicit emotional and physical responses that would translate easily into gestural movements. They included questions like: “How would you describe Australia/Korea in one movement?; What's your favourite dance move?; and “How are you feeling right now?” The idea was to develop a repertoire of questions that spoke to the individual's immediate and broader placements within specific geographic, personal and cultural frameworks. In Seoul, choreographer Soonho Park worked with groups of

children to workshop how dance and physical movements could express ideas without using words.

The collaborative process of formulating these questions led to intensified curatorial discussion about exchange, translation, and cultural difference within a mediated technological sphere. Art Center Nabi researcher Somi Han noted, “In the 21st century where the development of technology is making similar phenomena occur around the world, is it still possible to find the difference in cultural identities?” Attentive not simply to differences but also to linking principles, Park and Hilton worked with different cultural groups at community centers in Melbourne and Seoul (Footscray Community Arts Centre and Seoul Multicultural Families Centre) to ‘harvest’ a cross-section of movements from each location. These collected movements were videoed and catalogued to produce a ‘gesture archive’ or database of movements. Park and Hilton then each choreographed two fifteen second dance sequences based on the gestures collated in their respective archives. Their choreographed sequences were deliberately short, easy to learn, and able to translate easily to a big screen format.

### **Modes of public engagement**

The original idea was to allow members of the public to teach each other the dance sequences in real time, through the large screens in Seoul and Melbourne. The final outcome would be the creation of a synchronised public dance event held between Arko Art Center and Federation Square. But again the question of translation was raised. At the heart of this project was the acknowledgment that all translations involve gaps – moments of elision and miscommunication, compromise and exchange. Rather than seeking to sideline these elements, LSTPS wanted to bring them to the fore in the formatting of the event. How to create a translation that made visible the ellipses of knowledge transfer?

Rather than a simple teach and learn format, we began thinking of a continuously evolving dance routine that would foreground individual exchanges rather than encourage mass participation. Our methodology turned around the notion of a game, a kind of ‘exquisite corpse’ based on physical movements rather than written or image-based forms. For the Surrealists, [Exquisite Corpse](#) was a conduit for a new kind of collaboration that allowed individual contributions to coalesce into a new, unexpected whole. We matched this principle with the idea of [Chinese Whispers](#) (or as it is known in France ‘Arab Telephone’), a game in which chains of mistranslations are generated in the simple exchange of usually poetic information. In foregrounding the ‘glitches’ or ‘errors’ in communication within the structure of HELLO, symmetry between form and content emerged.

To facilitate the connections between individuals within each environment, we incorporated private tent enclosures within the two public spaces, forging a kind of ‘private-public space’ within the urban landscape. This consideration stemmed directly from the transnational aspects of the project: it addressed the concerns of the Korean partners about reticence to perform in public. In order to create a sheltered, relaxed and comfortable environment for participants, temporary tents were installed at Federation Square and Arko Art Center. When participants entered the tents, they encountered a live life-size projection of their counterpart across the globe. The participants were encouraged to learn whatever they could of the dance they were shown, and then teach whatever they remembered to the next person in line. Each participant was able to share, learn, and translate sequences of movements so as to collectively produce a chain of what Hilton dubbed ‘movement whispers’. The movements were passed back and forth between participants in real time. Footage captured inside the tent was broadcast live to the big screens in Melbourne and Seoul. In Melbourne, the following instructions were provided:

#### HELLO 여보세요 INSTRUCTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

1. Enter the tent and say hello to a person in Seoul, Korea. Just like you, they are looking at a screens inside a tent, in a public square in the middle of a city.
2. Your new friend will perform a short 15 second movement sequence for you. They will

show it to you twice to help you to remember the steps. The first time it is performed, watch in stillness. The second time, feel free to copy their movements as you try to learn them.

1. After they've shown you the movement sequence twice, the person in Seoul will leave the tent and you'll wait for the next person to enter.
2. Teach whatever you can remember of the dance to the new person. It's no problem if you can't remember the dance exactly. Perform it twice so they can learn the movements the same way that you did.
3. Wave goodbye and leave the tent!



Two cameras were installed at Fed Square, one capturing the participants in the tent, the other capturing footage of the public interacting with the screen in the screen. This tech set up was replicated in the space outside Arko Art Center in Seoul. Projectors inside each tent allowed participants to view each other through the Skype portal. The vision feeds from the four cameras were also shared live between the big screens in Melbourne and Seoul. Vision mixers at each site allowed for live broadcast mixing of the footage between the screens, while a split screen system permitted us to screen footage from Seoul and Melbourne on the screens simultaneously.



### Environmental Factors & Audience Research Data

Although the event was synchronized across the two sites, differences in environmental and temporal factors altered the overall experience for participants. In Seoul, the event began at 6pm on the evening of a warm autumn day. The sun was just going down, and many people were milling around the public space after work. The event attracted significant ambient traffic, many of whom were on their way to other performance events in the cultural district. The demographic was largely young people, students, and the crowd seemingly had no compunctions about queuing to enter the tent before the event started. DJ Soolee's live mix was clearly audible at a distance from the event site and drew curious passersby to the site well before the scheduled start time. Due to the

remaining sunlight at this time of day, the visibility of the big screen was poor in the first 15 minutes of the event. In Melbourne, the event commenced at 8pm on the Friday night. It was dark at this time and (typically Melbourne) had also had begun to rain. The ambient traffic in the square was minimized because of these environmental conditions.

During the event, audiences at both events were interviewed and cultural fieldwork was conducted. Our research will be used to creating qualitative and quantitative analyses of participant demographics and audience responses, and in particular on measuring the quality of the interaction and the user experience of the event. We are in the process of analysing the data – stay tuned for details!

**References** Roy Ascott, *Telematic Embrace, Visual Theories of Art, Technology and Consciousness*, ed. Edward Shanken, Berkeley: University of California Press (2003). Pauline Brooks, "Creating new spaces: dancing in a telematic world", *International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media*, 6.1:49-60. Nicola Green, "On the Move: Technology, Mobility and the Mediation of Social Time and Space", *The Information Society* 18: 281-292. Peter Hunsinger, "Culture and Cultural Identity in Intercultural Technical Communication", *Technical Communication Quarterly*, 15.1L 31-48. Annemarie Chandle and Eric Gibney, A History of Telematic Art, [http://research.hss.uts.edu.au/telematic\\_art/survey.html](http://research.hss.uts.edu.au/telematic_art/survey.html) Naugle, L., "Distributed Choreography in a Video-Conferencing Environment." *Journal of Performance and Art*, No 71, Volume XXI, No. 2 (2002): 56-62.

**Event Credits** This event was a co-production of The University of Melbourne (Amelia Barikin, Nikos Papastergiadis, Scott McQuire, Audrey Yue), Art Center Nabi (Director Soh-yeong Roh), University of Sydney (Ross Gibson), Fed Square Ltd (Matthew Jones), the Australia Council for the Arts. It was supported by the Australian Government through the Australia-Korea Foundation of the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade.

Curatorial Team: Soo-jung Yi, So-mi Han, Amelia Barikin, Ross Gibson, Cecelia Cmielewski

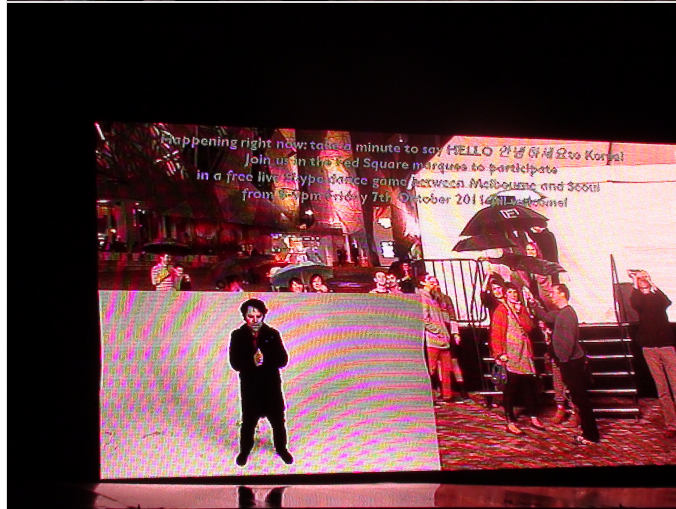
Technical Support: Dong-hoon Shin, Young-ho Lee, Won-ki Baek, Jeong-eun Ahn, Hyo-jun Park, Min-su Kim, Stephen Shelley, Thomas Dawe, Ben Speth, Lindsay Cox, Linda Sastradipradja, and the Footscray Community Arts Centre.

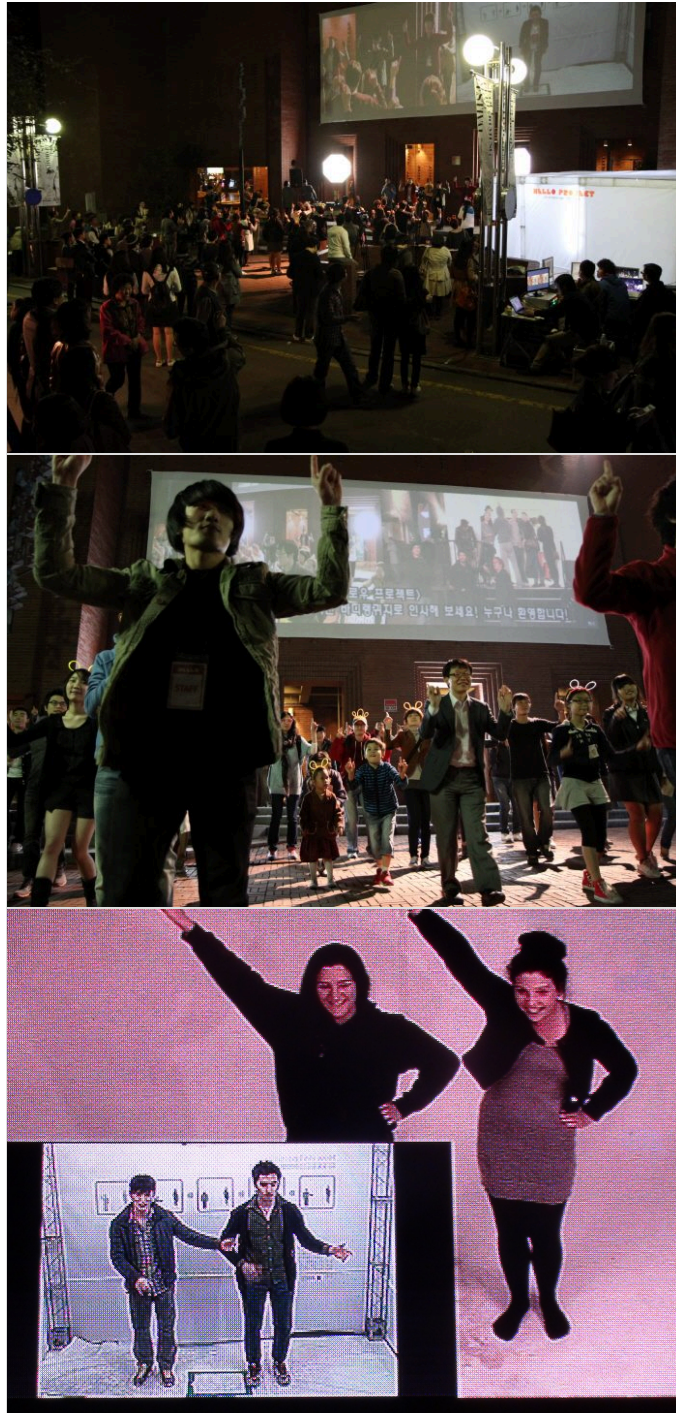
Choreography: Rebecca Hilton and Soonho Park, with thanks to Footscray Community Arts Centre

**Rebecca Hilton** is a Melbourne based performer, teacher, choreographer and director and is co-choreographer of The HELLO Project. She has performed in and contributed to the work of a range of artists including Russell Dumas, Stephen Petronio, Mathew Barney, Michael Clark, Tere O'Connor, Jennifer Monson, John Jasperse, Margie Medlin, Lucy Guerin among others. She teaches extensively for companies, schools and in festivals worldwide including Chunky Move, Lyons Opera Ballet, Berlin Opera Ballet, Vienna Impulse Tanz Festival, Rosas, PARTS, Victorian College of the Arts, and Balletlab, and has a particular interest in working with collaborative community dance events. In 2012 she is choreographing a series of solos for the Mexican dance company La Lagrima to feature in the 2012 Mexico Festival, and working on a book about dance. She is the 2010/11 recipient of a Fellowship from the Dance Board of the Australia Council.

**Soonho Park** is one of Korea's most respected young dancers and choreographers, and is co-choreographer of The HELLO Project. Graduating from Han-sung University and its Graduate school in Korea, he completed a Choreographers' course of EDDC European Dance Development Center in Netherlands. He was a member of Zapara Dance Troupe in Italy, and participated in many projects such as T.A.T Project, PACT Zollverein Atelier in Germany, as well as performances with Arepo Group of Tanzhaus and for the Seoul International Dance Festival. He currently works with Park Soonho Dance Project in Seoul to present dynamic group dance events that often involve elements of public collaboration.







FOR ADDITIONAL IMAGES OF THIS EVENT VISIT OUR PROJECT BLOG  
<http://spatialaesthetics.unimelb.edu.au/projects/large-screens-and-the-transnational-public-sphere/project-blog>