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Fischer, P. T. and Zöllner, C. and Hoffmann, T. and Piatza, S. (2010) *VR/Urban: SMSlingshot.* [Proceedings Paper]

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VR/Urban: SMSlingshot

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Figure 1 SMSlingshot Setup

Abstract
In this paper we describe the concept and design objectives of VR/Urban's media intervention tool SMSlingshot, which was presented at the Riga White Night Arts Festival 2009 [1] for the first time.

Keywords
Media façade, urban computing, media intervention, mobile tangible user interface, social technology, embodiment

ACM Classification Keywords
H.5.2 User Interfaces, H.1.2 User/Machine Systems, I.3.6 Methodology and Techniques

General Terms
Design, Interactive Art, Theory / Philosophy, Life

Introduction
VR/Urban's SMSlingshot is a conceptual advancement of the spread.gun intervention tool which has been created for the Media Façade Festival 2008 in Berlin [3, 4, 6, 9] and can be seen as an iterative design revision of what we call digital intervention activism in public spaces. By naming our first series of digital intervention approaches as "Reclaim the Screens" we pay homage to a London based collective called "Reclaim the Streets" (RTS)[5]. Like RTS, who often stage non-violent direct action street reclaiming events such as the "invasion" of a major road, highway or freeway to have a party, VR/Urban seeks for ways to counter the
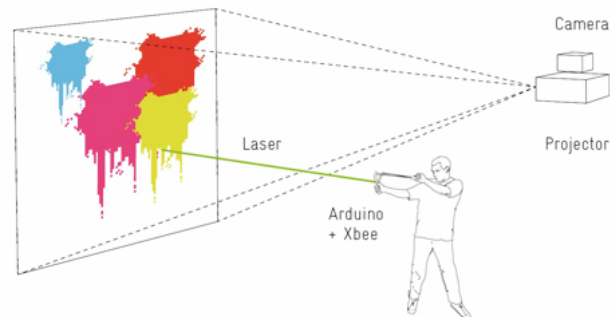
Figure 2 SMSlingshot

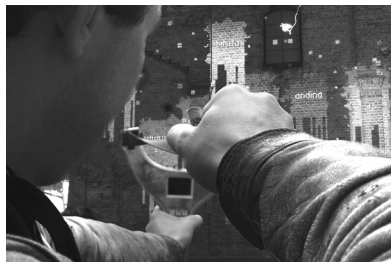**Figure 3** Random people interacting with the SMSlingshot

Figure 4 User shooting his virtual message to the building.

more and more increasing number of commercial screens in urban environment. Not by doing so randomly, but rather by *crossing* large scale LED media façades and digital billboards that proclaim commercial interests and "order" consumption. The increasing number of these commercial screens is matter of challenge for VR/Urban and subject of being reclaimed for public. VR/Urban felt that people need accessible intervention devices to have the opportunity of reply to these massive forces of capitalism. After all it is the people's urban space that got polluted by flickering ads. In our point of view, graffiti is currently the only affordable way for individuals to communicate political, social and personal issues in a one-to-many communicational way in urban environments. Fortunately some collectives are already developing new tools of intervention, e.g. initiatives like the Graffiti Research Lab (GRL), New York [2]. Like them VR/Urban demands the need and also creates tools for digital intervention to get public voices back in urban space.

The design objectives

The concept of "reclaiming the screens" and how that can be done was mainly driven by creating rather a consistent installation/experience than building a fancy technology gadget. This means we focused onto the design of human perception in terms of *aesthetics*, dérive (*drift)[8], social phenomenon* and *emotion*, rather than high tech technology and fancy graphics.

Summary of Non-functional requirements

Intuitive - Clear image schemas were used during the design phase to support intuitive use.

Unobtrusive – The archaic design of a slingshot is truly embodied in the archaic instincts of men.

Enticing – The interaction is visible to passers-by (spectators). They can follow and understand the

interaction between performer and screen and they can easily enter into the performance space by simply asking for the device.

Portable – Our SMSlingshot system can be carried easily and can be shot from any direction, even over kilometers away. Also the projection system is portable and lightweight.

Robust – The device should withstand at least eight hours of usage also surviving shocks from accidently dropping the device. Also the wireless communication can handle dynamic connections.

Flexible – The technical setup is very flexible since position capturing of the target aimed at can be installed at a different Computer as the rendering computer. Also different numbers of SMSlingshots can be used.

References

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