

Outre-Ronde

interactive 360 degrees panoramic installation, real time 3D, silence

Relations to the environment

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Into the Hollow of Darkness is composed of two works:

Visual work : *Eye-Ocean*, 2003-2007

Interactive panoramic work : *Outre-Ronde*, 2005 - 2008

Into the Hollow of Darkness began with feelings induced by Samuel Beckett 's texts exploring darkness (notably *Compagnie*), and by experimental films based on light (Turrell, Brakhage). It continues my creative investigation into the deconstruction of the material « computer-generated 3D image » and its relationship with numbers. How does light behave in a virtual space, constructed only by numbers ? How do these numbers allow one to play, to disturb, to possibly twist physical laws of light, when one is not looking to simulate realistic phenomena ? Negative numbers, used for some features of light, make it black : it absorbs the other lights according to a balance of power defined by their proximity.

The research on virtual light is related to interests in perception, vision, and, what one could call contemplation-in-darkness. I focused more and more on uncertain, imprecise vision - in particular on perception at the edges of the visual field. This is a very sensitive, but imprecise area which should be explored more.

To this visual research I added research into interactivity. Vision also depends greatly on the amount of time the viewer gives it. If vision takes place for a period of time, it deepens, it uncovers surprises, which one wouldn't have seen without this length of time. In our industrial society, with its speed and its desire for efficiency, these moments of observation are limited. Moreover, the desire to possess things makes us want to act on them (Soseki, *Grass Pillow*, p. 12), rather than merely observe them.

I then had the idea of using interactivity (retro-action between the image and the programme, allowed by digital technologies and real time) and working against its obvious usage. Normally, interactivity gives power, and enables us to act on the image, or on the object in the image, to move it, to change its form, etc. My project (under the influence of a few other art works, among them, some are interactive, Simon Biggs, *Shadows*, 1993, and Sauter-Lüsebrink, *Zerseher*,

1992 ; or linear, notably Samuel Beckett, *Film*, 1964 ; even literary, Lao Tseu, *Tao Te King*) aims to limit the power of vision of the viewer according to his/her behaviour. The slower he/she moves, the longer he/she can see. The faster he/she is, the shorter he/she makes the images last.

Technically, an interface (helmet + camera) tracks the viewer's head movements, and indicates to the computer the direction of his/her gaze and the speed of his/her movement. Images appear on a cylindrical screen (linked to 4 video projectors), by which the viewer is surrounded, like the circle he/she would draw turning round to explore his/her environment.

Choosing counter-intuitive interactivity is justified for several reasons. 1/ Frustrated, viewers have a better sense of their desire for vision, they become aware of it. They feel they want to see. 2/ But the visible flees, evading their desire, which is too rapid. Viewers also understand that phenomena are not docile, accessible, able to be manipulated. Phenomena can refuse to be visible, or can be destroyed – temporarily – by this desire to see them. Modifying – unwillingly – what they desire to see (cf. Heisenberg principle, the observer disturbs the observed), viewers are responsible for what they make appear. 3/ They have to be willing to take time, to go slowly to be able to see something, at first only in the corner of the eye, then gradually in central vision. By letting things/beings etc. come to them according to their own movement/psychology, viewers can have a sense of communication, even of dialogue or of relationship. This makes them understand that slowness is a factor in dialogue, because it implies respect for other people's time.

By thus going slowly to discover a dynamic and quasi-sensitive environment, on the one hand, viewers have to pay attention to tiny apparitions in the corner of their eye, and so they sharpen their perception and attention. But on the other hand, they can keep making these apparitions visible: they can then modulate their colours by their micro-movements. When they have been patient enough to gain access to central vision, they learn to respect their environment for which they are ultimately responsible.

NB : the viewer is not permanently frustrated. First, apparitions become gradually less visible and more subtly interactive, to leave viewers time (they need time too) to learn, through experience, how the form reacts. Second, like radar, by turning, viewers trigger in their peripheral visual field apparitions that turn with them, slightly faster, then disappear. This produces a great corporal, kinaesthetic pleasure (linked to the movement of turning on oneself) which is also visual. (... learning to love not to have immediate power over.. ?)