REMEDIOS’ TERRARIUM

Remedios Terrarium is a responsive environment, a group show, and a conversation made public. It’s a set of diverse responses to the fable of autopeiosis, imagining living systems as palimpsests of organic plants, woven textile, filament, air, projected video, sound, sensor data, and occasionally, people.

It’s a group show in which individual creators and collectives affiliated with the Topological Media Lab (TML) have responded to a call about the themes of a terrarium and delicate life, of the Gallery as a vessel made porous mixing outside and inside, of matter in constant alchemical transformation.

Our goal is not to make objects or even particular pieces of media, but events. Certainly in the course of making an event, we produce objects and media and, most importantly, some latent behavior, but all as elements conditioning an event. Its continuously evolving responsive environment changes weather and behavior according to the hour and the day, and according to what’s happening inside or outside its porous boundaries. We arrange our objects in a physical space to leverage the unbounded corporeal intuition that visitors bring with them, so the Remedios Terrarium is an architectural experiment as well as an event.

The Remedios Terrarium is also a set of conversations, articulated in things and events. It’s a philosophical investigation carried out in the form of material experiments of experimental modes of matter. We create things, media instruments, and kinetic plants, “spoken” from diverse perspectives. We can be noisy, divergent, and even contentious, but making and exhibiting Remedios Terrarium – the 100 day long event – requires us to create a common boundary object together.

As you walk about the Gallery, you’ll encounter individual and collective echoes of questions and speculations reaching ten years back: How can we make compelling events without convention? What makes some events dead and others live? What is a gesture when we do not assume bodies a priori? How do conventions and bodies come into being or dissolve in the continuously flowing world?

— Sha Xin Wei

THE TOPOLOGICAL MEDIA LAB

Computer-driven media are changing our environment, delivering images, sound and kinetic objects with ever greater density. Given that increasingly complex information technology verges on the limits of intelligibility and manageability, we face the challenge of building and inhabiting our spaces in ways that can make sense to us individually and collectively. How can we build rich responsive environments for shelter, sociability or play? How do people experience computer-mediated environments that now include not only virtual reality games and experimental theater, but also classrooms, airports and public spaces? In short, how can we build a world that is not complicated but rich?

In order to answer these practical and conceptual challenges, the Topological Media Lab was established in 2001 to experimentally explore gestural, performative, and embodied use of hybrid computational-physical materials. The experimental aspect of this work proceeds at two scales. The micro scale concerns topological responsive media, which includes time-based media and computationally-extended fabrics. The macro scale concerns the architecture of responsive media spaces, which includes augmented reality, sensor-based interactive environments, projected and ubiquitous media. Dr. Sha and TML researchers investigate how we build, inhabit and use sentient or active matter. By this we mean combinations of computational and physical materials sensitive to environmental features or activities, responding by changing their form or appearance. We say material because the emphasis is not so much on objects or devices, but on continuous substrates.

The experimental approach is based on a critical, theoretical project that treats the world as a continuous ontology. Prof. Sha’s theoretical work explores the limits of discrete representation, finding alternatives to linguistic-semantic analysis in the form of non-metric topological, dynamical, potential-theoretic and other material patterns. This theoretical project is informed by a material and social phenomenology. This investigation is substantively based on a fusion of computer science, science studies and critical studies of new media.

Intertwining scientific work with cultural practices gives meaning and context to guide the research. Prof. Sha and associates collaborate with fellow creators such as the sponge and Fokk’s art research networks to materialize these ideas as artifacts, installations and public conversations such as the T’Garden responsive media spaces, and the series of video Membranes and the Quija Improvisatory Movement experiments. We describe some of TML’s principal inter-related areas of research: gesture and performance, real-time media choreography, active garments, responsive media, and soft architecture. In 2007, the TML’s two major axes of research are movement-based installation events, and poetic architectural interventions in the built environment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Gallery Staff
Lynn Beards, FOA Gallery Coordinator
March 17 to April 4, 2008
Vernissage March 20, 7:30 (19h06)
FOA Gallery
Concordia University
1515, rue Sainte-Catherine Ouest, EV 1-715
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Metro Guy-Concordia
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www.topologicalmedialab.net

Remedios’ Terrarium
Topological Media Lab

March 17 - April 4
Vernissage March 20

From The Poems of Dylan Thomas, published by New Directions, 1952.

THE FORCE THAT THROUGH THE GREEN FUSE DRIVES THE FLOWER
DRIVES MY GREEN AGE, THAT BLASTS THE ROOTS OF TREES IS MY DESTROYER.
AND I AM DUMB TO TELL THE CROOKED ROSE
MY YOUTH IS RENT BY THE SAME WINTER FEW.
THE FORCE THAT DRIVES THE WATER THROUGH THE ROCKS
DRIVES MY RED BLOOD, THAT DRIES THE MOUTHING STREAMS
THINS HVN TO NUL.
AND I AM DUMB TO MOUTH UNTO MY VEINS
HOW AT THE MOUNTAIN SPRING THE SAME MOUTH SICKS.

Remedios’ Terrarium

Topological Media Lab

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www.topologicalmedialab.net
SUMMARY & CREDITS

Main Gallery
Cell Sculpture
Patrick Harrop; Gregory Rubin, JC Neski, Candace Fempel, Evan Marnoch, Dirk Bloew, Jean-Sebastien Rousseau; Flower Lunn
Weaved PVC plastic, mono-filament, fabric, water, plants
Description: A net of transparent cells fills the airspace at diverse heights.

Calligraphic Video Projection
Jean-Sebastien Rousseau (Michael Fortin)
Max / Jitter, OpenGL, projectors, Mac G5 computers, cameras
Description: Multiple streams of camera input transmute to responsive video projected onto the surfaces of the gallery, providing weather.

Sound Field
Timothy Sutton
Max / MSP, Logic, microphones, Mac G5 computer, hardware sound processors, speakers
Description: Ten channels of synthesized and transmutted sound form a palpable dynamical field.

Dynamic Light Field
Harry Smeak
Lighting instruments, DMX dimmers, LAN interface, Max, Macintosh computer
Description: A row of luminous pattern at the base of the south wall refracts activity from the sidewalk. 2. An array of lights build and respond to conditions in the gallery.

Electrified Flight Sensate Weaving
Marguerite Bromley (X5 Lab); Elliot Sinyor, Doug van Nort + IDML McGil; WYSI-WYG group TML
20” wide, 4” high Jacquard-woven fabric, conductive thread, custom electronics, Arduino micro - processor, speaker, Mac Mini computer
Description: A 20” wide weaving diverts flow around a corner of the gallery. It sounds as a visitor approaches or touches a pattern.

Black Box
Suitcase
Elena Frantova, Timothy Sutton (Lenka Novak, JS Rousseau)
Suitcase, plaster sculpture, electronics, sound.
Description: An old suitcase contains a doll-sized TML, with plaster figures illuminated by dynamic lights. Multi-channel, algorithmic sound playback system.

Electrical Flight Sensate Weaving
Lenka Novak
Mono-filament, cast glass, projected video.
Description: Seven glass disks are suspended from cones of monofilament. A projection of a river textures on to the monofilament.

General
Plant Systems
Flower Lunn
Plants, moss, soil, wood, string, aquaria, water, pumps, gro-lights, timers
Description: Arranged moss clusters at the base of the vitrine. Water plants float in the cell sculpture. Soil-based plants climb trellises made of string and plastic tubing.

Vitrine Corridor
Louis-Andre Fortin, Flower Lunn, Nadia Frantova, Elena Frantova, Timothy Sutton
Cut and printed paper, found objects, plasma display, subwoofer, microphone, sound processing system.
Description: A line of still images from the official TML documentation videos forms a vector from Mackay Street end through 3 sections of the vitrine. The actual, messy history lives on the floor as found objects and images from the lab. Microphones and moss cluster at the air gaps between the vitrine’s glass plates, absorbing air, sound, moisture. Low sounds permeate the space.

Sebald Cabinet
Mark Sussman, Ayesha Hameed
Wooden cabinet, television set, speakers
Description: This cabinet, augmented by recorded sound and video, references a series of table-top theater pieces by Mark Sussman and colleagues in Great Small Works based on the writing of W.G. Sebald.

Documentation Pedestal
David Bave Johnston
Cabinet, PC computer, Display monitor

Events
Remedios Terrarium Event
Sha Xin Wei, Morgan Sutherland, Emmanuelle Thiervig (Yon Vseli)
Max / C, Mac G5 computer
Description: The Gallery’s weather constantly evolves according to pre-composed tendencies as well as activities inside and outside the space.

Vernissage March 20
Lynn Beavis, Josée-Anne Drolet
Thursday March 20, 1800 - 2000

Touch2 March 20, Dusk (1990)
Design & Coordination : Josée-Anne Drolet
Choreographer: Soo-yeon Cho
Dancers: Soo-yeon Cho, Klaart dal Vallee
Video & Projection: Jae-Ok Lee
Real-time video design : Jean-Sebastien Rousseau
Set design & Construction : Josée-Anne Drolet, Pascal Simard, Jae-Ok Lee
Costume design : Josée-Anne Drolet, Jae-Ok Lee
Touch1 video : Desh Fernandez and Touch Creators
Touch1 sound design : Timothy Sutton
Touch2 sound editing : Soo-yeon Cho
Touch2 sound sources : Timothy Sutton, Freida Abtan, Akumu
Lighting : Harry Smeak
Technical consultation : Harry Smeak, Jean-Sebastien Rousseau
Description: A minute version of the Touch1 dance video of two dancers will be projected onto west wall. At dusk, Soo bursts from a paper structure on the west wall. She and Klaart dance among the suspended cells and the Tapestry, leaving visual traces on the wall.

SHA XIN WEI

Sha Xin Wei’s art work ranges from video and sound installations that respond to gesture or movement to complex, collaboratively built events. These works explore the relations people create with one another in the presence of dense, continuously evolving responsive media.

Since 1997, Sha has worked with the art research groups, Sponge, which he co-founded in San Francisco, and with FoAM in Brussels. Major series of environment projects include the TiGarden play spaces (1997-2001), HubHub public speech-painting (2002-2004), and the Sauna urban immersion installations (with Sponge, 2003-2004). In 2004, Sha embarked on a series of “software” projects exploring fields of gesture and subjectivity using sensitive, gestural, media-saturated fabrics. These works have been recognized and supported by the Rockefeller Foundation, Creative Work Fund, LEF Foundation, the Fondation Daniel Langlois, FQRSC among other cultural agencies. Sha was supported by an Individual Artist grant by the Fondation Daniel Langlois in 2004, and his most recent work in this area, WYSIWYG sounding tapestries, was funded by Hexagram in 2006. Sha has also created a series of responsive video installations, including a 42 channel multi-perspective video installation called Slip/Glitter, with Tirtza Even; the responsive Van Nelle Fabriek membrane installation in Rotterdam DEAF 2005, and the ILYA series of installations entangling historical with present day people in movement.

Dr. Sha has degrees in mathematics from Harvard and Stanford Universities. He is Canada Research Chair Media Arts and Sciences at Concordia University, and Associate Professor in the Faculties of Fine Arts and Computer Science. He is writing a book on poetics and enchantment in topological matter.

Selected Works:
“Frou’s Ear,” speech painting installation, Georgia State University 2003.
“Tig2001” open lab, with TiGarden Consortium, Ars Electronica 2001 Linz Austria.
“InGarden” responsive environment: fabric, sound and projected video, WestE ม erica 2000 Athens Greece, with Forbld and sponge.

http://sponge.org • http://topologicalmedialab.net/shaxiewei